

The Bush Boys: History and Adventures of a Cape Farmer and his Family

**By
Mayne Reid**

***Free*editorial** 

"THE BUSH BOYS"

Chapter One.

The Boors.

Hendrik Von Bloom was a boor.

My young English reader, do not suppose that I mean any disrespect to Mynheer Von Bloom, by calling him a “boor.” In our good Cape colony a “boor” is a farmer. It is no reproach to be called a farmer. Von Bloom was one—a Dutch farmer of the Cape—a boor.

The boors of the Cape colony have figured very considerably in modern history. Although naturally a people inclined to peace, they have been forced into various wars, both with native Africans and Europeans; and in these wars they have acquitted themselves admirably, and given proofs that a pacific people when need be can fight just as well as those who are continually exulting in the ruffian glory of the soldier.

But the boors have been accused of cruelty in their wars—especially those carried on against the native races. In an abstract point of view the accusation might appear just. But when we come to consider the provocation, received at the hands of these savage enemies, we learn to look more leniently upon the

conduct of the Cape Dutch. It is true they reduced the yellow Hottentots to a state of slavery; but at that same time, we, the English, were transporting shiploads of black Guineamen across the Atlantic, while the Spaniards and Portuguese were binding the Red men of America in fetters as tight and hard.

Another point to be considered is the character of the natives with whom the Dutch boors had to deal. The keenest cruelty inflicted upon them by the colonists was mercy, compared with the treatment which these savages had to bear at the hands of their own despots.

This does not justify the Dutch for having reduced the Hottentots to a state of slavery; but, all circumstances considered, there is no one of the maritime nations who can gracefully accuse them of cruelty. In their dealings with the aborigines of the Cape, they have had to do with savages of a most wicked and degraded stamp; and the history of colonisation, under such circumstances, could not be otherwise than full of unpleasant episodes.

Young reader, I could easily defend the conduct of the boors of Cape colony, but I have not space here. I can only give you my opinion; and that is, that they are a brave, strong, healthy, moral, peace-loving, industrious race—lovers of truth, and friends to republican freedom—in short, a noble race of men.

Is it likely, then, when I called Hendrik Von Bloom a boor, that I meant him any disrespect? Quite the contrary.

But Mynheer Hendrik had not always been a boor. He could boast of a somewhat higher condition—that is, he could boast of a better education than the mere Cape farmer usually possesses, as well as some experience in wielding the sword. He was not a native of the colony, but of the mother country; and he had found his way to the Cape not as a poor adventurer seeking his fortune, but as an officer in a Dutch regiment then stationed there.

His soldier-service in the colony was not of long duration. A certain cherry-cheeked, flaxen-haired Gertrude—the daughter of a rich boor—had taken a liking to the young lieutenant; and he in his turn became vastly fond of her. The consequence was, that they got married. Gertrude's father dying shortly after, the large farm, with its full stock of horses, and Hottentots, broad-tailed sheep, and long-horned oxen, became hers. This was an inducement for her soldier-husband to lay down the sword and turn "vee-boor," or stock farmer, which he consequently did.

These incidents occurred many years previous to the English becoming masters of the Cape colony. When that event came to pass, Hendrik Von Bloom was already a man of influence in the colony and "field-cornet" of his district, which lay in the beautiful county of Graaf Reinet. He was then a widower, the father of a small family. The wife whom he had fondly loved,—the cherry-cheeked, flaxen-haired Gertrude—no longer lived.

History will tell you how the Dutch colonists, discontented with English rule, rebelled against it. The ex-lieutenant and field-cornet was one of the most prominent among these rebels. History will also tell you how the rebellion was put down; and how several of those compromised were brought to execution. Von Bloom escaped by flight; but his fine property in the Graaf Reinet was confiscated and given to another.

Many years after we find him living in a remote district beyond the great Orange River, leading the life of a “trek-boor,”—that is, a nomade farmer, who has no fixed or permanent abode, but moves with his flocks from place to place, wherever good pastures and water may tempt him.

From about this time dates my knowledge of the field-cornet and his family. Of his history previous to this I have stated all I know, but for a period of many years after I am more minutely acquainted with it. Most of its details I received from the lips of his own son, I was greatly interested, and indeed instructed, by them. They were my first lessons in African zoology.

Believing, boy reader, that they might also instruct and interest you, I here lay them before you. You are not to regard them as merely fanciful. The descriptions of the wild creatures that play their parts in this little history, as well as the acts, habits, and instincts assigned to them, you may regard as true to Nature. Young Von Bloom was a student of Nature, and you may depend upon the fidelity of his descriptions.

Disgusted with politics, the field-cornet now dwelt on the remote frontier—in fact, beyond the frontier, for the nearest settlement was an hundred miles off. His “kraal” was in a district bordering the great Kalihari desert—the Saära of Southern Africa. The region around, for hundreds of miles, was uninhabited, for the thinly-scattered, half-human Bushmen who dwelt within its limits, hardly deserved the name of inhabitants any more than the wild beasts that howled around them.

I have said that Von Bloom now followed the occupation of a “trek-boor.” Farming in the Cape colony consists principally in the rearing of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats; and these animals form the wealth of the boor. But the stock of our field-cornet was now a very small one. The proscription had swept away all his wealth, and he had not been fortunate in his first essays as a nomade grazier. The emancipation law, passed by the British Government, extended not only to the Negroes of the West India Islands, but also to the Hottentots of the Cape; and the result of it was that the servants of Mynheer Von Bloom had deserted him. His cattle, no longer properly cared for, had strayed off. Some of them fell a prey to wild beasts—some died of the murrain. His horses, too, were decimated by that mysterious disease of Southern Africa, the “horse-sickness;” while his sheep and goats were continually being attacked and diminished in numbers by the earth-wolf, the

wild hound, and the hyena. A series of losses had he suffered until his horses, oxen, sheep, and goats, scarce counted altogether an hundred head. A very small stock for a vee-boor, or South African grazier.

Withal our field-cornet was not unhappy. He looked around upon his three brave sons—Hans, Hendrik, and Jan. He looked upon his cherry-cheeked, flaxen-haired daughter, Gertrude, the very type and image of what her mother had been. From these he drew the hope of a happier future.

His two eldest boys were already helps to him in his daily occupations; the youngest would soon be so likewise. In Gertrude,—or “Trüey,” as she was endearingly styled,—he would soon have a capital housekeeper. He was not unhappy therefore; and if an occasional sigh escaped him, it was when the face of little Trüey recalled the memory of that Gertrude who was now in heaven.

But Hendrik Von Bloom was not the man to despair. Disappointments had not succeeded in causing his spirits to droop. He only applied himself more ardently to the task of once more building up his fortune.

For himself he had no ambition to be rich. He would have been contented with the simple life he was leading, and would have cared but little to increase his wealth. But other considerations weighed upon his mind—the future of his little family. He could not suffer his children to grow up in the midst of the wild plains without education.

No; they must one day return to the abodes of men, to act their part in the drama of social and civilised life. This was his design.

But how was this design to be accomplished? Though his so-called act of treason had been pardoned, and he was now free to return within the limits of the colony, he was ill prepared for such a purpose. His poor wasted stock would not suffice to set him up within the settlements. It would scarce keep him a month. To return would be to return a beggar!

Reflections of this kind sometimes gave him anxiety. But they also added energy to his disposition, and rendered him more eager to overcome the obstacles before him.

During the present year he had been very industrious. In order that his cattle should be provided for in the season of winter he had planted a large quantity of maize and buckwheat, and now the crops of both were in the most prosperous condition. His garden, too, smiled, and promised a profusion of fruits, and melons, and kitchen vegetables. In short, the little homestead where he had fixed himself for a time, was a miniature oasis; and he rejoiced day after day, as his eyes rested upon the ripening aspect around him. Once more he began to dream of prosperity—once more to hope that his evil fortunes had come to an end.

Alas! It was a false hope. A series of trials yet awaited him—a series of misfortunes that deprived him of almost everything he possessed, and completely changed his mode of existence.

Perhaps these occurrences could hardly be termed misfortunes, since in the end they led to a happy result.

But you may judge for yourself, boy reader, after you have heard the “history and adventures” of the “trek-boor” and his family.

Chapter Two.

The “Kraal.”

The ex-field-cornet was seated in front of his kraal—for such is the name of a South African homestead. From his lips protruded a large pipe, with its huge bowl of meerschaum. Every boor is a smoker.

Notwithstanding the many losses and crosses of his past life, there was contentment in his eye. He was gratified by the prosperous appearance of his crops. The maize was now “in the milk,” and the ears, folded within the papyrus-like husks, looked full and large. It was delightful to hear the rustling of the long green blades, and see the bright golden tassels waving in the breeze. The heart of the farmer was glad as his eye glanced over his promising crop of “mealies.” But there was another promising crop that still more gladdened his heart—his fine children. There they are—all around him.

Hans—the oldest—steady, sober Hans, at work in the well-stocked garden; while the diminutive but sprightly imp Jan, the youngest, is looking on, and occasionally helping his brother. Hendrik—the dashing Hendrik, with bright face and light curling hair—is busy among the horses, in the “horse-kraal;” and Trüey—the beautiful, cherry-cheeked, flaxen-haired Trüey—is engaged with her pet—a fawn of the springbok gazelle—whose bright eyes rival her own in their expression of innocence and loveliness.

Yes, the heart of the field-cornet is glad as he glances from one to the other of these his children—and with reason. They are all fair to look upon,—all give promise of goodness. If their father feels an occasional pang, it is, as we have already said, when his eye rests upon the cherry-cheeked, flaxen-haired Gertrude.

But time has long since subdued that grief to a gentle melancholy. Its pang is short-lived, and the face of the field-cornet soon lightens up again as he looks around upon his dear children, so full of hope and promise.

Hans and Hendrik are already strong enough to assist him in his occupations,

—in fact, with the exception of “Swartboy,” they are the only help he has.

Who is Swartboy?

Look into the horse-kraal, and you will there see Swartboy engaged, along with his young master Hendrik, in saddling a pair of horses. You may notice that Swartboy appears to be about thirty years old, and he is full that; but if you were to apply a measuring rule to him, you would find him not much over four feet in height! He is stoutly built however, and would measure better in a horizontal direction. You may notice that he is of a yellow complexion, although his name might lead you to fancy he was black—for “Swartboy” means “black-boy.” You may observe that his nose is flat and sunk below the level of his cheeks; that his cheeks are prominent, his lips very thick, his nostrils wide, his face beardless, and his head almost hairless—for the small kinky wool-knots thinly-scattered over his skull can scarcely be designated hair. You may notice, moreover, that his head is monstrosly large, with ears in proportion, and that the eyes are set obliquely, and have a Chinese expression. You may notice about Swartboy all those characteristics that distinguish the “Hottentots” of South Africa.

Yet Swartboy is not a Hottentot—though he is of the same race. He is a Bushman.

How came this wild Bushman into the service of the ex-field-cornet Von Bloom? About that there is a little romantic history. Thus:—

Among the savage tribes of Southern Africa there exists a very cruel custom,—that of abandoning their aged or infirm, and often their sick or wounded, to die in the desert. Children leave their parents behind them, and the wounded are often forsaken by their comrades with no other provision made for them beyond a day’s food and a cup of water!

The Bushman Swartboy had been the victim of this custom. He had been upon a hunting excursion with some of his own kindred, and had been sadly mangled by a lion. His comrades, not expecting him to live, left him on the plain to die; and most certainly would he have perished had it not been for our field-cornet. The latter, as he was “trekking” over the plains, found the wounded Bushman, lifted him into his wagon, carried him on to his camp, dressed his wounds, and nursed him till he became well. That is how Swartboy came to be in the service of the field-cornet.

Though gratitude is not a characteristic of his race, Swartboy was not ungrateful. When all the other servants ran away, he remained faithful to his master; and since that time had been a most efficient and useful hand. In fact, he was now the only one left, with the exception of the girl, Totty—who was, of course, a Hottentot; and much about the same height, size, and colour, as Swartboy himself.

We have said that Swartboy and the young Hendrik were saddling a pair of horses. As soon as they had finished that job, they mounted them, and riding out of the kraal, took their way straight across the plain. They were followed by a couple of strong, rough-looking dogs.

Their purpose was to drive home the oxen and the other horses that were feeding a good distance off. This they were in the habit of doing every evening at the same hour,—for in South Africa it is necessary to shut up all kinds of live-stock at night, to protect them from beasts of prey. For this purpose are built several enclosures with high walls,—“kraals,” as they are called,—a word of the same signification as the Spanish “corral,” and I fancy introduced into Africa by the Portuguese—since it is not a native term.

These kraals are important structures about the homestead of a boor, almost as much so as his own dwelling-house, which of itself also bears the name of “kraal.”

As young Hendrik and Swartboy rode off for the horses and cattle, Hans, leaving his work in the garden, proceeded to collect the sheep and drive them home. These browsed in a different direction; but, as they were near, he went afoot, taking little Jan along with him.

Trüey having tied her pet to a post, had gone inside the house to help Totty in preparing the supper. Thus the field-cornet was left to himself and his pipe, which he still continued to smoke.

He sat in perfect silence, though he could scarce restrain from giving expression to the satisfaction he felt at seeing his family thus industriously employed. Though pleased with all his children, it must be confessed he had some little partiality for the dashing Hendrik, who bore his own name, and who reminded him more of his own youth than any of the others. He was proud of Hendrik’s gallant horsemanship, and his eyes followed him over the plain until the riders were nearly a mile off, and already mixing among the cattle.

At this moment an object came under the eyes of Von Bloom, that at once arrested his attention. It was a curious appearance along the lower part of the sky, in the direction in which Hendrik and Swartboy had gone, but apparently beyond them. It resembled a dun-coloured mist or smoke, as if the plain at a great distance was on fire!

Could that be so? Had some one fired the karoo bushes? Or was it a cloud of dust?

The wind was hardly strong enough to raise such a dust, and yet it had that appearance. Was it caused by animals? Might it not be the dust raised by a great herd of antelopes,—a migration of the springboks, for instance? It extended for miles along the horizon, but Von Bloom knew that these

creatures often travel in flocks of greater extent than miles. Still he could not think it was that.

He continued to gaze at the strange phenomenon, endeavouring to account for it in various ways. It seemed to be rising higher against the blue sky—now resembling dust, now like the smoke of a widely-spread conflagration, and now like a reddish cloud. It was in the west, and already the setting sun was obscured by it. It had passed over the sun's disc like a screen, and his light no longer fell upon the plain. Was it the forerunner of some terrible storm?—of an earthquake?

Such a thought crossed the mind of the field-cornet. It was not like an ordinary cloud,—it was not like a cloud of dust,—it was not like smoke. It was like nothing he had ever witnessed before. No wonder that he became anxious and apprehensive.

All at once the dark-red mass seemed to envelope the cattle upon the plain, and these could be seen running to and fro as if affrighted. Then the two riders disappeared under its dun shadow!

Von Bloom rose to his feet, now seriously alarmed. What could it mean?

The exclamation to which he gave utterance brought little Trüey and Totty from the house; and Hans with Jan had now got back with the sheep and goats. All saw the singular phenomenon, but none of them could tell what it was. All were in a state of alarm.

As they stood gazing, with hearts full of fear, the two riders appeared coming out of the cloud, and then they were seen to gallop forward over the plain in the direction of the house. They came on at full speed, but long before they had got near, the voice of Swartboy could be heard crying out,—

“Baas Von Bloom! da springhaans are comin!—da springhaan!—da springhaan!”

Chapter Three.

The “Springhaan.”

“Ah! the springhaan!” cried Von Bloom, recognising the Dutch name for the far-famed migratory locust.

The mystery was explained. The singular cloud that was spreading itself over the plain was neither more nor less than a flight of locusts!

It was a sight that none of them, except Swartboy, had ever witnessed before. His master had often seen locusts in small quantities, and of several species,—

for there are many kinds of these singular insects in South Africa. But that which now appeared was a true migratory locust (*Gryllus devastatorius*); and upon one of its great migrations—an event of rarer occurrence than travellers would have you believe.

Swartboy knew them well; and, although he announced their approach in a state of great excitement, it was not the excitement of terror.

Quite the contrary. His great thick lips were compressed athwart his face in a grotesque expression of joy. The instincts of his wild race were busy within him. To them a flight of locusts is not an object of dread, but a source of rejoicing—their coming as welcome as a take of shrimps to a Leigh fisherman, or harvest to the husbandman.

The dogs, too, barked and howled with joy, and frisked about as if they were going out upon a hunt. On perceiving the cloud, their instinct enabled them easily to recognise the locusts. They regarded them with feelings similar to those that stirred Swartboy—for both dogs and Bushmen eat the insects with avidity!

At the announcement that it was only locusts, all at once recovered from their alarm. Little Trüey and Jan laughed, clapped their hands, and waited with curiosity until they should come nearer. All had heard enough of locusts to know that they were only grasshoppers that neither bit nor stung any one, and therefore no one was afraid of them.

Even Von Bloom himself was at first very little concerned about them. After his feelings of apprehension, the announcement that it was a flight of locusts was a relief, and for a while he did not dwell upon the nature of such a phenomenon, but only regarded it with feelings of curiosity.

Of a sudden his thoughts took a new direction. His eye rested upon his fields of maize and buckwheat, upon his garden of melons, and fruits, and vegetables: a new alarm seized upon him; the memory of many stories which he had heard in relation to these destructive creatures rushed into his mind, and as the whole truth developed itself, he turned pale, and uttered new exclamations of alarm.

The children changed countenance as well. They saw that their father suffered; though they knew not why. They gathered inquiringly around him.

“Alas! alas! Lost! lost!” exclaimed he; “yes, all our crop—our labour of the year—gone, gone! O my dear children!”

“How lost, father?—how gone?” exclaimed several of them in a breath.

“See the springhaan! they will eat up our crop—all—all!”

“’Tis true, indeed,” said Hans, who being a great student had often read accounts of the devastations committed by the locusts.

The joyous countenances of all once more wore a sad expression, and it was no longer with curiosity that they gazed upon the distant cloud, that so suddenly had clouded their joy.

Von Bloom had good cause for dread. Should the swarm come on, and settle upon his fields, farewell to his prospects of a harvest. They would strip the verdure from his whole farm in a twinkling. They would leave neither seed, nor leaf, nor stalk, behind them.

All stood watching the flight with painful emotions. The swarm was still a full half-mile distant. They appeared to be coming no nearer,—good!

A ray of hope entered the mind of the field-cornet. He took off his broad felt hat, and held it up to the full stretch of his arm. The wind was blowing from the north, and the swarm was directly to the west of the kraal. The cloud of locusts had approached from the north, as they almost invariably do in the southern parts of Africa.

“Yes,” said Hendrik, who having been in their midst could tell what way they were drifting, “they came down upon us from a northerly direction. When we headed our horses homewards, we soon galloped out from them, and they did not appear to fly after us; I am sure they were passing southwards.”

Von Bloom entertained hopes that as none appeared due north of the kraal, the swarm might pass on without extending to the borders of his farm. He knew that they usually followed the direction of the wind. Unless the wind changed they would not swerve from their course.

He continued to observe them anxiously. He saw that the selvedge of the cloud came no nearer. His hopes rose. His countenance grew brighter. The children noticed this and were glad, but said nothing. All stood silently watching.

An odd sight it was. There was not only the misty swarm of the insects to gaze upon. The air above them was filled with birds—strange birds and of many kinds. On slow, silent wing soared the brown “oricou,” the largest of Africa’s vultures; and along with him the yellow “chasse fiente,” the vulture of Kolbé. There swept the bearded “lamvanger,” on broad extended wings. There shrieked the great “Caffre eagle,” and side by side with him the short-tailed and singular “bateleur.” There, too, were hawks of different sizes and colours, and kites cutting through the air, and crows and ravens, and many species of insectivora. But far more numerous than all the rest could be seen the little springhaan-vogel, a speckled bird of nearly the size and form of a swallow. Myriads of these darkened the air above—hundreds of them continually shooting down among the insects, and soaring up again, each with a victim in its beak. “Locust-vultures” are these creatures named, though not vultures in kind. They feed exclusively on these insects, and are never seen where the locusts are not. They follow them through all their migrations,

building their nests, and rearing their young, in the midst of their prey!

It was, indeed, a curious sight to look upon, that swarm of winged insects, and their numerous and varied enemies; and all stood gazing upon it with feelings of wonder. Still the living cloud approached no nearer, and the hopes of Von Bloom continued to rise.

The swarm kept extending to the south—in fact, it now stretched along the whole western horizon; and all noticed that it was gradually getting lower down—that is, its top edge was sinking in the heavens. Were the locusts passing off to the west? No.

“Da am goin’ roost for da nacht—now we’ll get ’em in bagfull,” said Swartboy, with a pleased look; for Swartboy was a regular locust-eater, as fond of them as either eagle or kite,—ay, as the “springhaan-vogel” itself.

It was as Swartboy had stated. The swarm was actually settling down on the plain.

“Can’t fly without sun,” continued the Bushman. “Too cold now. Dey go dead till da mornin.”

And so it was. The sun had set. The cool breeze weakened the wings of the insect travellers, and they were compelled to make halt for the night upon the trees, bushes, and grass.

In a few minutes the dark mist that had hid the blue rim of the sky, was seen no more; but the distant plain looked as if a fire had swept over it. It was thickly covered with the bodies of the insects, that gave it a blackened appearance, as far as the eye could reach.

The attendant birds, perceiving the approach of night, screamed for awhile, and then scattered away through the heavens. Some perched upon the rocks, while others went to roost among the low thickets of mimosa; and now for a short interval both earth and air were silent.

Von Bloom now bethought him of his cattle. Their forms were seen afar off in the midst of the locust-covered plain.

“Let ’em feed um little while, baas,” suggested Swartboy.

“On what?” inquired his master. “Don’t you see the grass is covered!”

“On de springhaan demself, baas,” replied the Bushman; “good for fatten big ox—better dan grass—ya, better dan mealies.”

But it was too late to leave the cattle longer out upon the plain. The lions would soon be abroad—the sooner because of the locusts, for the king of the beasts does not disdain to fill his royal stomach with these insects—when he can find them.

Von Bloom saw the necessity of bringing his cattle at once to their kraal.

A third horse was saddled, which the field-cornet himself mounted, and rode off, followed by Hendrik and Swartboy.

On approaching the locusts they beheld a singular sight. The ground was covered with these reddish-brown creatures, in some spots to the depth of several inches. What bushes there were were clustered with them,—all over the leaves and branches, as if swarms of bees had settled upon them. Not a leaf or blade of grass that was not covered with their bodies!

They moved not, but remained silent, as if torpid or asleep. The cold of the evening had deprived them of the power of flight.

What was strangest of all to the eyes of Von Bloom and Hendrik, was the conduct of their own horses and cattle. These were some distance out in the midst of the sleeping host; but instead of being alarmed at their odd situation, they were greedily gathering up the insects in mouthfuls, and crunching them as though they had been corn!

It was with some difficulty that they could be driven off; but the roar of a lion, that was just then heard over the plain, and the repeated application of Swartboy's jambok, rendered them more tractable, and at length they suffered themselves to be driven home, and lodged within their kraals.

Swartboy had provided himself with a bag, which he carried back full of locusts.

It was observed that in collecting the insects into the bag, he acted with some caution, handling them very gingerly, as if he was afraid of them. It was not them he feared, but snakes, which upon such occasions are very plenteous, and very much to be dreaded—as the Bushman from experience well knew.

Chapter Four.

A talk about Locusts.

It was a night of anxiety in the kraal of the field-cornet. Should the wind veer round to the west, to a certainty the locusts would cover his land in the morning, and the result would be the total destruction of his crops. Perhaps worse than that. Perhaps the whole vegetation around—for fifty miles or more—might be destroyed; and then how would his cattle be fed? It would be no easy matter even to save their lives. They might perish before he could drive them to any other pasturage!

Such a thing was by no means uncommon or improbable. In the history of the Cape colony many a boor had lost his flocks in this very way. No wonder there was anxiety that night in the kraal of the field-cornet.

At intervals Von Bloom went out to ascertain whether there was any change in the wind. Up to a late hour he could perceive none. A gentle breeze still blew from the north—from the great Kalihari desert—whence, no doubt, the locusts had come. The moon was bright, and her light gleamed over the host of insects that darkly covered the plain. The roar of the lion could be heard mingling with the shrill scream of the jackal and the maniac laugh of the hyena. All these beasts, and many more, were enjoying a plenteous repast.

Perceiving no change in the wind, Von Bloom became less uneasy, and they all conversed freely about the locusts. Swartboy took a leading part in this conversation, as he was better acquainted with the subject than any of them. It was far from being the first flight of locusts Swartboy had seen, and many a bushel of them had he eaten. It was natural to suppose, therefore, that he knew a good deal about them.

He knew not whence they came. That was a point about which Swartboy had never troubled himself. The learned Hans offered an explanation of their origin.

“They come from the desert,” said he. “The eggs from which they are produced, are deposited in the sands or dust; where they lie until rain falls, and causes the herbage to spring up. Then the locusts are hatched, and in their first stage are supported upon this herbage. When it becomes exhausted, they are compelled to go in search of food. Hence these ‘migrations,’ as they are called.”

This explanation seemed clear enough.

“Now I have heard,” said Hendrik, “of farmers kindling fires around their crops to keep off the locusts. I can’t see how fires would keep them off—not even if a regular fence of fire were made all round a field. These creatures have wings, and could easily fly over the fires.”

“The fires,” replied Hans, “are kindled, in order that the smoke may prevent them from alighting; but the locusts to which these accounts usually refer are without wings, called voetgangers (foot-goers). They are, in fact, the larvae of these locusts, before they have obtained their wings. These have also their migrations, that are often more destructive than those of the perfect insects, such as we see here. They proceed over the ground by crawling and leaping like grasshoppers; for, indeed, they are grasshoppers—a species of them. They keep on in one direction, as if they were guided by instinct to follow a particular course. Nothing can interrupt them in their onward march unless the sea or some broad and rapid river. Small streams they can swim across; and large ones, too, where they run sluggishly; walls and houses they can climb—even the chimneys—going straight over them; and the moment they have reached the other side of any obstacle, they continue straight onward in the old

direction.

“In attempting to cross broad rapid rivers, they are drowned in countless myriads, and swept off to the sea. When it is only a small migration, the farmers sometimes keep them off by means of fires, as you have heard. On the contrary, when large numbers appear, even the fires are of no avail.”

“But how is that, brother?” inquired Hendrik. “I can understand how fires would stop the kind you speak of, since you say they are without wings. But since they are so, how do they get through the fires? Jump them?”

“No, not so,” replied Hans. “The fires are built too wide and large for that.”

“How then, brother?” asked Hendrik. “I’m puzzled.”

“So am I,” said little Jan.

“And I,” added Trüey.

“Well, then,” continued Hans, “millions of the insects crawl into the fires and put them out!”

“Ho!” cried all in astonishment. “How? Are they not burned?”

“Of course,” replied Hans. “They are scorched and killed—myriads of them quite burned up. But their bodies crowded thickly on the fires choke them out. The foremost ranks of the great host thus become victims, and the others pass safely across upon the holocaust thus made. So you see, even fires cannot stop the course of the locusts when they are in great numbers.

“In many parts of Africa, where the natives cultivate the soil, as soon as they discover a migration of these insects, and perceive that they are heading in the direction of their fields and gardens, quite a panic is produced among them. They know that they will lose their crops to a certainty, and hence dread a visitation of locusts as they would an earthquake, or some other great calamity.”

“We can well understand their feelings upon such an occasion,” remarked Hendrik, with a significant look.

“The flying locusts,” continued Hans, “seem less to follow a particular direction than their larvae. The former seem to be guided by the wind. Frequently this carries them all into the sea, where they perish in vast numbers. On some parts of the coast their dead bodies have been found washed back to land in quantities incredible. At one place the sea threw them upon the beach, until they lay piled up in a ridge four feet in height, and fifty miles in length! It has been asserted by several well-known travellers that the effluvium from this mass tainted the air to such an extent that it was perceived one hundred and fifty miles inland!”

“Heigh!” exclaimed little Jan. “I didn’t think anybody had so good a nose.”

At little Jan's remark there was a general laugh. Von Bloom did not join in their merriment. He was in too serious a mood just then.

"Papa," inquired little Trüey, perceiving that her father did not laugh, and thinking to draw him into the conversation,—“Papa! were these the kind of locusts eaten by John the Baptist when in the desert? His food, the Bible says, was ‘locusts and wild honey.’”

"I believe these are the same," replied the father.

"I think, papa," modestly rejoined Hans, "they are not exactly the same, but a kindred species. The locust of Scripture was the true *Gryllus migratorius*, and different from those of South Africa, though very similar in its habits. But," continued he, "some writers dispute that point altogether. The Abyssinians say it was beans of the locust-tree, and not insects, that were the food of Saint John."

"What is your own opinion, Hans?" inquired Hendrik, who had a great belief in his brother's book-knowledge.

"Why, I think," replied Hans, "there need be no question about it. It is only torturing the meaning of a word to suppose that Saint John ate the locust fruit, and not the insect. I am decidedly of opinion that the latter is meant in Scripture; and what makes me think so is, that these two kinds of food, 'locusts and wild honey,' are often coupled together, as forming at the present time the subsistence of many tribes who are denizens of the desert. Besides, we have good evidence that both were used as food by desert-dwelling people in the days of Scripture. It is, therefore, but natural to suppose that Saint John, when in the desert, was forced to partake of this food; just as many a traveller of modern times has eaten of it when crossing the deserts that surround us here in South Africa.

"I have read a great many books about locusts," continued Hans; "and now that the Bible has been mentioned, I must say for my part, I know no account given of these insects so truthful and beautiful as that in the Bible itself. Shall I read it, papa?"

"By all means, my boy," said the field-cornet, rather pleased at the request which his son had made, and at the tenor of the conversation.

Little Trüey ran into the inner room and brought out an immense volume bound in gemsbok skin, with a couple of strong brass clasps upon it to keep it closed. This was the family Bible; and here let me observe, that a similar book may be found in the house of nearly every boor, for these Dutch colonists are a Protestant and Bible-loving people—so much so, that they think nothing of going a hundred miles, four times in the year, to attend the nacht-maal, or sacramental supper! What do you think of that?

Hans opened the volume, and turned at once to the book of the prophet Joel. From the readiness with which he found the passage, it was evident he was well acquainted with the book he held in his hands.

He read as follows:—

“A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong: there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.”

“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”

“How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.”

Even the rude Swartboy could perceive the poetic beauty of this description.

But Swartboy had much to say about the locusts, as well as the inspired Joel.

Thus spoke Swartboy:—

“Bushman no fear da springhaan. Bushman hab no garden—no maize—no buckwheat—no nothing for da springhaan to eat. Bushman eat locust himself—he grow fat on da locust. Ebery thing eat dem dar springhaan. Ebery thing grow fat in da locust season. Ho! den for dem springhaan!”

These remarks of Swartboy were true enough. The locusts are eaten by almost every species of animal known in South Africa. Not only do the carnivora greedily devour them, but also animals and birds of the game kind—such as antelopes, partridges, guinea-fowls, bustards, and, strange to say, the giant of all—the huge elephant—will travel for miles to overtake a migration of locusts! Domestic fowls, sheep, horses, and dogs, devour them with equal greediness. Still another strange fact—the locusts eat one another! If any one of them gets hurt, so as to impede his progress, the others immediately turn upon him and eat him up!

The Bushmen and other native races of Africa submit the locusts to a process of cookery before eating them; and during the whole evening Swartboy had been engaged in preparing the bagful which he had collected. He “cooked” them thus:—

He first boiled, or rather steamed them, for only a small quantity of water was

put into the pot. This process lasted two hours. They were then taken out, and allowed to dry; and after that shaken about in a pan, until all the legs and wings were broken off from the bodies. A winnowing process—Swartboy's thick lips acting as a fan—was next gone through; and the legs and wings were thus got rid of. The locusts were then ready for eating.

A little salt only was required to render them more palatable, when all present made trial of, and some of the children even liked them. By many, locusts prepared in this way are considered quite equal to shrimps!

Sometimes they are pounded when quite dry into a sort of meal, and with water added to them, are made into a kind of stir-about.

When well dried, they will keep for a long time; and they frequently form the only store of food, which the poorer natives have to depend upon for a whole season.

Among many tribes—particularly among those who are not agricultural—the coming of the locusts is a source of rejoicing. These people turn out with sacks, and often with pack-oxen to collect and bring them to their villages; and on such occasions vast heaps of them are accumulated and stored, in the same way as grain!

Conversing of these things the night passed on until it was time for going to bed. The field-cornet went out once again to observe the wind; and then the door of the little kraal was closed and the family retired to rest.

Chapter Five.

The Locust-Flight.

The field-cornet slept but little. Anxiety kept him awake. He turned and tossed, and thought of the locusts. He snapped at intervals, and dreamt about locusts, and crickets, and grasshoppers, and all manner of great long-legged, goggle-eyed insects. He was glad when the first ray of light penetrated through the little window of his chamber.

He sprang to his feet; and, scarce staying to dress himself, rushed out into the open air. It was still dark, but he did not require to see the wind. He did not need to toss a feather or hold up his hat. The truth was too plain. A strong breeze was blowing—it was blowing from the west!

Half distracted, he ran farther out to assure himself. He ran until clear of the walls that enclosed the kraals and garden.

He halted and felt the air. Alas! his first impression was correct. The breeze blew directly from the west—directly from the locusts. He could perceive the

effluvium borne from the hateful insects: there was no longer cause to doubt.

Groaning in spirit, Von Bloom returned to his house. He had no longer any hope of escaping the terrible visitation.

His first directions were to collect all the loose pieces of linen or clothing in the house, and pack them within the family chests. What! would the locusts be likely to eat them?

Indeed, yes—for these voracious creatures are not fastidious. No particular vegetable seems to be chosen by them. The leaves of the bitter tobacco plant appear to be as much to their liking as the sweet and succulent blades of maize! Pieces of linen, cotton, and even flannel, are devoured by them, as though they were the tender shoots of plants. Stones, iron, and hard wood, are about the only objects that escape their fierce masticators.

Von Bloom had heard this. Hans had read of it, and Swartboy confirmed it from his own experience.

Consequently, everything that was at all destructible was carefully stowed away; and then breakfast was cooked and eaten in silence.

There was a gloom over the faces of all, because he who was the head of all was silent and dejected. What a change within a few hours! But the evening before the field-cornet and his little family were in the full enjoyment of happiness.

There was still one hope, though a slight one. Might it yet rain? Or might the day turn out cold?

In either case Swartboy said the locusts could not take wing—for they cannot fly in cold or rainy weather. In the event of a cold or wet day they would have to remain as they were, and perhaps the wind might change round again before they resumed their flight. Oh, for a torrent of rain, or a cold cloudy day!

Vain wish! vain hope! In half-an-hour after the sun rose up in African splendour, and his hot rays, slanting down upon the sleeping host, warmed them into life and activity. They commenced to crawl, to hop about, and then, as if by one impulse, myriads rose into the air. The breeze impelled them in the direction in which it was blowing,—in the direction of the devoted maize-fields.

In less than five minutes, from the time they had taken wing, they were over the kraal, and dropping in tens of thousands upon the surrounding fields. Slow was their flight, and gentle their descent, and to the eyes of those beneath they presented the appearance of a shower of black snow, falling in large feathery flakes. In a few moments the ground was completely covered, until every stalk of maize, every plant and bush, carried its hundreds. On the outer plains too, as far as eye could see, the pasture was strewn thickly; and as the great flight

had now passed to the eastward of the house, the sun's disk was again hidden by them as if by an eclipse!

They seemed to move in a kind of echelon, the bands in the rear constantly flying to the front, and then halting to feed, until in turn these were headed by others that had advanced over them in a similar manner.

The noise produced by their wings was not the least curious phenomenon; and resembled a steady breeze playing among the leaves of the forest, or the sound of a water-wheel.

For two hours this passage continued. During most of that time, Von Bloom and his people had remained within the house, with closed doors and windows. This they did to avoid the unpleasant shower, as the creatures impelled by the breeze, often strike the cheek so forcibly as to cause a feeling of pain. Moreover, they did not like treading upon the unwelcome intruders, and crushing them under their feet, which they must have done, had they moved about outside where the ground was thickly covered.

Many of the insects even crawled inside, through the chinks of the door and windows, and greedily devoured any vegetable substance which happened to be lying about the floor.

At the end of two hours Von Bloom looked forth. The thickest of the flight had passed. The sun was again shining; but upon what was he shining? No longer upon green fields and a flowery garden. No. Around the house, on every side, north, south, east, and west, the eye rested only on black desolation. Not a blade of grass, not a leaf could be seen—even the very bark was stripped from the trees, that now stood as if withered by the hand of God! Had fire swept the surface, it could not have left it more naked and desolate. There was no garden, there were no fields of maize or buckwheat, there was no longer a farm—the kraal stood in the midst of a desert!

Words cannot depict the emotions of the field-cornet at that moment. The pen cannot describe his painful feelings.

Such a change in two hours! He could scarce credit his senses—he could scarce believe in its reality. He knew that the locusts would eat up his maize, and his wheat, and the vegetables of his garden; but his fancy had fallen far short of the extreme desolation that had actually been produced. The whole landscape was metamorphosed—grass was out of the question—trees, whose delicate foliage had played in the soft breeze but two short hours before, now stood leafless, scathed by worse than winter. The very ground seemed altered in shape! He would not have known it as his own farm. Most certainly had the owner been absent during the period of the locust-flight, and approached without any information of what had been passing, he would not have recognised the place of his own habitation!

With the phlegm peculiar to his race, the field-cornet sat down, and remained for a long time without speech or movement.

His children gathered near, and looked on—their young hearts painfully throbbing. They could not fully appreciate the difficult circumstances in which this occurrence had placed them; nor did their father himself at first. He thought only of the loss he had sustained, in the destruction of his fine crops; and this of itself, when we consider his isolated situation, and the hopelessness of restoring them, was enough to cause him very great chagrin.

“Gone! all gone!” he exclaimed, in a sorrowing voice. “Oh! Fortune—Fortune—again art thou cruel!”

“Papa! do not grieve,” said a soft voice; “we are all alive yet, we are here by your side;” and with the words a little white hand was laid upon his shoulder. It was the hand of the beautiful Trüey.

It seemed as if an angel had smiled upon him. He lifted the child in his arms, and in a paroxysm of fondness pressed her to his heart. That heart felt relieved.

“Bring me the Book,” said he, addressing one of the boys.

The Bible was brought—its massive covers were opened—a verse was chosen—and the song of praise rose up in the midst of the desert.

The Book was closed; and for some minutes all knelt in prayer.

When Von Bloom again stood upon his feet, and looked around him, the desert seemed once more to “rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

Upon the human heart such is the magic influence of resignation and humility.

Chapter Six.

“Inspann and Trek!”

With all his confidence in the protection of a Supreme Being, Von Bloom knew that he was not to leave everything to the Divine hand. That was not the religion he had been taught; and he at once set about taking measures to extricate himself from the unpleasant position in which he was placed.

Unpleasant position! Ha! It was more than unpleasant, as the field-cornet began to perceive. It was a position of peril!

The more Von Bloom reflected, the more was he convinced of this. There they were, in the middle of a black naked plain, that without a green spot extended beyond the limits of vision. How much farther he could not guess; but he knew that the devastations of the migratory locust sometimes cover an area of thousands of miles! It was certain that the one that had just swept past was on

a very extensive scale.

It was evident he could no longer remain by his kraal. His horses, and cattle, and sheep, could not live without food; and should these perish, upon what were he and his family to subsist? He must leave the kraal. He must go in search of pasture, without loss of time,—at once. Already the animals, shut up beyond their usual hour, were uttering their varied cries, impatient to be let out. They would soon hunger; and it was hard to say when food could be procured for them.

There was no time to be lost. Every hour was of great importance,—even minutes must not be wasted in dubious hesitation.

The field-cornet spent but a few minutes in consideration. Whether should he mount one of his best horses, and ride off alone in search of pasture? or whether would it not be better to “inspann” his wagon, and take everything along with him at once?

He soon decided in favour of the latter course. In any case he would have been compelled to move from his present location,—to leave the kraal altogether.

He might as well take everything at once. Should he go out alone, it might cost him a long time to find grass and water—for both would be necessary—and, meantime, his stock would be suffering.

These and other considerations decided him at once to “inspann” and “trek” away, with his wagon, his horses, his cattle, his sheep, his “household gods,” and his whole family circle.

“Inspann and trek!” was the command: and Swartboy, who was proud of the reputation he had earned as a wagon-driver, was now seen waving his bamboo whip like a great fishing-rod.

“Inspann and trek!” echoed Swartboy, tying upon his twenty-feet lash a new cracker, which he had twisted out of the skin of the hartebeest antelope.

“Inspann and trek!” he repeated, making his vast whip crack like a pistol; “yes, baas, I’ll inspann;” and, having satisfied himself that his “voorslag” was properly adjusted, Swartboy rested the bamboo handle against the side of the house, and proceeded to the kraal to collect the yoke-oxen.

A large wagon, of a sort that is the pride and property of every Cape farmer, stood to one side of the house. It was a vehicle of the first class,—a regular “cap-tent” wagon,—that had been made for the field-cornet in his better days, and in which he had been used to drive his wife and children to the “nacht-maal” and upon vrolykheids (parties of pleasure.) In those days a team of eight fine horses used to draw it along at a rattling rate. Alas! oxen had now to take their place; for Von Bloom had but five horses in his whole stud, and these were required for the saddle.

But the wagon was almost as good as ever it had been,—almost as good as when it used to be the envy of the field-cornet's neighbours, the boors of Graaf Reinet. Nothing was broken. Everything was in its place,—“voor-kist,” and “achter-kist,” and side-chests. There was the snow-white cap, with its “fore-clap” and “after-clap,” and its inside pockets, all complete; and the wheels neatly carved, and the well planed boxing and “disselboom” and the strong “trektow” of buffalo-hide. Nothing was wanting that ought to be found about a wagon. It was, in fact, the best part of the field-cornet's property that remained to him,—for it was equal in value to all the oxen, cattle, and sheep, upon his establishment.

While Swartboy, assisted by Hendrik, was catching up the twelve yoke-oxen, and attaching them to the disselboom and trektow of the wagon, the “baas” himself, aided by Hans, Totty, and also by Trüey and little Jan, was loading up the furniture and implements. This was not a difficult task. The Penates of the little kraal were not numerous, and were all soon packed either inside or around the roomy vehicle.

In about an hour's time the wagon was loaded up, the oxen were inspanned, the horses saddled, and everything was ready for “trekking.”

And now arose the question, whither?

Up to this time Von Bloom had only thought of getting away from the spot—of escaping beyond the naked waste that surrounded him.

It now became necessary to determine the direction in which they were to travel—a most important consideration.

Important, indeed, as a little reflection showed. They might go in the direction in which the locusts had gone, or that in which they had come? On either route they might travel for scores of miles without meeting with a mouthful of grass for the hungry animals; and in such a case these would break down and perish.

Or the travellers might move in some other direction, and find grass, but not water. Without water, not only would they have to fear for the cattle, but for themselves—for their own lives. How important then it was, which way they turned their faces!

At first the field-cornet bethought him of heading towards the settlements. The nearest water in that direction was almost fifty miles off. It lay to the eastward of the kraal. The locusts had just gone that way. They would by this time have laid waste the whole country—perhaps to the water or beyond it!

It would be a great risk going in that direction.

Northward lay the Kalihari desert. It would be hopeless to steer north. Von Bloom knew of no oasis in the desert. Besides the locusts had come from the north. They were drifting southward when first seen; and from the time they

had been observed passing in this last direction, they had no doubt ere this wasted the plains far to the south.

The thoughts of the field-cornet were now turned to the west. It is true the swarm had last approached from the west; but Von Bloom fancied that they had first come down from the north, and that the sudden veering round of the wind had caused them to change direction. He thought that by trekking westward he would soon get beyond the ground they had laid bare.

He knew something of the plains to the west—not much indeed, but he knew that at about forty miles distance there was a spring with good pasturage around it, upon whose water he could depend. He had once visited it, while on a search for some of his cattle, that had wandered thus far. Indeed, it then appeared to him a better situation for cattle than the one he held, and he had often thought of moving to it. Its great distance from any civilised settlement was the reason why he had not done so. Although he was already far beyond the frontier, he still kept up a sort of communication with the settlements, whereas at the more distant point such a communication would be extremely difficult.

Now that other considerations weighed with him, his thoughts once more returned to this spring; and after spending a few minutes more in earnest deliberation, he decided upon “trekking” westward.

Swartboy was ordered to head round, and strike to the west. The Bushman promptly leaped to his seat upon the voor-kist, cracked his mighty whip, straightened out his long team, and moved off over the plain.

Hans and Hendrik were already in their saddles; and having cleared the kraals of all their live-stock, with the assistance of the dogs, drove the lowing and bleating animals before them.

Trüey and little Jan sat beside Swartboy on the fore-chest of the wagon; and the round full eyes of the pretty springbok could be seen peeping curiously out from under the cap-tent.

Casting a last look upon his desolate kraal, the field-cornet turned his horse’s head, and rode after the wagon.

Chapter Seven.

“Water! Water!”

On moved the little caravan, but not in silence. Swartboy’s voice and whip made an almost continual noise. The latter could be plainly heard more than a mile over the plain, like repeated discharges of a musket. Hendrik, too, did a

good deal in the way of shouting; and even the usually quiet Hans was under the necessity of using his voice to urge the flock forward in the right direction.

Occasionally both the boys were called upon to give Swartboy a help with the leading oxen when these became obstinate or restive, and would turn out of the track. At such times either Hans or Hendrik would gallop up, set the heads of the animals right again, and ply the “jamboks” upon their sides.

This “jambok” is a severe chastener to an obstinate ox. It is an elastic whip made of rhinoceros or hippopotamus skin,—hippopotamus is the best,—near six feet long, and tapering regularly from butt to tip.

Whenever the led oxen misbehaved, and Swartboy could not reach them with his long “voorslag,” Hendrik was ever ready to tickle them with his tough jambok; and, by this means, frighten them into good behaviour. Indeed, one of the boys was obliged to be at their head nearly all the time.

A “leader” is used to accompany most teams of oxen in South Africa. But those of the field-cornet had been accustomed to draw the wagon without one, ever since the Hottentot servants ran away; and Swartboy had driven many miles with no other help than his long whip. But the strange look of everything, since the locusts passed, had made the oxen shy and wild; besides the insects had obliterated every track or path which oxen would have followed. The whole surface was alike,—there was neither trace nor mark. Even Von Bloom himself could with difficulty recognise the features of the country, and had to guide himself by the sun in the sky.

Hendrik stayed mostly by the head of the leading oxen. Hans had no difficulty in driving the flock when once fairly started. A sense of fear kept all together, and as there was no herbage upon any side to tempt them to stray, they moved regularly on.

Von Bloom rode in front to guide the caravan. Neither he nor any of them had made any change in their costume, but travelled in their everyday dress. The field-cornet himself was habited after the manner of most boors,—in wide leathern trousers, termed in that country “crackers;” a large roomy jacket of green cloth, with ample outside pockets; a fawn-skin waistcoat; a huge white felt hat, with the broadest of brims; and upon his feet a pair of brogans of African unstained leather, known among the boors as “feldt-schoenen” (country shoes). Over his saddle lay a “kaross,” or robe of leopard-skins, and upon his shoulder he carried his “roer”—a large smoothbore gun, about six feet in length, with an old-fashioned flint-lock,—quite a load of itself. This is the gun in which the boor puts all his trust; and although an American backwoodsman would at first sight be disposed to laugh at such a weapon, a little knowledge of the boor’s country would change his opinion of the “roer.” His own weapon—the small-bore rifle, with a bullet less than a pea—would

be almost useless among the large game that inhabits the country of the boor. Upon the “karoos” of Africa there are crack shots and sterling hunters, as well as in the backwoods or on the prairies of America.

Curving round under the field-cornet’s left arm, and resting against his side, was an immense powder-horn—of such size as could only be produced upon the head of an African ox. It was from the country of the Bechuanas, though nearly all Cape oxen grow horns of vast dimensions. Of course it was used to carry the field-cornet’s powder, and, if full, it must have contained half-a-dozen pounds at least! A leopard-skin pouch hanging under his right arm, a hunting-knife stuck in his waist-belt, and a large meerschaum pipe through the band of his hat, completed the equipments of the trek-boor, Von Bloom.

Hans and Hendrik were very similarly attired, armed, and equipped. Of course their trousers were of dressed sheep-skin, wide—like the trousers of all young boors—and they also wore jackets and “feldt-schoenen,” and broad-brimmed white hats. Hans carried a light fowling-piece, while Hendrik’s gun was a stout rifle of the kind known as a “yäger”—an excellent gun for large game. In this piece Hendrik had great pride, and had learnt to drive a nail with it at nearly a hundred paces. Hendrik was par excellence the marksman of the party. Each of the boys also carried a large crescent-shaped powder-horn, with a pouch for bullets; and over the saddle of each was strapped the robe or kaross, differing only from their father’s in that his was of the rarer leopard-skin, while theirs were a commoner sort, one of antelope, and the other of jackal-skin. Little Jan also wore wide trousers, jacket, “feldt-schoenen,” and broad-brimmed beaver,—in fact, Jan, although scarce a yard high, was, in point of costume, a type of his father,—a diminutive type of the boor. Trüey was habited in a skirt of blue woollen stuff, with a neat bodice elaborately stitched and embroidered after the Dutch fashion, and over her fair locks she wore a light sun-hat of straw with a ribbon and strings. Totty was very plainly attired in strong homespun, without any head-dress. As for Swartboy, a pair of old leathern “crackers” and a striped shirt were all the clothing he carried, beside his sheep-skin kaross. Such were the costumes of our travellers.

For full twenty miles the plain was wasted bare. Not a bite could the beasts obtain, and water there was none. The sun during the day shone brightly,—too brightly, for his beams were as hot as within the tropics. The travellers could scarce have borne them had it not been that a stiff breeze was blowing all day long. But this unfortunately blew directly in their faces, and the dry karoos are never without dust. The constant hopping of the locusts with their millions of tiny feet had loosened the crust of earth; and now the dust rose freely upon the wind. Clouds of it enveloped the little caravan, and rendered their forward movement both difficult and disagreeable. Long before night their clothes were covered, their mouths filled, and their eyes sore.

But all that was nothing. Long before night a far greater grievance was felt,—the want of water.

In their hurry to escape from the desolate scene at the kraal, Von Bloom had not thought of bringing a supply in the wagon—a sad oversight, in a country like South Africa, where springs are so rare, and running streams so uncertain. A sad oversight indeed, as they now learnt—for long before night they were all crying out for water—all were equally suffering from the pangs of thirst.

Von Bloom thirsted, but he did not think of himself, except that he suffered from self-accusation. He blamed himself for neglecting to bring a needful supply of water. He was the cause of the sufferings of all the rest. He felt sad and humbled on account of his thoughtless negligence.

He could promise them no relief—at least none until they should reach the spring. He knew of no water nearer.

It would be impossible to reach the spring that night. It was late when they started. Oxen travel slowly. Half the distance would be as much as they could make by sundown.

To reach the water they would have to travel all night; but they could not do that for many reasons. The oxen would require to rest—the more so that they were hungered; and now Von Bloom thought, when too late, of another neglect he had committed—that was, in not collecting, during the flight of the locusts, a sufficient quantity of them to have given his cattle a feed.

This plan is often adopted under similar circumstances; but the field-cornet had not thought of it: and as but few locusts fell in the kraals where the animals had been confined, they had therefore been without food since the previous day. The oxen in particular showed symptoms of weakness, and drew the wagon sluggishly; so that Swartboy's voice and long whip were kept in constant action.

But there were other reasons why they would have to halt when night came on. The field-cornet was not so sure of the direction. He would not be able to follow it by night, as there was not the semblance of a track to guide him. Besides it would be dangerous to travel by night, for then the nocturnal robber of Africa—the fierce lion—is abroad.

They would be under the necessity, therefore, of halting for the night, water or no water.

It wanted yet half-an-hour of sundown when Von Bloom had arrived at this decision. He only kept on a little farther in hopes of reaching a spot where there was grass. They were now more than twenty miles from their starting-point, and still the black “spoor” of the locusts covered the plain. Still no grass to be seen, still the bushes bare of their leaves, and barked!

The field-cornet began to think that he was trekking right in the way the locusts had come. Westward he was heading for certain; he knew that. But he was not yet certain that the flight had not advanced from the west instead of the north. If so, they might go for days before coming upon a patch of grass!

These thoughts troubled him, and with anxious eyes he swept the plain in front, as well as to the right and left.

A shout from the keen-eyed Bushman produced a joyful effect. He saw grass in front. He saw some bushes with leaves! They were still a mile off, but the oxen, as if the announcement had been understood by them, moved more briskly forward.

Another mile passed over, and they came upon grass, sure enough. It was a very scanty pasture, though—a few scattered blades growing over the reddish surface, but in no place a mouthful for an ox. There was just enough to tantalise the poor brutes without filling their stomachs. It assured Von Bloom, however, that they had now got beyond the track of the locusts; and he kept on a little farther in hopes that the pasture might get better.

It did not, however. The country through which they advanced was a wild, sterile plain—almost as destitute of vegetation as that over which they had hitherto been travelling. It no longer owed its nakedness to the locusts, but to the absence of water.

They had no more time to search for pasture. The sun was already below the horizon when they halted to “outspann.”

A “kraal” should have been built for the cattle, and another for the sheep and goats. There were bushes enough to have constructed them, but who of that tired party had the heart to cut them down and drag them to the spot?

It was labour enough—the slaughtering a sheep for supper, and collecting sufficient wood to cook it. No kraal was made. The horses were tied around the wagon. The oxen, cattle, and sheep and goats, were left free to go where they pleased. As there was no pasture near to tempt them, it was hoped that, after the fatigue of their long journey, they would not stray far from the camp-fire, which was kept burning throughout the night.

Chapter Eight.

The fate of the Hero.

But they did stray.

When day broke, and the travellers looked around them, not a head of the oxen or cattle was to be seen. Yes, there was one, and one only—the milch-cow.

Totty, after milking her on the previous night, had left her tied to a bush where she still remained. All the rest were gone, and the sheep and goats as well.

Whither had they strayed?

The horses were mounted, and search was made. The sheep and goats were found among some bushes not far off; but it soon appeared that the other animals had gone clean away.

Their spoor was traced for a mile or two. It led back on the very track they had come; and no doubt any longer existed that they had returned to the kraal.

To overtake them before reaching that point, would be difficult, if at all possible. Their tracks showed that they had gone off early in the night, and had travelled at a rapid rate—so that by this time they had most likely arrived at their old home.

This was a sad discovery. To have followed them on the thirsting and hungry horses would have been a useless work; yet without the yoke-oxen how was the wagon to be taken forward to the spring?

It appeared to be a sad dilemma they were in; but after a short consultation the thoughtful Hans suggested a solution of it.

“Can we not attach the horses to the wagon?” inquired he. “The five could surely draw it on to the spring?”

“What! and leave the cattle behind?” said Hendrik. “If we do not go after them, they will be all lost, and then—”

“We could go for them afterwards,” replied Hans; “but is it not better first to push forward to the spring; and, after resting the horses a while, return then for the oxen? They will have reached the kraal by this time. There they will be sure of water anyhow, and that will keep them alive till we get there.”

The course suggested by Hans seemed feasible enough. At all events, it was the best plan they could pursue; so they at once set about putting it in execution. The horses were attached to the wagon in the best way they could think of. Fortunately some old horse-harness formed part of the contents of the vehicle, and these were brought out and fitted on, as well as could be done.

Two horses were made fast to the disselboom as “wheelers;” two others to the trektow cut to the proper length; and the fifth horse was placed in front as a leader.

When all was ready, Swartboy again mounted the voor-kist, gathered up his reins, cracked his whip, and set his team in motion. To the delight of every one, the huge heavy-laden wagon moved off as freely as if a full team had been inspanned.

Von Bloom, Hendrik, and Hans, cheered as it passed them; and setting the

milch-cow and the flock of sheep and goats in motion, moved briskly after. Little Jan and Trüey still rode in the wagon; but the others now travelled afoot, partly because they had the flock to drive, and partly that they might not increase the load upon the horses.

They all suffered greatly from thirst, but they would have suffered still more had it not been for that valuable creature that trotted along behind the wagon—the cow—“old Graaf,” as she was called. She had yielded several pints of milk, both the night before and that morning; and this well-timed supply had given considerable relief to the travellers.

The horses behaved beautifully. Notwithstanding that their harness was both incomplete and ill fitted, they pulled the wagon along after them as if not a strap or buckle had been wanting. They appeared to know that their kind master was in a dilemma, and were determined to draw him out of it. Perhaps, too, they smelt the spring-water before them. At all events, before they had been many hours in harness, they were drawing the wagon through a pretty little valley covered with green, meadow-looking sward; and in five minutes more were standing halted near a cool crystal spring.

In a short time all had drunk heartily, and were refreshed. The horses were turned out upon the grass, and the other animals browsed over the meadow. A good fire was made near the spring, and a quarter of mutton cooked—upon which the travellers dined—and then all sat waiting for the horses to fill themselves.

The field-cornet, seated upon one of the wagon-chests, smoked his great pipe. He could have been contented, but for one thing—the absence of his cattle.

He had arrived at a beautiful pasture-ground—a sort of oasis in the wild plains, where there were wood, water, and grass,—everything that the heart of a “vee-boor” could desire. It did not appear to be a large tract, but enough to have sustained many hundred head of cattle—enough for a very fine “stock farm.” It would have answered his purpose admirably; and had he succeeded in bringing on his oxen and cattle, he would at that moment have felt happy enough. But without them what availed the fine pasturage? What could he do there without them to stock it? They were his wealth—at least, he had hoped in time that their increase would become wealth. They were all of excellent breeds; and, with the exception of his twelve yoke-oxen, and one or two long-horned Bechuana bulls, all the others were fine young cows calculated soon to produce a large herd.

Of course his anxiety about these animals rendered it impossible for him to enjoy a moment’s peace of mind, until he should start back in search of them. He had only taken out his pipe to pass the time, while the horses were gathering a bite of grass. As soon as their strength should be recruited a little,

it was his design to take three of the strongest of them, and with Hendrik and Swartboy, ride back to the old kraal.

As soon, therefore, as the horses were ready for the road again, they were caught and saddled up; and Von Bloom, Hendrik, and Swartboy, mounted and set out, while Hans remained in charge of the camp.

They rode at a brisk rate, determined to travel all night, and, if possible, reach the kraal before morning. At the last point on the route where there was grass, they off-saddled, and allowed their horses to rest and refresh themselves. They had brought with them some slices of the roast mutton, and this time they had not forgotten to fill their gourd-canteens with water—so that they should not again suffer from thirst. After an hour's halt they continued their journey.

It was quite night when they arrived at the spot where the oxen had deserted them; but a clear moon was in the sky, and they were able to follow back the wheel-tracks of the wagon, that were quite conspicuous under the moonlight. Now and then to be satisfied, Von Bloom requested Swartboy to examine the spoor, and see whether the cattle had still kept the back-track. To answer this gave no great trouble to the Bushman. He would drop from his horse, and bending over the ground, would reply in an instant. In every case the answer was in the affirmative. The animals had certainly gone back to their old home.

Von Bloom believed they would be sure to find them there, but should they find them alive? That was the question that rendered him anxious.

The creatures could obtain water by the spring, but food—where? Not a bite would they find anywhere, and would not hunger have destroyed them all before this?

Day was breaking when they came in sight of the old homestead. It presented a very odd appearance. Not one of the three would have recognised it. After the invasion of the locusts it showed a very altered look, but now there was something else that added to the singularity of its appearance. A row of strange objects seemed to be placed upon the roof ridge, and along the walls of the kraals. What were these strange objects, for they certainly did not belong to the buildings? This question was put by Von Bloom, partly to himself, but loud enough for the others to hear him.

“Da vogels!” (the vultures), replied Swartboy.

Sure enough, it was a string of vultures that appeared along the walls.

The sight of these filthy birds was more than ominous. It filled Von Bloom with apprehension. What could they be doing there? There must be carrion near?

The party rode forward. The day was now up, and the vultures had grown busy. They flapped their shadowy wings, rose from the walls, and alighted at

different points around the house.

“Surely there must be carrion,” muttered Von Bloom.

There was carrion, and plenty of it. As the horsemen drew near the vultures rose into the air, and a score of half-devoured carcasses could be seen upon the ground. The long curving horns that appeared beside each carcass, rendered it easy to tell to what sort of animals they belonged. In the torn and mutilated fragments, Von Bloom recognised the remains of his lost herd!

Not one was left alive. There could be seen the remains of all of them, both cows and oxen, lying near the enclosures and on the adjacent plain—each where it had fallen.

But how had they fallen? That was the mystery.

Surely they could not have perished of hunger, and so suddenly? They could not have died of thirst, for there was the spring bubbling up just beside where they lay? The vultures had not killed them! What then?

Von Bloom did not ask many questions. He was not left long in doubt. As he and his companions rode over the ground, the mystery was explained. The tracks of lions, hyenas, and jackals, made everything clear enough. A large troop of these animals had been upon the ground. The scarcity of game, caused by the migration of the locusts, had no doubt rendered them more than usually ravenous, and in consequence the cattle became their prey.

Where were they now? The morning light, and the sight of the house perhaps, had driven them off. But their spoor was quite fresh. They were near at hand, and would be certain to return again upon the following night.

Von Bloom felt a strong desire to be revenged upon the hideous brutes; and, under other circumstances, would have remained to get a shot at them. But just then that would have been both imprudent and unprofitable work. It would be as much as their horses could accomplish, to get back to camp that night; so, without even entering the old house, they watered their animals, refilled their calabashes at the spring, and with heavy hearts once more rode away from the kraal.

Chapter Nine.

A Lion “Couchant.”

They had not proceeded an hundred steps when an object appeared before them that caused all three to draw bridle suddenly and simultaneously. That object was a lion!

He was couched upon the plain directly in the path they intended to take—the very same path by which they had come!

How was it they had not seen him before? He was under the lee of a low bush; but, thanks to the locusts, this bush was leafless, and its thin naked twigs formed no concealment for so large a creature as a lion. His tawny hide shone conspicuously through them.

The truth is, he had not been there when the horsemen passed towards the kraal. He had just fled from among the carcasses, on seeing them approach; and had skulked around the walls, and then run to their rear. He had executed this manoeuvre to avoid an encounter—for a lion reasons as a man does, though not to the same extent. Seeing the horsemen come that way, his reasoning powers were strong enough to tell him that they were not likely to return by the same path. It was more natural they should continue on. A man, ignorant of all the preceding events connected with their journey would have reasoned much in the same way. If you have been at all observant, you have seen other animals—such as dogs, deer, hares, or even birds—act just as the lion did on this occasion.

Beyond a doubt the intellectual process described passed through the mind of this lion; and he had skulked round to shun an encounter with the three travellers.

Now a lion will not always act so—though he will in five cases out of six, or oftener. Hence very erroneous views are held in relation to the courage of this animal. Some naturalists, led away by what appears to be a feeling of envy or anger, accuse the lion of downright cowardice, denying him a single noble quality of all those that have from earliest times been ascribed to him! Others, on the contrary, assert that he knows no fear, either of man or beast; and these endow him with many virtues besides courage. Both parties back up their views, not by mere assertions, but by an ample narration of well-attested facts!

How is this? There is a dilemma here. Both cannot be right in their opinions? And yet, odd as it may appear to say so, both are right in a certain sense.

The fact is, some lions are cowardly, while others are brave.

The truth of this might be shown by whole pages of facts, but in this little volume we have not room. I think, however, boy reader, I can satisfy you with an analogy.

Answer me—Do you know any species of animal, the individuals of which are exactly alike in character? Think over the dogs of your acquaintance! Are they alike, or anything near it? Are not some of them noble, generous, faithful, brave to the death? Are not others mean, sneaking, cowardly curs? So is it with lions.

Now, you are satisfied that my statement about the lions may be true.

There are many causes to affect the courage and ferocity of the lion. His age—the state of his stomach—the season of the year—the hour of the day—but, above all, the sort of hunters that belong to the district he inhabits.

This last fact appears quite natural to those who believe in the intellect of animals, which of course I do. It is perfectly natural that the lion, as well as other animals, should soon learn the character of his enemy, and fear him or not, as the case may be. Is this not an old story with us? If I remember aright, we had a talk upon this subject when speaking of the crocodiles of America. We remarked that the alligator of the Mississippi rarely attacks man in modern times; but it has not been always so. The rifle of the alligator-leather hunter has tamed its ferocity. The very same species in South America eats Indians by scores every year; and the crocodile of Africa is dreaded in some parts even more than the lion!

It is asserted that the lions of the Cape are more cowardly in some districts than in others. They are less brave in those districts where they have been “jaged” by the courageous and stalwart boor with his long loud-cracking “roer.”

Beyond the frontier, where they have no enemy but the tiny arrow of the Bushman (who does not desire to kill them!) and the slender “assegai” of the Bechuana, the lion has little or no fear of man.

Whether the one, before the eyes of our party, was naturally a brave one, could not yet be told. He was one with a huge black mane, or “schwart-fore life,” as the boors term it; and these are esteemed the fiercest and most dangerous. The “yellow-maned,”—for there is considerable variety in the colour of the Cape lions—is regarded as possessing less courage; but there is some doubt about the truth of this. The young “black-manes” may often be mistaken for the true yellow variety, and their character ascribed to him to his prejudice,—for the swarthy colour of the mane only comes after the lion is many years of age.

Whether the “schwart-fore life” was a fierce and brave one, Von Bloom did not stay to think about. It was evident that the edge had been taken off the animal’s appetite. It was evident he did not meditate an attack; and that had the horsemen chosen to make a *détour*, and ride peacefully away, they might have continued their journey without ever seeing or hearing of him again.

But the field-cornet had no such intention. He had lost his precious oxen and cattle. That lion had pulled down some of them, at least. The Dutch blood was up, and if the beast had been the strongest and fiercest of his tribe, he was bound to be brought out of that bush.

Ordering the others to remain where they were, Von Bloom advanced on horseback until within about fifty paces of where the lion lay. Here he drew

up, coolly dismounted, passed the bridle over his arm, stuck his loading-rod into the ground, and knelt down behind it.

You will fancy he would have been safer to have kept his saddle, as the lion cannot overtake a horse. True; but the lion would have been safer too. It is no easy matter to fire correctly from any horse, but when the mark happens to be a grim lion, he is a well-trained steed that will stand sufficiently firm to admit of a true aim. A shot from the saddle under such circumstances is a mere chance shot; and the field-cornet was not in the mood to be satisfied with a chance shot. Laying his roer athwart the loading-rod, and holding the long barrel steady against it, he took deliberate aim through the ivory sights.

During all this time the lion had not stirred. The bush was between him and the hunter; but he could hardly have believed that it sufficed to conceal him. Far from it. His yellow flanks were distinctly visible through the thorny twigs, and his head could be seen with his muzzle and whiskers stained red with the blood of the oxen.

No—he did not believe himself hid. A slight growl, with one or two shakes of his tail, proved the contrary. He lay still however, as lions usually do, until more nearly approached. The hunter, as already stated, was full fifty yards from him.

Excepting the motion of his tail, he made no other till Von Bloom pulled trigger; and then with a scream he sprang several feet into the air. The hunter had been afraid of the twigs causing his bullet to glance off; but it was plain it had told truly, for he saw the fur fly from the side of that lion where it struck him.

It was but a wound; and not deadly, as soon appeared.

With long bounds the angry brute came on—lashing his tail, and showing his fearful teeth. His mane, now on end, seemed to have doubled his size. He looked as large as a bull!

In a few seconds time he had crossed the distance that separated him from the hunter, but the latter was gone far from that spot. The moment he had delivered his fire, he leaped upon his well-trained horse, and rode off towards the others.

All three were for a short while together—Hendrik holding his yäger cocked and ready, while Swartboy grasped his bow and arrows. But the lion dashed forward before either could fire; and they were obliged to spur and gallop out of his way.

Swartboy had ridden to one side, while Von Bloom and Hendrik took the other; and the game was now between the two parties—both of which had pulled up at some distance off.

The lion, after the failure of his charge, halted, and looked first at one, then at the other—as if uncertain which to pursue.

His appearance at this moment was terrible beyond expression. His whole fierce nature was roused. His mane stood erect—his tail lashed his flanks—his mouth, widely open, showed the firm-set trenchant teeth—their white spikes contrasting with the red blood that clotted his cheeks and snout, while his angry roaring added horror to his appearance.

But none of the three were terrified out of their senses. Hendrik at this moment covered him with his rifle, took cool aim, and fired; while at the same instant Swartboy sent an arrow whistling through the air.

Both had aimed truly. Both bullet and arrow struck; and the shaft of the latter could be seen sticking in the lion's thigh.

The fierce brute that up to this time had exhibited the most determined courage, now seemed overcome with a sudden fear. Either the arrow or one of the bullets must have sickened him with the combat; for, dropping his mop-like tail to a level with the line of his back, he broke away; and, trotting sulkily forward, sprang in at the door of the kraal!

Chapter Ten.

A Lion in the Trap.

There was something singular in the lion seeking shelter in so unusual a place; but it showed his sagacity. There was no other cover within convenient distance, and to have reached any bush that would have afforded him concealment, since the passage of the locusts, would have been difficult. The mounted hunters could easily have overtaken him, had he attempted to run off. He was aware that the house was uninhabited. He had been prowling around it all the night—perhaps within it—and therefore knew what sort of place it was.

The brute's instinct was correct. The walls of the house would protect him from the guns of his enemies at a distance; and for these to approach near would be his advantage and their danger.

An odd incident occurred as the lion entered the kraal. There was a large window in one end of the house. Of course it was not glazed—it never had been. A glass window is a rarity in these parts. A strong wooden shutter alone closed it. This was still hanging on its hinges, but in the hurried "flitting," the window had been left open. The door also had been standing ajar. As the lion sprang in at the latter, a string of small foxy wolf-like creatures came pouring out through the former, and ran with all their might across the plain. They

were jackals!

As it afterwards appeared, one of the oxen had been chased into the house either by lions or hyenas, and killed there. His carcass had been overlooked by the larger carnivora, and the cunning jackals had been making a quiet breakfast upon it, when so unceremoniously disturbed.

The entrance of their terrible king in such angry mood, by the door, caused the fox-wolves to beat a quick retreat by the window; and the appearance of the horsemen without had still further frightened these cowardly brutes, so that they ran away from the kraal at top speed, and never halted until they were out of sight.

The three hunters could not restrain a laugh; but their tone was suddenly changed by another incident that happened almost at the same moment.

Von Bloom had brought with him his two fine dogs, to assist in driving back the cattle.

During the short halt the party had made by the spring, these had fastened upon a half-eaten carcass behind the walls; and, being extremely hungry, had stuck to it, even after the horsemen, had ridden off. Neither of the dogs had seen the lion, until the moment when the savage brute charged forward, and was making for the kraal. The shots, the growling of the lion, and the loud wings of the vultures as they flew off affrighted, told the dogs that something was going on in front, at which they ought to be present; and, forsaking their pleasant meal, both came bounding over the walls.

They reached the open space in front, just as the lion leaped into the door; and without hesitation the brave noble animals rushed on, and followed him inside the house.

For some moments there was heard a confused chorus of noises—the barking and worrying of the dogs, the growling and roaring of the lion. Then a dull sound followed as of some heavy object dashed against the wall. Then came a mournful howl—another, another—a noise like the cracking of bones—the “purr” of the great brute with its loud rough bass—and then a deep silence. The struggle was over. This was evident, as the dogs no longer gave tongue. Most likely they were killed.

The hunters remained watching the door with feelings of intense anxiety. The laugh had died upon their lips, as they listened to those hideous sounds, the signs of the fearful combat. They called their dogs by name. They hoped to see them issue forth, even if wounded. But no. The dogs came not forth—they never came forth—they were dead!

A long-continued silence followed the noise of the conflict. Von Bloom could no longer doubt that his favourite and only dogs had been killed.

Excited by this new misfortune he almost lost prudence. He was about to rush forward to the door, where he might deliver his fire close to the hated enemy, when a bright idea came into the brain of Swartboy; and the Bushman was heard calling out,—

“Baas! baas! we shut him up! we close da skellum up.”

There was good sense in this suggestion—there was plausibility in it. Von Bloom saw this; and, desisting from his previous intention, he determined to adopt Swartboy’s plan.

But how was it to be executed? The door still hung upon its hinges, as also the window-shutter. If they could only get hold of these, and shut them fast, they would have the lion secure, and might destroy him at their leisure.

But how to shut either door or window in safety? That was the difficulty that now presented itself.

Should they approach either, the lion would be certain to see them from within; and, enraged as he now was, would be sure to spring upon them. Even if they approached on horseback to effect their purpose, they would not be much safer. The horses would not stand quiet while they stretched out to lay hold of latch or handle. All three of the animals were already dancing with excitement. They knew the lion was inside, an occasional growl announced his presence there—they would not approach either door or window with sufficient coolness; and their stamping and snorting would have the effect of bringing the angry beast out upon them.

It was clear, then, that to shut either door or window would be an operation of great danger. So long as the horsemen were in open ground, and at some distance from the lion, they had no cause to fear; but should they approach near and get entangled among the walls, some one of them would be most likely to fall a victim to the ferocious brute.

Low as may be the standard of a Bushman’s intellect, there is a species of it peculiar to him in which he appears to excel. In all matters of hunter-craft, his intelligence, or instinct you might almost call it, is quite a match for the more highly—developed mind of the Caucasian. This arises, no doubt, from the keen and frequent exercise of those particular faculties,—keen and frequent, because his very existence often depends on their successful employment.

Huge ill-shapen head as Swartboy carried on his shoulders, there was an ample stock of brains in it; and a life of keen endeavour to keep his stomach supplied had taught him their exercise. At that moment Swartboy’s brains came to the relief of the party.

“Baas!” he said, endeavouring to restrain the impatience of his master, “vyacht um bige, mein baas! Leave it to da ole Bushy to close da door. He do it.”

“How?” inquired Von Bloom.

“Vyacht um bige, mein baas! no long to wait,—you see.”

All three had ridden up together within less than an hundred yards of the kraal. Von Bloom and Hendrik sat silent, and watched the proceedings of the Bushman.

The latter drew from his pocket a clew of small cord, and, having carefully uncoiled it, attached one end to an arrow. He then rode up to within thirty yards of the house, and dismounted—not directly opposite the entrance, but a little to the one side—so that the face of the wooden door, which was fortunately but three-quarters open, was thus fair before him. Keeping the bridle over his arm, he now bent his bow, and sent the arrow into the woodwork of the door. There it was, sticking near the edge, and just under the latch!

As soon as Swartboy delivered the shaft, he had leaped back into his saddle—to be ready for retreat in case the lion should spring out. He still, however, kept hold of the string, one end of which was attached to the arrow.

The “thud” of the arrow, as it struck the door, had drawn the attention of the lion. Of course, none of them saw him, but his angry growl told them that it was so. He did not show himself, however, and was again silent.

Swartboy now drew the string taut,—first felt it with a steady pull; and then, satisfied of its strength, gave it a stronger jerk, and brought the door to. The latch acted beautifully, and the door remained shut even after the strain was taken off the cord.

To have opened the door now the lion must have had the sagacity to lift the latch, or else must have broken through the thick, strong planks—neither of which was to be feared.

But the window still remained open, and through it the lion could easily leap out. Swartboy, of course, designed closing it in the same manner as he had done the door.

But now arose a particular danger. He had only one piece of cord. That was attached to the arrow that still stuck fast. How was he to detach and get possession of it?

There appeared to be no other way but by going up to the door and cutting it from the shaft. In this lay the danger; for, should the lion perceive him and rush out by the window, it would be all over with the Bushman.

Like most of his race, Swartboy was more cunning than brave—though he was far from being a coward. Still he was by no means inclined at that moment to go up to the door of the kraal.

The angry growls from within would have made a stouter heart than Swartboy's quail with fear.

In this dilemma Hendrik came to his relief. Hendrik had conceived a way of getting possession of the string, without going near the door!

Calling to Swartboy to be on his guard, he rode within thirty yards of the entrance—but on the other side from where Swartboy was—and there halted. At the place there stood a post with several forks upon it, that had been used as a bridle-post.

Hendrik dismounted, hooked his rein over one of these forks; rested his yäger across another; and then, sighting the shaft of the arrow, pulled trigger. The rifle cracked, the broken stick was seen to fly out from the door, and the string was set free!

All were ready to gallop off; but the lion, although he growled fiercely on hearing the shot, still lay close.

Swartboy now drew in the string; and, having adjusted it to a fresh arrow, moved round so as to command a view of the window. In a few minutes the shaft had cut through the air and stuck deep into the yielding wood, and then the shutter swung round on its hinges and was drawn close.

All three now dismounted ran silently and rapidly up, and secured both door and shutter with strong reins of raw-hide.

Hurrah! the lion was caged!

Chapter Eleven.

The Death of the Lion.

Yes, the fierce brute was fairly in the trap. The three hunters breathed freely.

But how was the affair to end? Both door and window-shutter fitted strongly and closely; and, although it was possible to glance through the chinks, nothing could be seen inside—since, both being shut, it was quite dark within.

Even could the lion have been seen, there was no hole through which to thrust the muzzle of a gun and fire at him. He was just as safe as his captors; and, so long as the door remained closed, they could do him no more harm than he could them!

They might leave him shut up, and let him starve. He could live for a while upon what the jackals had left, with the carcasses of the two dogs, but that would not sustain him long, and in the end he would have to give up and miserably perish. After all, this did not seem so certain to Von Bloom and his

companions. Finding that he was caged in earnest, the brute might attack the door, and with his sharp claws and teeth manage to cut his way through.

But the angry field-cornet had not the slightest intention of leaving the lion such a chance. He was determined to destroy the beast before leaving the ground; and he now set to thinking how this could be accomplished in the speediest and most effectual manner.

At first he thought of cutting a hole in the door with his knife, large enough to see through and admit the barrel of his roer. Should he not succeed in getting a view of the beast through that one, he would make another in the window-shutter. The two being on adjacent sides of the house, would give him the command of the whole interior—for the former dwelling of the field-cornet comprised only a single apartment. During his residence there, there had been two, thanks to a partition of zebra-skins; but these had been removed, and all was now in one room.

At first Von Bloom could think of no other plan to get at the enemy, and yet this one did not quite please him. It was safe enough, and, if carried out, could only end in the death of the lion.

A hole in both door and window-shutter would enable them to fire at the brute as many bullets as they pleased, while they would be quite secure from his attack. But the time that would be required to cut these holes—that was why the plan did not please the field-cornet. He and his party had no time to spare: their horses were weak with hunger, and a long journey lay before them ere a morsel could be obtained. No,—the time could not be spared for making a breach. Some more expeditious mode of attack must be devised.

“Father,” said Hendrik, “suppose we set the house on fire?”

Good. The suggestion was a good one. Von Bloom cast his eyes up to the roof—a sloping structure with long eaves. It consisted of heavy beams of dry wood with rafters and laths, and all covered over with a thatch of rushes, a foot in thickness. It would make a tremendous blaze, and the smoke would be likely enough to suffocate the lion even before the blaze could get at him. The suggestion of Hendrik was adopted. They prepared to fire the house.

There was still a large quantity of rubbish,—the collected firewood which the locusts had not devoured. This would enable them to carry out their purpose; and all three immediately set about hauling it up, and piling it against the door.

One might almost have fancied that the lion had fathomed their design; for, although he had been for a long while quite silent, he now commenced a fresh spell of roaring. Perhaps the noise of the logs, striking against the door outside, had set him at it; and, finding himself thus shut up and baited, he had grown impatient. What he had sought as a shelter had been turned into a trap, and he was now anxious to get out of it. This was evident by the

demonstrations he began to make. They could hear him rushing about—passing from door to window—striking both with his huge paws, and causing them to shake upon their hinges—all the while uttering the most fiendish roars.

Though not without some apprehensions, the three continued their work. They had their horses at hand, ready to be mounted in case the lion might make his way through the fire. In fact, they intended to take to their saddles—as soon as the fire should be fairly under way—and watch the conflagration from a safe distance.

They had dragged up all the bush and dry wood, and had piled them in front of the door. Swartboy had taken out his flint and steel, and was about to strike, when a loud scratching was heard from the inside, unlike anything that had yet reached their ears. It was the rattling of the lion's claws against the wall, but it had an odd sound as if the animal was struggling violently; at the same time his voice seemed hoarse and smothered, and appeared to come from a distance.

What was the brute doing?

They stood for a moment, looking anxiously in each other's faces. The scratching continued—the hoarse growling at intervals—but this ended at length; and then came a snort, followed by a roar so loud and clear, that all three started in airtight. They could not believe that trails were between them and their dangerous enemy!

Again echoed that horrid cry. Great Heaven! It proceeded no longer from the inside—it came from above them! Was the lion upon the roof? All three rushed backward a step or two, and looked up. A sight was before them that rendered them almost speechless with surprise and terror. Above the funnel of the chimney appeared the head of the lion; his glaring yellow eyes and white teeth showing more fearful from contrast with the black soot that begrimed him. He was dragging his body up. One foot was already above the capstone; and with this and his teeth he was widening the aperture around him.

It was a terrible sight to behold—at least to those below.

As already stated, they were alarmed; and would have taken to their horses, had they not perceived that the animal had stuck fast!

It was evident that this was the case, but it was equally evident that in a few moments he would succeed in clearing himself from the chimney. His teeth and claws were hard at work, and the stones and mortar were flying in all directions. The funnel would soon be down below his broad chest, and then—

Von Bloom did not stay to think what then. He and Hendrik, guns in hand, ran up near the bottom of the wall. The chimney was but a score of feet in height;

the long roer was pointed upward, reaching nearly half that distance. The yäger was also aimed. Both cracked together. The lion's eyes suddenly closed, his head shook convulsively, his paw dropped loose over the capstone, his jaws fell open, and blood trickled down his tongue. In a few moments he was dead!

This was apparent to every one. But Swartboy was not satisfied, until he had discharged about a score of his arrows at the head of the animal, causing it to assume the appearance of a porcupine.

So tightly had the huge beast wedged himself, that even after death he still remained in his singular situation.

Under other circumstances he would have been dragged down for the sake of his skin. But there was no time to spare for skinning him; and without further delay, Von Bloom and his companions mounted their horses and rode off.

Chapter Twelve.

A talk about Lions.

As they rode back they conversed about lions, to beguile the time. All of them knew something about these animals; but Swartboy, who had been born and brought up in the bush, in the very midst of their haunts as it were, of course was well acquainted with their habits—ay, far better than Monsieur Buffon himself.

To describe the personal appearance of a lion would be to waste words. Every one of my readers must know the lion by sight, either from having seen one in a zoological collection, or the stuffed skin of one in a museum. Every one knows the form of the animal, and his great shaggy mane. Every one knows, moreover, that the lioness is without this appendage, and in shape and size differs considerably from the male.

Though there are not two species of lions, there are what are termed varieties, but these differ very little from each other—far less than the varieties of most other animals.

There are seven acknowledged varieties. The Barbary lion, the lion of Senegal, the Indian lion, the Persian, the yellow Cape, the black Cape, and the maneless lion.

The difference among these animals is not so great, but that at a glance any one may tell they were all of one species and kind. The Persian variety is rather smaller than the others; the Barbary is of darker brown and heavily maned; the lion of Senegal is of light shining yellow colour, and thinly maned;

while the maneless lion, as its name imports, is without this appendage. The existence of the last species is doubted by some naturalists. It is said to be found in Syria.

The two Cape lions differ principally in the colour of the mane. In the one it is black or dark brown—in the other of a tawny yellow, like the rest of the body.

Of all lions, those of South Africa are perhaps the largest, and the black variety the most fierce and dangerous.

Lions inhabit the whole continent of Africa, and the southern countries of Asia. They were once common in parts of Europe, where they exist no longer. There are no lions in America. The animal known in Spanish-American countries as the lion (leon) is the cougar or puma (*Felis concolor*), which is not one-third the lion's size, and resembles the king of beasts only in being of the same tawny colour. The puma is not unlike a lion's cub six months old.

Africa is peculiarly the country of the lion. He is found throughout the whole extent of that continent—excepting of course a few thickly inhabited spots, from which he has been expelled by man.

The lion has been called the “king of the forest.” This appears to be a misnomer. He is not properly a forest animal. He cannot climb trees, and therefore in the forest would less easily procure his food than in the open plain. The panther, the leopard, and the jaguar, are all tree-climbers. They can follow the bird to its roost, and the monkey to its perch. The forest is their appropriate home. They are forest animals. Not so the lion. It is upon the open plains—where the great ruminants love to roam, and among the low bushy thickets that skirt them, that the lion affects to dwell.

He lives upon flesh,—the flesh of many kinds of animals, though he has his favourites, according to the country in which he is found. He kills these animals for himself. The story of the jackal being his “provider,”—killing them for him,—is not true. More frequently he himself provides the skulking jackals with a meal. Hence their being often seen in his company—which they keep, in order to pick up his “crumbs.”

The lion “butchers” for himself, though he will not object to have it done for him; and will take away their game from wolf, jackal, or hyena—from the hunter if he can.

The lion is not a fast runner—none of the true felidae are. Nearly all the ruminant animals can outrun him. How, then, does he capture them?

By stratagem, by the suddenness of his attack, and by the length and velocity of his bound. He lies in wait, or steals upon them. He springs from his crouching place. His peculiar anatomical structure enables him to spring to an immense distance—in fact, to an almost incredible distance. Sixteen paces

have been alleged by writers, who say they were eye-witnesses, and carefully measured the leap!

Should he fail to capture his prey at the first bound, the lion follows it no farther, but turns and trots away in an opposite direction.

Sometimes, however, the intended victim tempts him to a second spring, and even to a third; but failing then, he is sure to give up the pursuit.

The lion is not gregarious, although as many as ten or a dozen are often seen together. They hunt in company at times, and drive the game towards one another!

They attack and destroy all other species of animals that inhabit the country around them—even the strong heavy rhinoceros is not feared by them, though the latter frequently foils and conquers them. Young elephants sometimes become their prey. The fierce buffalo, the giraffe, the oryx, the huge eland, and the eccentric gnou, all have to succumb to their superior strength and armature.

But they are not universally victorious over these animals. Sometimes they are vanquished by one or other of them, and in turn become victims. Sometimes both combatants leave their bodies upon the scene of the struggle.

The lion is not hunted as a profession. His spoils are worthless. His skin sells for but little, and he yields no other trophy of any value. As hunting him is attended with great danger, and the hunter, as already stated, may avoid him if he wishes, but few lions would be destroyed, were it not for a certain offensive habit to which they are addicted—that of robbing the vee-boor of his horses and his cattle. This brings a new passion into play,—the vengeance of the farmer; and with such a motive to urge on the hunt, the lion in some parts is chased with great zeal and assiduity.

But where there are no cattle-farms, no such motive exists; and there but little interest is felt in the chase of this animal. Nay, what is still stranger: the Bushmen and other poor wandering tribes do not kill the lion at all, or very seldom. They do not regard him with feelings of hostility. The lion acts towards them as a “provider!”

Hendrik, who had heard of this, asked Swartboy if it was true.

The Bushman answered at once in the affirmative.

His people, he said, were in the habit of watching the lion, or following his spoor, until they came upon either himself, or the quarry he had killed. Sometimes the vultures guided them to it. When the “tao” chanced to be on the spot, or had not yet finished his meal, his trackers would wait, until he had taken his departure, after which they would steal up and appropriate what remained of the spoil. Often this would be the half, or perhaps three parts of

some large animal, which they might have found a difficulty in killing for themselves.

Knowing the lion will rarely attack them, the Bushmen are not much afraid of these animals. On the contrary, they rather rejoice at seeing them numerous in their district, as they are then provided with hunters able to furnish them with food!

Chapter Thirteen.

The travellers benighted.

Our travellers would have talked much more about lions, but for the condition of their horses. This made them feel uneasy. With the exception of a few hours grazing, the poor brutes had been without food since the appearance of the locusts. Horses do not travel well upon soft grass, and of course they were now suffering severely.

It would be far in the night before the horsemen could reach the camp—although they were pushing on as fast as the horses could travel.

It was quite dark, when they arrived at the spot where they had halted the previous evening. In fact, it was very dark. Neither moon nor stars were to be seen in the sky; and thick black clouds covered the whole canopy of the heavens. It looked as though a rain-storm might be expected—still no rain had as yet fallen.

It was the intention of the travellers to halt at this place, and let their horses graze a while. With this view they all dismounted; but, after trying one or two places, they could find no grass!

This appeared strange, as they had certainly observed grass at that very spot the day before. Now there was none!

The horses put their noses to the ground, but raised them up again, snorting as they did so, and evidently disappointed. They were hungry enough to have eaten grass had there been any, for they eagerly snatched at the leaves of the bushes as they passed along!

Had the locusts been there also? No. The mimosa-bushes still retained their delicate foliage, which would not have been the case had the locusts visited the spot.

Our travellers were astonished that there was no grass. Surely there was some the day before? Had they got upon a new track?

The darkness prevented them from having a view of the ground; yet Von

Bloom could not be mistaken about the route—having travelled it four times already. Though he could not see the surface, every now and again he caught a glimpse of some tree or bush, which he had marked in his former journeys, and these assured him they were still upon the right track.

Surprised at the absence of grass where they had so lately observed it, they would have examined the surface more carefully; but they were anxious to push on to the spring, and at length gave up the idea of halting. The water in their gourds had been used up long before this; and both they and their horses were once more suffering from thirst.

Besides, Von Bloom was not without some anxiety about the children at the wagon. He had been separated from them now a full day and a half, and many a change might take place—many a danger might arise in that time. In fact, he began to blame himself for having left them alone. It would have been better to have let his cattle perish. So thought he now. A presentiment that all was not right was gradually forming in his mind; and he grew more anxious to proceed as he reflected.

They rode on in silence. It was only on Hendrik expressing a doubt about the way, that the conversation recommenced. Swartboy also thought they were taking a wrong course.

At first Von Bloom assured them they were right: but after going a little farther, he admitted that he was in doubt; and then, after another half-mile's travelling, he declared that he had lost the track. He could no longer recognise any one of the marks or bearings he had taken.

The proper thing to be done under these circumstances was to leave the horses to themselves; and this all three well knew. But the animals were suffering the pangs of hunger, and when left to themselves, would not journey forward, but rushed up to the mimosa-bushes, and eagerly commenced devouring their leaves.

The consequence was, that their riders were obliged to keep them going with whip and spur; and in that way there was no certainty of the horses taking the right direction.

After several hours' advancing, all the while in a state of suspense, and as yet no appearance of either wagon or camp-fire, the travellers resolved upon coming to a halt. It was of no use going forward. They believed they could not be far from the camp; but they were now as likely to be riding from as towards it; and they concluded at length, that it would be wiser to remain where they were until the day broke.

They all dismounted therefore, and fastened their horses to the bushes—so that the animals could browse upon the leaves till morning—which could not now be very far off. They rolled themselves up in their karosses, and lay down

upon the earth.

Hendrik and Swartboy were soon asleep. Von Bloom would have slept too, for he was tired enough; but the heart of the father was too full of anxiety to allow repose to his eyes, and he lay awake watching for the dawn.

It came at length, and at the first light his eyes swept the surface of the surrounding country. The party had by chance halted on an eminence that commanded a good view for miles on each side, but the field-cornet had not glanced half around the circle, when an object came before his eyes that brought gladness to his heart. It was the white tent of the wagon!

The joyful exclamation he uttered awoke the sleepers, who immediately sprang to their feet; and all three stood gazing at the welcome sight.

As they continued to gaze, their joy gradually gave place to feelings of surprise. Was it their wagon, after all?

It certainly looked like theirs; but it was a full half-mile off, and at such a distance one wagon would look just like another. But what led them to doubt its being theirs? It was the appearance of the place in which they saw it. Surely it was not the same place in which they had outspanned!

Theirs had been left in an oblong valley between two gentle ridges—in such a valley was this one standing. Near a small pool formed by a spring—here, too, was the same, for they could perceive the water shining. But in all other respects the situation was different. The surface of the valley in which their wagon had been left was covered, both sides and bottom, with a verdant carpet of grass; whereas the one now before their eyes was brown and bare! not a blade of grass was to be seen—the trees seeming to be the only things that had any verdure. Even the low bushes appeared to be destitute of leaves! The scene had no resemblance whatever to that where they had outspanned. It must be the camp of some other travellers, thought they.

They had fully arrived at this conclusion, when Swartboy, whose eyes had been rolling about everywhere, now rested upon the ground at his feet. After a moment's observation—which the increasing light now enabled him to make—he turned suddenly to the others, and directed their attention to the surface of the plain. This they saw was covered with tracks, as if a thousand hoofs had passed over it. In fact, it presented the appearance of a vast sheep-pen; so vast, that as far as their sight extended, they beheld the same tracked and trampled appearance!

What could this mean? Hendrik did not know. Von Bloom was in doubt. Swartboy could tell at the first glance. It was no new sight to him.

“All right, baas,” he said, looking up in his master's face. “Da's da ole wagon!—da same spring an' vley—da same place—dar hab been umtrek-boken!”

“A trek-boken!” cried Von Bloom and Hendrik, in a breath.

“Ya, baas—a mighty big one too; das de spoor of dem antelope—See!”

Von Bloom now comprehended all. The bareness of the country, the absence of the leaves on the lower bushes, the millions of small hoof-tracks, all were now explained. A migration of the springbok antelope, a “trek-boken,” had swept over the spot. That it was that had caused such a mighty change. The wagon they saw was theirs, after all.

They lost no time, but, catching their horses, bridled them, and rode rapidly down the hill.

Though somewhat relieved at seeing the wagon, Von Bloom was still apprehensive.

As they approached, they perceived the two horses standing beside it, and tied to the wheels, the cow also was there—but neither goats nor sheep were in the neighbourhood.

There was a fire burning in the rear of the hind-wheels, and a dark mass underneath the wagon, but no human form could be observed.

The hearts of the horsemen beat loudly as they advanced. Their eyes were bent earnestly upon the wagon. They felt keen anxiety.

They had got within three hundred yards, and still no one stirred—no human form made its appearance. Von Bloom and Hendrik now suffered intensely.

At this moment the two horses by the wagon neighed loudly; the dark mass under the wagon moved, rolled outward, rose up, and stood erect. Totty was recognised!

And now the “after-clap” of the wagon was hurriedly drawn aside, and three young faces were seen peeping forth.

A shout of joy burst from the horsemen, and the next moment little Jan and Trüey leaped out from the cap-tent into the arms of their father—while the mutual congratulations of Hans and Hendrik, Swartboy and Totty, produced for some moments a scene of joyful confusion quite indescribable.

Chapter Fourteen.

The “Trek-Boken.”

Those who remained by the camp had had their adventures too; and their tale was by no means a merry one, for it disclosed the unpleasant fact, that the sheep and goats were all lost. The flock had been carried off, in a most singular manner; and there was but little hope of their ever being seen again.

Hans began his tale:—

“Nothing unusual occurred on the day you left us. I was busy all the afternoon in cutting ‘wait-a-bit’ thorns for a kraal. Totty helped me to drag them up, while Jan and Trüey looked after the flock. The animals did not stray out of the valley here, as the grass was good, and they had had enough of trotting lately.

“Well—Totty and I got the kraal, as you see, all ready. So, when night came, we drove the flock in; and, after milking the cow and getting our supper, we all went to bed. We were precious tired, and all of us slept soundly throughout the night without being disturbed. Both jackals and hyenas came around, but we knew they would not break into that kraal.”

Hans pointed to the circular enclosure of thorn-bushes, that had been well constructed.

He then proceeded with his narration:—

“In the morning we found everything right. Totty again milked the cow; and we had breakfast. The flock was let out upon the grass, and so were the cow and the two horses.

“Just about midday I began to think what we were to have for dinner, for the breakfast had cleared up everything. I did not like to kill another sheep, if it could be helped. So bidding Jan and Trüey stay close by the wagon, and leaving Totty to look after the flock, I took my gun and started off in search of game. I took no horse, for I thought I saw springboks out on the plain; and I would stalk them better afoot.

“Sure enough, there were springboks. When I got out of the valley here, and had a better view, I saw what astonished me, I can assure you.

“I could scarce credit my eyes. The whole plain, towards the west, appeared to be one vast crowd of animals; and by their bright yellow sides, and the snow-white hair on their rumps, I knew they were springboks. They were all in motion, some browsing along, while hundreds of them were constantly bounding up into the air full ten feet high, and leaping a-top of each other. I assure you all it was one of the strangest sights I ever beheld, and one of the pleasantest too; for I knew that the creatures that covered the plain, instead of being fierce wild beasts, were nothing but graceful and beautiful little gazelles.

“My first thought was to get near them, and have a shot; and I was about to start off over the plain, when I perceived that the antelopes were coming towards me. I saw that they were approaching with considerable rapidity; and if I only remained where I was, they would save me the trouble of stalking in upon them. I lay down behind a bush and waited.

“I had not very long to wait. In less than a quarter of an hour the foremost of

the herd drew near, and in five minutes more a score of them were within shot.

“I did not fire for some time. I knew they would come still nearer; and I lay watching the motions of those pretty creatures. I took notice of their light handsome forms, their smooth slender limbs, their cinnamon-coloured backs, and white bellies, with the band of chestnut along each side. I looked at the lyre-shaped horns of the bucks, and above all, at the singular flaps on their croup, that unfolded each time that they leaped up, displaying a profusion of long silky hair, as white as snow itself.

“All these points I noticed, and at length, tired of admiring them, I singled out a fine-looking doe—for I was thinking of my dinner, and knew that doe-venison was the most palatable.

“After aiming carefully, I fired. The doe fell, but, to my astonishment, the others did not run off. A few of the foremost only galloped back a bit, or bounded up into the air; but they again set to browsing quite unconcerned, and the main body advanced as before!

“I loaded as quickly as I could, and brought down another,—this time a buck—but as before without frightening the rest!

“I proceeded to load for the third time; but before I had finished, the front ranks had passed on both sides of me, and I found myself in the midst of the herd!

“I saw no need for covering myself any longer behind the bush, but rose to my knees, and, firing at the nearest, brought it down also. Its comrades did not pause, but ran over its body in thousands!

“I loaded again, and stood right up on my feet.

“Now for the first time it occurred to me to reflect on the strange conduct of the springboks; for, instead of making off at my appearance, they only bounded a little to one side, and then kept on their course. They seemed possessed by a species of infatuation. I remembered hearing that such was their way when upon one of their migrations, or ‘trek-bokens.’ This, then, thought I, must be a ‘trek-boken.’

“I was soon convinced of this, for the herd every moment grew thicker and thicker around me, until at length they became so crowded, that I began to feel very singularly situated. Not that I was afraid of the creatures, as they made no demonstration of using their horns upon me. On the contrary, they did all they could to get out of my way. But the nearest only were alarmed; and, as my presence in no way terrified those that were an hundred yards off, the latter made no attempt to give ground. Of course the nearest ones could only get a few paces from me, by pushing the others closer, or springing up over their backs—so that with the ones thus constantly bounding up into the air there

was all the time a ring around me two deep!

“I cannot describe the strange feelings I had in this unusual situation, or how long I might have kept my place. Perhaps I might have loaded and fired away for some time, but just at the moment the sheep came into my mind.

“They’ll be carried away, thought I. I had heard that such a thing was common enough.

“I saw that the antelopes were heading towards the valley—the foremost were already into it, and would soon be on the spot, where I had just seen our little flock feeding!

“In hopes of yet heading the springboks, and driving the sheep into the kraal, before the former crowded on them, I started towards the valley. But, to my chagrin, I could get no faster than the herd was going!

“As I approached the creatures, to make my way through their mass, they leaped about and sprang over one another, but could not for their lives open a way for me as fast as I wanted one. I was so near some of them that I could have knocked them down with my gun!

“I commenced hallooing, and, brandishing the gun about, I was making a lane more rapidly, when I perceived in front what appeared to be a large open space. I pushed forward for this, but the nearer I came to its border the more densely I found the creatures packed. I could only see that it was an open space by leaping up. I did not know what was causing it. I did not stay to reflect. I only wished to get forward as rapidly as possible, thinking about our flock.

“I continued to clear my way, and at length found myself in the position I had coveted; while the lane I had made, in getting there, closed instantaneously behind me. I was about to rush on, and take advantage of the bit of clear ground, when, what should I see in the centre, and directly before me, but a great yellow lion!

“That accounted for the break in the herd. Had I known what had been causing it, I should have fought my way in any other direction but that; but there was I, out in the open ground, the lion not ten paces from me, and a fence of springboks two deep around both of us!

“I need not say I was frightened, and badly too. I did not for some moments know how to act. My gun was still loaded—for, after thinking of saving our little flock, I did not care to empty it at the antelopes. I could get one, thought I, at any time when I had secured the sheep in the kraal. The piece, therefore, was loaded and with bullets.

“Should I take aim at the lion, and fire? I asked myself this question, and was just on the point of deciding in the affirmative, when I reflected that it would

be imprudent. I observed that the lion, whose back was turned to me, had either not seen, or as yet took no notice of me. Should I only wound him—and from the position he was in I was not likely to do more,—how then? I would most likely be torn to pieces.

“These were my reflections, all of which scarce occupied a second of time. I was about to ‘back out’ or back in among the springboks, and make my way in some other direction, and had even got near the edge, when, in looking over my shoulder, I saw the lion suddenly halt and turn round. I halted too, knowing that to be the safest plan; and, as I did so, I glanced back at the lion’s eyes.

“To my relief, I saw they were not upon me. He seemed to have taken some fancy in his head. His appetite, perhaps, had returned; for the next moment he ran a few yards, and then, rising with a terrific bound, launched himself far into the herd, and came down right upon the back of one of the antelopes! The others sprang right and left, and a new space was soon opened around him.

“He was now nearer than ever to where I stood, and I could see him distinctly crouched over his victim. His claws held its quivering body, and his long teeth grasped the poor creature by the neck. But, with the exception of his tail, he was making not the slightest motion, and that vibrated gently from side to side, just as a kitten that had caught a tiny mouse. I could see, too, that his eyes were close shut, as though he were asleep!

“Now I had heard that under such circumstances the lion may be approached without much danger. Not that I wished to go any nearer—for I was near enough for my gun—but it was this recollection, I believe, that put me in the notion of firing. At all events, something whispered me I would succeed, and I could not resist trying.

“The broad blind jaw of the brute was fair before me. I took aim, and pulled trigger; but, instead of waiting to see the effect of my shot, I ran right off in an opposite direction.

“I did not halt till I had put several acres of antelopes between myself and the place where I had last stood; and then I made the best of my way to the wagon.

“Long before I had reached it, I could see that Jan, and Trüey, and Totty, were safe under the tent. That gave me pleasure, but I also saw that the sheep and goats had got mixed up with the springboks, and were moving off with them as if they belonged to the same species! I fear they are all lost.”

“And the lion?” inquired Hendrik.

“Yonder he lies!” answered Hans, modestly pointing to a yellow mass out upon the plain, over which the vultures were already beginning to hover. “Yonder he lies, you could hardly have done it better yourself, brother

Hendrik.”

As Hans said this, he smiled in such a manner as to show, that he had no idea of making a boast of his achievements.

Hendrik was loud in acknowledging that it was a most splendid feat, and also in regretting that he had not been on the ground to witness the wonderful migration of the springboks.

But there was no time for much idle talk. Von Bloom and his party were in a very unpleasant situation. His flocks were all gone. The cow and horses alone remained; and for these not a blade of grass had been left by the antelopes. Upon what were they to be fed?

To follow the spoor of the migratory springboks with the hope of recovering their flock would be quite useless. Swartboy assured them of this. The poor animals might be carried hundreds of miles before they could separate themselves from the great herd, or bring their involuntary journey to an end!

The horses could travel but little farther. There was nought to feed them on but the leaves of the mimosas, and this was but poor food for hungry horses. It would be fortunate if they could be kept alive until they should reach some pasture; and where now was pasture to be found? Locusts and antelopes between them seemed to have turned all Africa into a desert!

The field-cornet soon formed his resolution. He would remain there for the night, and early on the morrow set out in search of some other spring.

Fortunately Hans had not neglected to secure a brace of the springboks; and their fat venison now came into general use. A roast of that, and a drink of cool water from the spring, soon refreshed the three wearied travellers.

The horses were let loose among the mimosa-trees, and allowed to shift for themselves; and although under ordinary circumstances they would have “turned up their noses” at such food as mimosa-leaves, they now turned them up in a different sense, and cleared the thorny branches like so many giraffes.

Some naturalist of the “Buffon” school has stated that neither wolf, fox, hyena, nor jackal, will eat the carcass of a lion,—that their fear of the royal despot continues even after his death.

The field-cornet and his family had proof of the want of truth in this assertion. Before many hours both jackals and hyenas attacked the carcass of the king of beasts, and in a very short while there was not a morsel of him there but his bones. Even his tawny skin was swallowed by these ravenous creatures, and many of the bones broken by the strong jaws of the hyenas. The respect which these brutes entertain for the lion ends with his life. When dead, he is eaten by them with as much audacity as if he were the meanest of animals.

Chapter Fifteen.

Spooring for a Spring.

Von Bloom was in the saddle at an early hour. Swartboy accompanied him, while all the others remained by the wagon to await his return. They took with them the two horses that had remained by the wagon, as these were fresher than the others.

They rode nearly due westward. They were induced to take this direction by observing that the springboks had come from the north. By heading westward they believed they would sooner get beyond the wasted territory.

To their great satisfaction an hour's travelling carried them clear of the track of the antelope migration; and although they found no water, there was excellent grass.

The field-cornet now sent Swartboy back for the other horses and the cow, pointing out a place where he should bring them to graze, while he himself continued on in search of water.

After travelling some miles farther, Von Bloom perceived to the north of him a long line of cliff rising directly up from the plain, and running westward as far as he could see. Thinking that water would be more likely to be found near these cliffs, he turned his horse's head towards them. As he approached nearer to their base, he was charmed with the beautiful scenery that began to open before his eyes. He passed through grassy plains of different sizes, separated from each other by copses of the delicate-leaved mimosa; some of these forming large thickets, while others consisted of only a few low bushes. Towering high over the mimosas, grew many trees of gigantic size, and of a species Von Bloom had never seen before. They stood thinly upon the ground; but each, with its vast leafy head, seemed a little forest of itself.

The whole country around had a soft park-like appearance, which contrasted well with the dark cliff that rose beyond—the latter stepping up from the plain by a precipice of several hundred feet in height, and seemingly as vertical as the walls of a house.

The fine landscape was gratifying to the eyes of the traveller—such a fine country in the midst of so much barrenness; for he knew that most of the surrounding region was little better than a wild karoo. The whole of it to the north for hundreds of miles was a famous desert—the desert of Kalihari—and these cliffs were a part of its southern border. The “vee-boor” would have been rejoiced at such a sight under other circumstances. But what to him now were all these fine pastures—now that he was no longer able to stock them?

Notwithstanding the beauty of the scene, his reflections were painful.

But he did not give way to despair. His present troubles were sufficiently grievous to prevent him from dwelling much on the future. His first care was to find a place where his horses might be recruited; for without them he could no longer move anywhere—without them he would be helpless indeed.

Water was the desired object. If water could not be found, all this beautiful park through which he was passing would be as valueless to him as the brown desert.

Surely so lovely a landscape could not exist without that most essential element!

So thought the field-cornet; and at the turning of every new grove his eyes wandered over the ground in search of it.

“Ho!” he joyfully exclaimed as a covey of large Namaqua partridges whirled up from his path. “A good sign that: they are seldom far from water.”

Shortly after, he saw a flock of beautiful pintados, or guinea-hens, running into a copse. This was a still further proof that water was nigh. But surest of all, on the top of a tall cameel-doorn tree, he next observed the brilliant plumage of a parrot.

“Now,” muttered he to himself, “I must be very near to some spring or pool.”

He rode cheerfully forward: and after a little while arrived upon the crest of an elevated ridge. Here he halted to observe the flight of the birds. Presently he noticed a covey of partridges flying in a westerly direction, and shortly after, another covey going the same way. Both appeared to alight near a gigantic tree that grew in the plain about five hundred yards from the bottom of the cliffs. This tree stood apart from any of the others, and was by far the largest Von Bloom had yet seen.

As he remained gazing at its wonderful dimensions, he observed several pairs of parrots alighting upon it. These, after chattering a while among its branches, flew down upon the plain not far from its base.

“Surely,” thought Von Bloom, “there must be water there. I shall ride forward and see.”

But his horse had scarcely waited for him to form this design. The animal had been already dragging upon the bridle; and as soon as his head was turned in the direction of the tree, he started forward with outstretched neck, snorting as he rushed along.

The rider, trusting to the instinct of his horse, surrendered up the bridle; and in less than five minutes both horse and rider were drinking from the sweet water of a crystal fountain that gushed out within a dozen yards of the tree.

The field-cornet would now have hastened back to the wagon: but he thought that by allowing his horse to browse an hour or so upon the grass, he would make the return-journey with more spirit, and in quite as good time. He, therefore, took off the bridle, gave the animal his liberty, while he stretched himself under the shade of the great tree.

As he lay, he could not help admiring the wonderful production of nature that towered majestically above him. It was one of the largest trees he had ever beheld. It was of the kind known as the “nwana” tree, a species of ficus, with large sycamore-shaped leaves that grew thickly over its magnificent head. Its trunk was full twenty-feet in diameter, rising to more than that height without a branch, and then spreading off into numerous limbs that stretched far out in a horizontal direction. Through the thick foliage Von Bloom could perceive shining egg-shaped fruits as large as cocoa-nuts; and upon these the parrots and several other kinds of birds appeared to be feeding.

Other trees of the same species stood out upon the plain at long distances apart; and though they were all taller than the surrounding timber, none were so large or conspicuous as the one that grew by the spring.

The field-cornet, as he enjoyed the cool shade which its umbrageous frondage afforded, could not help thinking what an admirable spot it would be to build a kraal. The inmates of a dwelling placed beneath its friendly shelter, need never dread the fierce rays of the African sun; even the rain could scarce penetrate its leafy canopy. In fact, its dense foliage almost constituted a roof of itself.

Had his cattle still remained to him, no doubt the vee-boor would have resolved at once to make this spot his future home. But, tempting as it was, what now could he do in such a place? To him it would be only a wilderness. There was no species of industry he could follow in such a remote quarter. True, he might sustain himself and his family by hunting. He saw that game was plenteous all around. But that would be but a sorry existence, with no promise for the future. What would his children do hereafter? Were they to grow up with no other end than to become poor hunters—no better than the wild Bushmen? No! no! no! To make a home there would be out of the question. A few days to recruit his wearied horses, and then he would make a struggle and trek back to the settlements.

But what after he had got back? He knew not what then. His future was gloomy and uncertain.

After indulging in such reflections for an hour or more, he bethought him that it was time to return to the camp; and having caught and bridled his horse, he mounted and set forth.

The animal, refreshed by the sweet grass and cool water, carried him briskly along; and in less than two hours he came up with Swartboy and Hendrik

where they were pasturing the horses.

These were taken back to the wagon and harnessed in; and then the great vehicle once more “trekked” across the plains.

Before the sun had set, the long white cap-tent was gleaming under the leafy screen of the gigantic “nwana.”

Chapter Sixteen.

The terrible “Tsetse.”

The verdant carpet that stretched away around them—the green leaves upon the trees—the flowers by the fountain—the crystal water in its bed—the black bold rocks towering up at a distance—all combined to make a lovely picture. The eyes of the wayfarers were glad as they beheld it; and while the wagon was outspanning, every one gave utterance to their delightful emotions.

The place seemed to please everyone. Hans loved its quiet and sylvan beauty. It was just such a place as he would choose to ramble in, book in hand, and dream away many a pleasant hour. Hendrik liked it much, because he had already observed what he termed “extensive spoor” about the spot: in other words, he had noticed the tracks of many of Africa’s largest wild animals.

Little Trüey was delighted to see so many beautiful flowers. There were bright scarlet geraniums, and starlike sweet-scented jessamines, and the gorgeous belladonna lily, with its large blossoms of rose-colour and white; and there were not only plants in flower, but bushes, and even trees, covered with gaudy and sweetly-perfumed blossoms. There was the “sugar-bush” (*Protea mellifera*), the most beautiful of its family, with its large cup-shaped corollas of pink, white, and green; and there, too, was the “silver-tree” (*Leucodendron argenteum*), whose soft silvery leaves playing in the breeze, looked like a huge mass of silken flowers; and there were the mimosas covered with blossoms of golden yellow that filled the air with their strong and agreeable perfume.

Rare forms of vegetation were around or near at hand: the arborescent aloes, with their tall flower-spikes of coral red, and euphorbias of many shapes; and zamia, with its palm-like fronds; and the soft-leaved *Strelitzia reginae*. All these were observed in the neighbourhood of this new-discovered fountain.

But what received little Trüey’s admiration more than any other was the beautiful blue waterlily (*Nympha caerulea*), which is certainly one of the loveliest of Africa’s flowers. Close by the spring, but a little farther in the direction of the plain, was a vley, or pool—in fact, it might have been termed a small lake—and upon the quiet bosom of its water the sky-blue corollas lay

sleeping in all their gorgeous beauty.

Trüey, leading her little pet in a string, had gone down on the bank to look at them. She thought she could never cease gazing at such pretty things.

“I hope papa will stay here a long time,” she said to her companion, little Jan.

“And I hope so too. Oh! Trüey, what a fine tree yon is! Look! nuts as big as my head, I declare. Bless me, sis! how are we to knock some, of them down?”

And so the children conversed, both delighted with the new scenes around them.

Although all the young people were inclined to be happy, yet they were checked in their expression of it, by observing that there was a cloud on the brow of their father. He had seated himself under the great tree, but his eyes were upon the ground, as though he were busy with painful reflections. All of them noticed this.

His reflections were, indeed, painful—they could not well have been otherwise. There was but one course left for him—to return to the settlements, and begin life anew. But how to begin it? What could he do? His property all gone, he could only serve some of his richer neighbours; and for one accustomed all his life to independence, this would be hard indeed.

He looked towards his five horses, now eagerly cropping the luxuriant grass that grew under the shadow of the cliffs. When would they be ready to trek back again? In three or four days he might start. Fine animals, most of them were—they would carry the wagon lightly enough.

So ran the reflections of the field-cornet. He little thought at the moment that those horses would never draw wagon more, nor any other vehicle. He little thought that those five noble brutes were doomed!

Yet so it was. In less than a week from that time, the jackals and hyenas were quarrelling over their bones. Even at that very moment, whilst he watched them browsing, the poison was entering their veins, and their death-wounds were being inflicted. Alas! alas! another blow awaited Von Bloom.

The field-cornet had noticed, now and again, that the horses seemed uneasy as they fed. At times they started suddenly, whisked their long tails, and rubbed their heads against the bushes.

“Some fly is troubling them,” thought he, and had no more uneasiness about the matter.

It was just that—just a fly that was troubling them. Had Von Bloom known what that fly was, he would have felt a very different concern about his horses. Had he known the nature of that little fly, he would have rushed up with all his boys, caught the horses in the greatest hurry, and led them far away from those

dark cliffs. But he knew not the “tsetse” fly.

It still wanted some minutes of sunset, and the horses were permitted to browse freely, but Von Bloom observed that they were every moment getting more excited—now striking their hoofs upon the turf,—now running a length or two—and at intervals snorting angrily. At the distance they were off—a quarter of a mile or so—Von Bloom could see nothing of what was disturbing them; but their odd behaviour at length induced him to walk up to where they were. Hans and Hendrik went along with him. When they arrived near the spot, they were astonished at what they then beheld. Each horse seemed to be encompassed by a swarm of bees!

They saw, however, they were not bees, but insects somewhat smaller, of a brown colour, resembling gad-flies, and exceedingly active in their flight. Thousands of them hovered above each horse, and hundreds could be seen lighting upon the heads, necks, bodies, and legs of the animals,—in fact, all over them. They were evidently either biting or stinging them. No wonder the poor brutes were annoyed.

Von Bloom suggested that they should drive the horses farther out into the plain, where these flies did not seem to haunt. He was only concerned about the annoyance which the horses received from them. Hendrik also pitied their sufferings; but Hans, alone of all the three, guessed at the truth. He had read of a fatal insect that frequented some districts in the interior of South Africa, and the first sight of these flies aroused his suspicions that it might be they.

He communicated his thoughts to the others, who at once shared his alarm.

“Call Swartboy hither!” said Von Bloom.

The Bushman was called, and soon made his appearance, coming up from the spring. He had for the last hour been engaged in unpacking the wagon, and had taken no notice of the horses or the interest they were exciting.

As soon, however, as he got near, and saw the winged swarm whirring around the horses, his small eyes opened to their widest extent, his thick lips fell, and his whole face yielded itself to an expression of amazement and alarm.

“What is it, Swart?” inquired his master.

“Mein baas! mein baas! der duyvel um da—dar skellum is da ‘tsetse!’”

“And what if it be the tsetse?”

“Mein baas!—all dead—dead—ebery horse!”

Swartboy then proceeded to explain, with a loud and continuous “clicking,” that the fly which they saw was fatal in its bite, that the horses would surely die—sooner or later, according to the number of stings they had already received; but, from the swarm of insects around them, the Bushman had no

doubt they had been badly stung and a single week would see all five of the horses dead.

“Wait, mein baas—morrow show.” And to-morrow did show; for before twelve o’clock on the next day, the horses were swollen all over their bodies and about their heads. Their eyes were quite closed up; they refused any longer to eat, but staggered blindly among the luxuriant grass, every now and then expressing the pain they felt by a low melancholy whimpering. It was plain to every one they were going to die.

Von Bloom tried bleeding, and various other remedies; but to no purpose. There is no cure for the bite of the tsetse fly!

Chapter Seventeen.

The Long-Horned Rhinoceros.

Great, indeed, was now the affliction of the field-cornet. Fortune seemed to be adverse in everything. Step by step he had been sinking for years, every year becoming poorer in worldly wealth. He had now reached the lowest point—poverty itself. He owned nothing whatever. His horses might be regarded as dead. The cow had escaped from the tsetse by avoiding the cliffs, and keeping out upon the plain; and this animal now constituted his whole live-stock,—his whole property! True, he still had his fine wagon; but of what use would that be without either oxen or horses? a wagon without a team! Better a team without a wagon.

What could he do? How was he to escape from the position he was placed in? To say the least, it was an awkward one—nearly two hundred miles from any civilised settlement, and no means of getting there,—no means except by walking; and how were his children to walk two hundred miles? Impossible!

Across desert tracts, exposed not only to terrible fatigue, but to hunger, thirst, and fierce carnivorous animals. It appeared impossible that they could accomplish such a task.

And what else was there to be done? asked the field-cornet of himself. Were they to remain there all their lives, subsisting precariously on game and roots? Were his children to become “Bush-boys,”—himself a Bushman?

With these reflections passing through his mind, no wonder that Von Bloom felt deeply afflicted.

“Merciful Heaven!” he exclaimed, as he sat with his head between his hands, “what will become of me and mine?”

Poor Von Bloom! he had reached the lowest point of his fortunes.

He had, in reality, reached the lowest point; for on that very day,—even within that very hour—an incident occurred, that not only gave relief to his afflicted spirit, but that promised to lay the foundation of future wealth and prosperity. In one hour from that time the prospects of the field-cornet had undergone a complete change,—in one hour from that time he was a happy man, and all around him were as happy as he!

You are impatient to hear how this change was effected? What little fairy had sprung out of the spring, or come down from the cliffs, to befriend the good field-cornet in his hour of misery? You are impatient to hear! Then you shall hear.

The sun was just going down. They were all seated under the great tree, and near a fire, upon which they had cooked their supper. There was no talking, no cheerful conversation,—for the children saw that their father was in trouble, and that kept them silent. Not a word passed between them, or only an occasional whisper.

It was at this moment that Von Bloom gave utterance to his sad thoughts in words as above.

As if seeking for an answer, his eyes were raised to heaven, and then wandered around the plain. All at once they became fixed upon a singular object, that appeared at some distance off, and was just emerging from the bushes.

It was an animal of some kind, and from its vast size Von Bloom and the others at first took it to be an elephant. None of them, except Swartboy, were accustomed to elephants in their wild state,—for, although these animals once inhabited the most southerly portion of Africa, they have long since deserted the settled districts, and are now only to be found far beyond the frontier of the colony. But they knew that there were elephants in these parts—as they had already observed their tracks—and all now supposed the huge creature that was approaching must be one.

Not all, Swartboy was an exception. As soon as his eyes fell upon the animal he cried out,—

“Chukuroo—a chukuroo!”

“A rhinoster, is it?” said Von Bloom, knowing that “chukuroo” was the native name for the rhinoceros, or “rhinoster,” as he called it in Dutch.

“Ya, baas,” replied Swartboy; “and one o’ da big karles—da ‘kobaoba,’ da long-horn white rhinoster.”

What Swartboy meant by this was that the animal in question was a large species of rhinoceros, known among the natives as the “kobaoba.”

Now I dare say, young reader, you have been all your life under the impression

that there was but one species of rhinoceros in the world—that is the rhinoceros. Is it not so? Yes.

Well, permit me to inform you, that you have been under a wrong impression. There is quite a number of distinct species of this very singular animal. At least eight distinct kinds I know of; and I do not hesitate to say that when the central parts of Africa have been fully explored, as well as South Asia and the Asiatic islands, nearly half as many more will be found to exist.

In South Africa four distinct species are well-known; one in North Africa differs from all these; while the large Indian rhinoceros bears but slight resemblance to any of them. A distinct species from any is the rhinoceros of Sumatra, an inhabitant of that island; and still another is the Java rhinoceros, found in the island of Java. Thus we have no less than eight kinds, all specifically differing from one another.

The best known in museums, zoological collections, and pictures, is perhaps the Indian animal. It is the one marked by the singular foldings of its skin, thickly embellished with protuberances or knobs, that give it a shield-like appearance. This distinguishes it from the African species, all of which are without these knobs, though the hides of some are knotty or warty. The Abyssinian rhinoceros has also foldings of the skin, which approach it somewhat to the character of the Indian species. Both the Sumatra and Java kinds are small compared with their huge cousin, the Indian rhinoceros, which inhabits only continental India, Siam, and Cochin China.

The Javan species more resembles the Indian, in having scutellae over the skin and being one-horned. It is, however, without the singular folds which characterise the latter. That of Sumatra has neither folds nor scutellae. Its skin has a slight covering of hair, and a pair of horns gives it some resemblance to the two-horned species of Africa.

The natives of South Africa are acquainted with four distinct species of rhinoceros, to which they give distinct names; and it may be remarked that this observation of species by native hunters is far more to be depended upon than the speculations of mere closet-naturalists, who draw their deductions from a tubercle, or the tooth, or a stuffed skin. If there be any value in a knowledge of animated nature, it is not to these we are indebted for that knowledge, but far oftener to the “rude hunters,” whom they affect to despise, and who, after all, have taught us pretty much all we know of the habits of animals. Such a “rude hunter” as Gordon Cumming, for example, has done more to increase the knowledge of African zoology than a whole college full of “speculating” savans.

This same Gordon Cumming, who has been accused of exaggeration (but in my opinion very wrongfully accused), has written a very modest and truthful

book, which tells you that there are four kinds of rhinoceroses in Southern Africa; and no man is likely to know better than he.

These four kinds are known among the natives as the “borele,” the “keitloa,” the “muchocho,” and “kobaoba.” The two first are “black rhinoceroses,”—that is, the general colour of their skin is dark—while the “muchocho” and “kobaoba” are white varieties, having the skin of a dingy whitish hue. The black rhinoceroses are much smaller—scarce half the size of the others, and they differ from them in the length and set of their horns, as well as in other particulars.

The horns of the “borele” are placed—as in all rhinoceroses,—upon a bony mass over the nostrils,—hence the word “rhinoceros” (rhis, the nose, chiras, a horn.)

In the “borele” they stand erect, curving slightly backwards, and one behind the other. The anterior horn is the longer—rarely above eighteen inches in length—but it is often broken or rubbed shorter, and in no two individuals is there equality in this respect. The posterior horn in this species is only a sort of knob; whereas in the “keitloa,” or two-horned black rhinoceros, both horns are developed to a nearly equal length.

In the “muchocho” and “kobaoba,” the after horns can hardly be said to exist, but the anterior one in both species far exceeds in length those of the borele and keitloa. In the muchocho it is frequently three feet in length, while the kobaoba is often seen with a horn four feet long, jutting out from the end of its ugly snout—a fearful weapon!

The horns of the two last do not curve back, but point forward; and as both these carry their heads low down the long sharp spike is often borne horizontally. In the form and length of their neck, the set of their ears, and other respects, the black rhinoceroses differ materially from the white ones. In fact, their habits are quite unlike. The former feed chiefly on the leaves and twigs of thorns, such as the *Acacia horrida*, or “wait-a-bits,” while the latter live upon grass. The former are of fiercer disposition—will attack man or any other animal on sight; and even sometimes seem to grow angry with the bushes, charging upon them and breaking them to pieces!

The white rhinoceroses, although fierce enough when wounded or provoked, are usually of pacific disposition, and will permit the hunter to pass without molestation.

These become very fat, and make excellent eating. The flesh of no African animal is esteemed superior to the calf of the white rhinoceros, whereas the black varieties never grow fat, and their flesh is tough and unpalatable.

The horns of all four are used by the natives for many purposes, being solid, of fine texture, and susceptible of a high polish. Out of the longer horns the

natives manufacture “knobkerries” (clubs), and loading-rods for their guns. The shorter ones afford material for mallets, drinking-cups, handles for small tools, and the like. In Abyssinia, and other parts of Northern Africa, where swords are in use, sword-hilts are made from the horns of the rhinoceros.

The hide is also used for different purposes, among others for making the whips known as “jamboks,” though hippopotamus-hide is superior.

The skin of the African rhinoceros, as already stated, is without the plaits, folds, and scutellae, that characterise its Asiatic congener, yet it is far from being a soft one. It is so thick and difficult to pierce, that a bullet of ordinary lead will sometimes flatten upon it. To ensure its penetrating, the lead must be hardened with solder.

The rhinoceros, though not a water animal, like the hippopotamus, is nevertheless fond of that element, and is rarely found at a great distance from it. All four kinds love to lie and wallow in mud, just as hogs in a summer’s day; and they are usually seen coated all over with this substance. During the day they may be observed lying down or standing under the shade of some thick mimosa-tree, either asleep or in a state of easy indolence; and it is during the night that they wander about in search of food and water. If approached from the lee side they can easily be got at, as their small sparkling eyes do not serve them well. On the contrary, if the hunter go to windward, they will scent him at a great distance, as their sense of smell is most acute. If their eyes were only as keen as their nostrils, it would be a dangerous game to attack them, for they can run with sufficient rapidity to overtake a horse in the first charge.

In charging and running, the black variety far excels the white. They are easily avoided, however, by the hunter springing quickly to one side, and letting them rush blindly on.

The black rhinoceros is about six feet high at the shoulder, and full thirteen in length; while the white kinds are far larger. The “kobaoba” is full seven feet high, and fourteen in length!

No wonder that an animal of these extraordinary dimensions was at first sight taken for the elephant. In fact, the kobaoba rhinoceros is the quadruped next to the elephant in size; and with his great muzzle—full eighteen inches broad—his long clumsy head, his vast ponderous body, this animal impresses one with an idea of strength and massive grandeur as great, and some say greater than the elephant himself. He looks, indeed, like a caricature of the elephant. It was not such a bad mistake, then, when our people by the wagon took the “kobaoba” for the “mighty elephant.”

Swartboy, however, set them all right by declaring that the animal they saw was the white rhinoceros.

Chapter Eighteen.

A heavy combat.

When they first saw the kobaoba, he was, as stated, just coming out of the thicket. Without halting, he headed in the direction of the vley already mentioned; and kept on towards it, his object evidently being to reach the water.

This little lake, of course, owed its existence to the spring—though it was full two hundred yards from the latter—and about the same from the great tree. It was nearly circular in shape, and about one hundred yards in diameter, so that its superficial area would thus be a little over two English acres. It merited, then, the name of “lake;” and by that name the young people already called it.

On its upper side—that in the direction of the spring—its shore was high, and in one or two places rocky, and these rocks ran back to the spring along the channel of a little rivulet. On the west or outer side of the lake the land lay lower, and the water at one or two points lipped up nearly to the level of the plain. For this reason it was, that upon that side, the bank was paddled all over with tracks of animals that had been to drink. Hendrik the hunter had observed among them the footprints of many kinds he knew nothing about.

It was for the lower end of the lake the kobaoba was making—no doubt with him an old and favourite drinking-place.

There was a point where the water was easier of access than elsewhere—a little to one side of where the wash or waste-stream of the lake ran out. It was a sort of cove with bright sandy beach, and approachable from the plain by a miniature gorge, hollowed out, no doubt, by the long usage of those animals who came to drink at the vley. By entering this cove, the tallest animals might get deep water and good bottom, so that they could drink without much straining or stooping. The kobaoba came on in a direct line for the lake; and as he drew near, they could see him heading for the gorge that led into the little cove. It proved he had been there before.

Next moment he passed through the gap, and stood knee-deep in the water.

After swallowing several copious draughts—now sneezing, and then wheezing—he plunged his broad snout, horn and all, into the water, tossed it till it foamed, and then lying down in it, commenced wallowing like a hog.

The place was shallow, and most of his huge body was above the surface—though there was deep enough water in the lake to have given him a bath had he desired it.

The first thought of Von Bloom, as well as of Hendrik, was how to

“circumvent” the rhinoceros, and of course destroy him. Not that they simply wished his destruction; but Swartboy had already represented what fine food the species was, and there was no stock of provision in camp. Hendrik had another object in wishing the death of the creature. He wanted a new loading-rod for his rifle; and he had gazed covetously at the kobaoba’s long horn.

But it was easier to desire the death of the rhinoceros than to accomplish it. They had no horses—at least none that could be mounted—and to attack the animal on foot would be a game as dangerous as idle. He would be like enough to impale one of them on his great spike, or else trample them brutally under his huge feet. If he did not do one or the other, he would easily make his escape—as any kind of rhinoceros can outrun a man.

How were they to manage him then?

Perhaps they might get near—fire at him from an ambush, and with a lucky shot stretch him out. A single bullet sometimes kills the rhinoceros—but only when correctly placed, so as to penetrate the heart, or some other of the “vitals.”

This was, probably, the best plan. They might easily get near enough. There was some bush cover close to the spot. It was probable the old kobaoba would not perceive them, if they approached from leeward, particularly as he seemed in the full tide of enjoyment at that moment.

They were about to attempt the approach, and had got to their feet for that purpose, when a sudden fit seemed to have attacked Swartboy. The latter commenced jumping over the ground, at the same time muttering in a low voice,—

“Da klow! da klow!”

A stranger would have fancied Swartboy in a fit, but Von Bloom knew that by “Da klow! da klow!” the Bushman meant “The elephant! the elephant!” and therefore looked in the direction in which Swartboy was pointing.

Sure enough, upon the western plain, looming up against the yellow sky, was a dark mass, that upon examination presented the outlines of an elephant. Its rounded back was easily distinguished over the low bushes; and its broad hanging ears were moving as it marched. All saw at a glance that it was coming towards the lake, and almost in the same track that the rhinoceros had taken.

Of course this new apparition quite disarranged the plans of the hunters. At sight of the mighty elephant, they scarce any longer gave a thought to the kobaoba. Not that they had formed any very great hopes of being able to kill the gigantic animal, yet some such thought was running through their minds. They had determined to try, at all events.

Before they could agree upon any plan, however, the elephant had got up to the edge of the lake. Though moving only at a slow walk, with his immense strides he soon measured off a large quantity of ground, and advanced much more rapidly than one would have supposed. The hunters had scarce time to exchange thoughts, before the huge creature was up within a few yards of the water.

Here he halted, pointed his proboscis in different directions, stood quite silent, and seemed to listen.

There was no noise to disturb him—even the kobaoba for the moment was quiet.

After standing a minute or so, the huge creature moved forward again, and entered the gorge already described.

They at the camp had now a full view of him, at less than three hundred yards distance. An immense mass he seemed. His body quite filled the gorge from side to side, and his long yellow tusks projecting more than two yards from his jaws, curved gracefully upward. He was an “old bull,” as Swartboy whispered.

Up to this time the rhinoceros had not had the slightest intimation of the elephant’s approach; for the tread of the latter—big beast as he is—is as silent as a cat’s. It is true that a loud rumbling noise like distant thunder proceeded from his inside as he moved along; but the kobaoba was in too high a caper just then to have heard or noticed any sound that was not very near and distinct.

The huge body of the elephant coming suddenly into “his sunshine,” and flinging its dark shadow over the vley, was distinct enough, and caused the kobaoba to get to his feet with an agility quite surprising for a creature of his build.

At the same time a noise, something between a grunt and a whistle escaped him, as the water was ejected from his nostrils.

The elephant also uttered his peculiar salute in a trumpet note, that echoed from the cliffs and halted in his tracks as soon as he saw the rhinoceros.

No doubt both were surprised at the rencontre as both stood for some seconds eyeing each other with apparent astonishment.

This, however, soon gave place to a different feeling. Symptoms of anger began to show themselves. It was evident that bad blood was brewing between them.

There was, in fact, a little dilemma. The elephant could not get comfortably at the water unless the rhinoceros left the cove; and the rhinoceros could not well get out of the cove, so long as the elephant blocked up the gorge with his immense thick limbs.

It is true, the kobaoba might have sneaked through among the other's legs, or he might have swum off and landed at some other point, and in either way have left the coast clear.

But of all animals in the world a rhinoceros is, perhaps, the most unaccommodating. He is, also, one of the most fearless, dreading neither man nor beast—not even the boasted lion, whom he often chases like a cat. Hence the old kobaoba had no intention of yielding ground to the elephant; and from his attitude, it was plain that he neither intended to sneak off under the other's belly, nor swim a single stroke for him. No—not a stroke.

It remained to be seen how the point of honour was to be decided. The attitude of affairs had become so interesting, that every one by the camp was gazing with fixed eyes upon the two great bulls—for the rhinoceros was also a “bull” and of the largest size known of his kind.

For several minutes they stood eyeing each other. The elephant, although much the larger, knew his antagonist well. He had met his “sort” before, and knew better than to despise his powers. Perhaps, ere now, he had had a touch of that long spit-like excrescence that stood out from the kobaoba's snout.

At all events, he did not rush upon his adversary at once—as he would have done on some poor antelope that might have crossed him in the same way.

His patience, however, became exhausted. His ancient dignity was insulted—his rule disputed—he wished to have his bath and his drink—he could bear the insolence of the rhinoceros no longer.

With a bellow that made the rocks ring again, he charged forward; placed his tusks firmly under the shoulder of his adversary,—gave a mighty “lift,” and turned the rhinoceros over in the water!

For a moment the latter plunged, and blowed, and snorted, his head half under water; but in a second's time he was on his feet again, and charging in turn. The spectators could see that he aimed right at the elephant's ribs with his horn, and that the latter did all he could to keep head towards him.

Again the elephant flung the kobaoba, and again the latter rose and charged madly upon his huge antagonist; and so both fought until the water around them was white with foam.

The contest was carried on in the water, until the elephant, seeming to think his adversary had an advantage there, backed himself into the gorge, and stood waiting with his head towards the lake. In this position the sides of the gorge did not protect him, as perhaps he fancied. They were too low, and his broad flanks rose far above them. They only kept him from turning round, and this interfered with the freedom of his movements.

It could scarce have been design in the rhinoceros to act as he now did, though

it appeared so to those who were watching. As the elephant took up his position in the gorge, the kobaoba clambered out upon the bank; and then, wheeling suddenly, with head to the ground and long horn projected horizontally, the latter rushed upon his antagonist and struck him right among the ribs. The spectators saw that the horn penetrated, and the loud scream that came from the elephant, with the quick motions of his trunk and tail, told plainly that he had received a severe wound. Instead of standing any longer in the gorge he rushed forward, and did not stop until he was knee-deep in the lake. Drawing the water up into his trunk, he raised it on high, and pointing it backwards, he discharged large volumes over his body, and upon the spot where he had received the thrust of the kobaoba's horn.

He then ran out of the lake, and charged about in search of the rhinoceros; but long-horn was nowhere to be found!

Having escaped from the cove without compromising his dignity, and perhaps believing that he had gained the victory, the rhinoceros, as soon as he delivered the thrust, had galloped off and disappeared among the bushes.

Chapter Nineteen.

The Death of the Elephant.

The battle between these two large quadrupeds did not continue for more than ten minutes. During that time the hunters made no advance towards attacking either of them—so much absorbed were they in watching the novel contest. It was only after the rhinoceros had retreated, and the elephant returned to the water, that they once more began to deliberate on some plan of assaulting this mightiest of African animals. Hans now laid hold of his gun and joined them.

The elephant, after looking about for his enemy had got back, and was standing knee-deep in the lake. He appeared restless and highly excited. His tail was continually in motion, and at intervals he uttered a piercing melancholy scream—far different to the usual trumpet-like bellow of his voice. He lifted his huge limbs, and then plunged them back again to the bottom, until the foam gathered upon the water with his continued churning.

But the oddest of his actions was the manner in which he employed his long tubular trunk. With this he sucked up vast volumes of water, and then pointing it backwards ejected the fluid over his back and shoulders, as if from an immense syringe. This shower-bath he kept repeating time after time, though it was evident he was not at his ease.

They all knew he was angry. Swartboy said it would be exceedingly dangerous to be seen by him at that moment, without having a horse to gallop out of his

way. On this account every one of them had concealed themselves behind the trunk of the nwana-tree, Von Bloom peeping past one side, and Hendrik the other, in order to watch his movements.

Notwithstanding the danger, they at length resolved to attack him. They believed that if they did not do so soon, he would walk off, and leave them supperless—for they had hoped to sup upon a slice of his trunk. Time, therefore, had grown precious, and they resolved to attack him without further ado.

They intended to creep as near as was safe. All three would fire together, and then lie close in the bushes until they saw the effect of their shots.

Without further parley, Von Bloom, Hans, and Hendrik, leaving the tree, crept through the bushes towards the western end of the lake. It was not a continuous thicket, but only an assemblage of copses and clumps, so that they required to steal very cautiously from one to the other. Von Bloom led the way, while the boys kept in his tracks, following him closely.

After some five minutes spent in this way they got under cover of a little clump near the water's edge, and near enough to the gigantic game. Upon their hands and knees they now approached the verge of the underwood; and having parted the leaves, looked through. The mighty quadruped was right under their eyes, within twenty yards of them!

He was still busy plunging about, and blowing volumes of water over his body. He gave no sign that he had any suspicion of their presence. They could take time, therefore, in choosing a part of his huge body at which to aim their pieces.

When first seen from their new position, he was standing stern towards them. Von Bloom did not think it a good time to fire, as they could not give him a deadly wound in that situation. They waited, therefore, until he might turn his side, before they should deliver their volley. They kept their eyes all the while steadily fixed on him.

He ceased at length to “churn” with his feet, and no longer raised water in his trunk; and now the hunters perceived that the lake was red for a space around him! It was his blood that had reddened it.

They no longer doubted that he had been wounded by the rhinoceros; but whether the wound was a bad one they could not tell. It was in his side, and as yet they could only see his broad stern from the position in which he still continued to stand. But they waited with confidence—as they knew that in turning to get out of the water, he would have to present his side towards them.

For several minutes he kept the same position, but they noticed that his tail no longer switched about, and that his attitude was loose and drooping. Now and

then he turned his proboscis to the spot where he had received the thrust of the kobaoba's horn. It was evident that the wound was distressing him, and this became more apparent by the loud painful breathing the creature uttered through his trunk.

The three began to grow impatient. Hendrik asked leave to creep round to another point, and give him a shot that would turn him round.

Just at that moment the elephant made a motion, as though he was about to come out of the water.

He had got fairly round—his head and forepart were over dry land—the three guns were pointed—the eyes of the three hunters were about to glance through the sights of their pieces, when all at once he was seen to rock and stagger,—and then roll over! With a loud splash, his vast body subsided into the water, sending great waves to every corner of the lake.

The hunters uncocked their guns, and, springing from their ambush, rushed forward to the bank. They saw at a glance that the elephant was dead. They saw the wound upon his side,—the hole made by the horn of the rhinoceros. It was not very large, but the terrible weapon had penetrated far into his body, into his very vitals. No wonder, then, at the result it had produced—the death of the mightiest of quadrupeds.

As soon as it became known that the elephant was dead, everybody was seen rushing forward to the spot. Little Trüey and Jan were called from their hiding-place—for they had both been hidden in the wagon—and Totty, too, went down with the rest. Swartboy was one of the first upon the spot, carrying an axe and a large knife—for Swartboy had designs upon the carcass—while Hans and Hendrik both threw off their jackets to assist in the butchering operations.

And what during this time was Von Bloom about? Ha! That is a more important question than you think for. That was an important hour—the hour of a great crisis in the life of the field-cornet.

He was standing with folded arms on the bank of the lake, directly over the spot where the elephant had fallen. He appeared to be wrapt in silent meditation, his eyes bent upon the huge carcass of the animal. No, not on the carcass. A close observer would have perceived that his eyes did not wander over that mountain of thick skin and flesh, but were resting upon a particular spot.

Was it the wound in the animal's side? And was Von Bloom meditating how the thrust had caused the death of such a huge creature?

Neither one nor the other. His thoughts were upon a very different theme from either.

The elephant had fallen so that his head was clear of the water, and rested upon a little bank of sand; along which, his soft and limber trunk lay extended to its full length. Curving like a pair of gigantic scimitars from its base, were the yellow enamelled tusks; those ivory arms that for years,—ay centuries, perhaps,—had served him to root up the trees of the forest, and rout his antagonists in many a dread encounter. Precious and beautiful trophies were they, but alas! their world-wide fame had cost no less than life to many thousands of his race.

Shining in all their magnificence lay these mated crescents, gently curved and softly rounded. It was upon these that the eyes of the field-cornet were bent.

Ay, and bent too with an eagerness unusual in his glance. His lips were compressed, his chest was visibly heaving. Oh! there was a world of thoughts passing through the mind of Von Bloom at that moment.

Were they painful thoughts? The expression of his face told the contrary. The cloud that all that day sat perched upon his brow had vanished. Not a trace of it remained, but in its place could be seen the lines of hope and joy, and these feelings at length found expression in words.

“It is the hand of Heaven!” he exclaimed aloud. “A fortune—a fortune!”

“What is it, papa?” inquired little Trüey, who was near him; “what were you speaking about, dear papa?”

And then all the others gathered around him, noticing his excited manner, and pleased at seeing him look so happy.

“What is it, papa?” asked all together, while Swartboy and Totty stood eager as the rest to hear the answer.

In the pleasant excitement of his thoughts, the fond father could no longer conceal from his children the secret of his new-born happiness. He would gratify them by disclosing it.

Pointing to the long crescents he said,—

“You see those beautiful tusks?”

Yes, of course, they all did.

“Well, do you know their value?”

No. They knew they were worth something. They knew that it was from elephants’ tusks that ivory was obtained, or, more properly, that elephants’ tusks were ivory itself; and that it was used in the manufacture of hundreds of articles. In fact, little Trüey had a beautiful fan made out of it, which had been her mother’s; and Jan had a knife with an ivory handle. Ivory was a very beautiful material and cost very dear, they knew. All this they knew, but the value of the two tusks they could not guess at. They said so.

“Well, my children,” said Von Bloom, “as near as I can estimate them, they are worth twenty pounds each of English money.”

“Oh! oh! Such a grand sum!” cried all in a breath.

“Yes,” continued the field-cornet; “I should think each tusk is one hundred pounds in weight, and as ivory at present sells for four shillings and sixpence the pound weight, these two would yield between forty and fifty pounds of sterling money.”

“Why, it would buy a full span of best oxen!” cried Hans.

“Four good horses!” said Hendrik.

“A whole flock of sheep!” added little Jan.

“But whom can we sell them to?” asked Hendrik, after a pause. “We are away from the settlements. Who is to give us either oxen, or horses, or sheep, for them? It would not be worth while to carry two tusks all the way—”

“Not two, Hendrik,” said his father, interrupting him; “but twenty it might,—ay, twice twenty, or three times that number. Now, do you understand what makes me so gay?”

“Oh!” exclaimed Hendrik, as well as the others, who now began to perceive what their father was so joyed about, “you think we can obtain more tusks in these parts?”

“Precisely so. I think there are many elephants here. I feel certain of it from the quantity of their spoor I have already noticed. We have our guns, and fortunately, plenty of ammunition. We are all pretty fair shots—why can we not obtain more of these valuable trophies?”

“But we shall,” continued Von Bloom. “I know we shall, because I recognise the hand of God in sending us this wealth in the midst of our misery—after we had lost everything. More will come by the guiding of the same hand. So be of good cheer, my children! We shall not want—we shall yet have plenty—we may be rich!”

It was not that any of those young creatures cared much about being rich, but because they saw their father so happy, that they broke out into something more than a murmur of applause. It was, in fact, a cheer, in which both Totty and Swartboy joined. It rang over the little lake, and caused the birds about settling to roost to wonder what was going on. There was no happier group in all Africa than stood at that moment upon the shore of that lonely little vley.

Chapter Twenty.

Turned Hunters.

The field-cornet, then, had resolved upon turning hunter by profession—a hunter of elephants; and it was a pleasant reflection to think, that this occupation promised, not only exciting sport, but great profit. He knew that it was not so easy a matter to succeed in killing such large and valuable game as elephants. He did not suppose that in a few weeks or months he would obtain any great quantities of their ivory spoils; but he had made up his mind to spend even years in the pursuit. For years he should lead the life of a Bushman—for years his sons would be “Bush-boys,” and he hoped that in time his patience and toil would be amply rewarded.

That night around the camp-fire all were very happy and very merry. The elephant had been left where he lay, to be cut up on the morrow. Only his trunk had been taken off—part of which was cooked for supper.

Although all the flesh of the elephant is eatable, the trunk is esteemed one of the delicate bits. It tastes not unlike ox-tongue; and all of them liked it exceedingly. To Swartboy, who had made many a meal upon “de ole klow,” it was a highly-relished feast.

They had plenty of fine milk, too. The cow, now upon the best of pasture, doubled her yield; and the quantity of this, the most delicious of all drinks, was sufficient to give every one a large allowance.

While enjoying their new-fashioned dish of roast elephant-trunk, the conversation naturally turned upon these animals.

Everybody knows the appearance of the elephant, therefore a description of him is quite superfluous. But everybody does not know that there are two distinct kinds of this gigantic quadruped—the African and Asiatic.

Until a late period they were thought to be of the same species. Now they are acknowledged to be, not only distinct, but very different in many respects. The Asiatic, or, as it is more frequently called, the “Indian” elephant is the larger of the two; but it is possible that domestication may have produced a larger kind, as is the rule with many animals. The African species exists only in a wild state; and it would appear that individuals of this kind have been measured having the dimensions of the largest of the wild Asiatic elephants.

The most remarkable points of difference between the two are found in the ears and tusks. The ears of the African elephant are of enormous proportions, meeting each other above the shoulders, and hanging down below the breast. Those of the Indian elephant are scarce one-third the size. In his grand tusks the former has far the advantage—these in some individuals weighing nearly two hundred pounds each—while the tusks of the latter rarely reach the weight of one hundred. To this, however, there are some exceptions. Of course a two hundred pound tusk is one of the very largest, and far above the average even

of African elephants. In this species the females are also provided with tusks—though not of such size as in the males—whereas the female of the Indian elephant has either no tusks at all, or they are so small as to be scarcely perceptible outside the skin of the lips. The other chief points of difference between the two are that the front of the Asiatic elephant is concave, while that of the African is convex; and the former has four horny toes or sabots on the hind-foot, where only three appear upon that of the latter. The enamel of the teeth presents still another proof of these animals being different in species.

Nor are all Asiatic elephants alike. In this species there are varieties which present very distinct features; and, indeed, these “varieties,” as they are called, appear to differ from each other, nearly as much as any one of them does from the African kind.

One variety known among Orientals by the name of “mooknah,” has straight tusks that point downward, whereas the usual habit of these singular appendages is to curve upward.

Asiatics recognise two main castes, or perhaps species, among their elephants. One known as “coomareah,” is a deep-bodied, compact, and strong animal, with large trunk and short legs. The other called “merghee,” is a taller kind, but neither so compact nor strong as the coomareah, nor has he so large a trunk. His long legs enable him to travel faster than the coomareah; but the latter having a larger trunk (a point of beauty among elephant-owners) and being capable of enduring more fatigue, is the favourite, and fetches a larger price in the Oriental market.

Occasionally a white elephant is met with. This is simply an “albino,” but such are greatly prized in many countries of Asia, and large sums are given for them. They are even held in superstitious veneration in some parts.

The Indian elephant at the present time inhabits most of the southern countries of Asia, including the large islands, Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, etcetera. Of course every one knows that in these countries the elephant has been trained long ago to the use of man, and is one of the “domestic animals.” But he also exists in a wild state, both upon the continent of Asia and in its islands; and hunting the elephant is one of the grand sport of the East.

In Africa the elephant exists only in a state of nature. None of the nations upon this little-known continent tame or train him to any purpose. He is only prized among them for his precious tusks, and his flesh as well. Some have asserted that this species is more fierce than its Indian congener, and could not be domesticated. This is altogether a mistake. The reason why the African elephant is not trained, is simply that none of the modern nations of Africa have yet reached a high enough point of civilisation to avail themselves of the

services of this valuable animal.

The African elephant may be domesticated and trained to the “howdah,” or castle, as easily as his Indian cousin. The trial has been made; but that it can be done no better proof is required than that at one period it was done, and upon a large scale. The elephants of the Carthaginian army were of this species.

The African elephant at present inhabits the central and southern parts of Africa. Abyssinia on the east, and Senegal on the west, are his northern limits, and but a few years ago he roamed southward to the very Cape of Good Hope. The activity of the Dutch ivory-hunters, with their enormous long guns, has driven him from that quarter; and he is no longer to be found to the south of the Orange River.

Some naturalists (Cuvier among others) believed the Abyssinian elephant to be of the Indian species. That idea is now exploded, and there is no reason to think that the latter inhabits any part of Africa. It is very likely there are varieties of the African species in different parts of the continent. It is well-known that those of the tropical regions are larger than the others; and a reddish and very fierce kind is said to be met with in the mountains of Africa, upon the river Niger. It is probable, however, that these red elephants seen have been some whose bodies were coated with red dust, as it is a habit of elephants to powder themselves with dust on many occasions, using their trunks as “dredgers.”

Swartboy spoke of a variety well-known among the Hottentot hunters as the “koes-cops.” This kind, he said, differed from the ordinary ones by its altogether wanting the tusks, and being of a far more vicious disposition. Its encounter is more dreaded; but as it possesses no trophies to make it worth the trouble and danger of killing, the hunters usually give it a wide berth.

Such was the conversation that night around the camp-fire. Much of the information here given was furnished by Hans, who of course had gathered it from books; but the Bushman contributed his quota—perhaps of a far more reliable character. All were destined ere long to make practical acquaintance with the haunts and habits of this huge quadruped, that to them had now become the most interesting of all the animal creation.

Chapter Twenty One.

“Jerking” an Elephant.

Next day was one of severe, but joyful labour. It was spent in “curing” the elephant, not in a medical sense, but in the language of the provision-store.

Although not equal to either beef or mutton, or even pork, the flesh of the elephant is sufficiently palatable to be eaten. There is no reason why it should not be, for the animal is a clean feeder, and lives altogether on vegetable substances—the leaves and tender shoots of trees, with several species of bulbous roots, which he well knows how to extract from the ground with his tusks and trunk. It does not follow from this that his beef should be well tasted—since we see that the hog, one of the most unclean of feeders, yields most delicious “pork;” while another of the same family (*pachydermatii*) that subsists only on sweet succulent roots, produces a flesh both insipid and bitter. I allude to the South American tapir. The quality of the food, therefore, is no criterion of the quality of the flesh.

It is true that the beef of the elephant was not what Von Bloom and most of his family would have chosen for their regular diet. Had they been sure of procuring a supply of antelope venison, the great carcass might have gone, not to the “dogs,” but to their kindred the hyenas. But they were not sure of getting even a single antelope, and therefore decided upon “curing” the elephant. It would be a safe stock to have on hand, and need not interfere with their eating venison, or any other dainty that might turn up.

The first thing done was to cut out the tusks. This proved a tough job, and occupied full two hours. Fortunately there was a good axe on hand. But for this and Swartboy’s knowledge, double the time might have been wasted in the operation.

The ivory having been extracted and put away in a safe place, the “cutting up” then commenced in earnest. Von Bloom and Swartboy were the “baas-butchers,” while Hans and Hendrik played the part of “swabs.” As the carcass lay half under water, they would have had some difficulty in dealing with the under part. But this they did not design to touch. The upper half would be amply sufficient to provision them a long while; and so they set about removing the skin from that side that was uppermost.

The rough thick outer coat they removed in broad sheets cut into sections; and then they peeled off several coats of an under-skin, of tough and pliant nature. Had they needed water-vessels, Swartboy would have saved this for making them—as it is used for such purposes by the Bushmen and other natives. But they had vessels enough in the wagon, and this skin was thrown away.

They had now reached the pure flesh, which they separated in large sheets from the ribs; and then the ribs were cut out, one by one, with the axe. This trouble they would not have taken—as they did not want the ribs—but they cut them away for another reason, namely, to enable them to get at the valuable fat, which lies in enormous quantities around the intestines. Of course for all cooking purposes, the fat would be to them invaluable, and indeed almost necessary to render the flesh itself eatable.

It is no easy matter to get at the fat in the inside of an elephant, as the whole of the intestines have first to be removed. But Swartboy was not to be deterred by a little trouble; so climbing into the interior of the huge carcass, he commenced cutting and delving, and every now and then passing a multitude of “inwards” out to the others, who carried them off out of the way.

After a long spell of this work, the fat was secured, and carefully packed in a piece of clean under-skin; and then the “butchering” was finished.

Of course the four feet, which along with the trunk are considered the “tit-bits,” had already been separated at the fetlock joint; and stood out upon the bank, for the future consideration of Swartboy.

The next thing to be done was to “cure” the meat. They had a stock of suit—that precious, though, as lately discovered, not indispensable article. But the quantity—stowed away in a dry corner of the wagon—was small, and would have gone but a short way in curing an elephant.

They had no idea of using it for such a purpose. Flesh can be preserved without salt; and not only Swartboy, but Von Bloom himself, knew how to preserve it. In all countries where salt is scarce, the process of “jerking” meat is well understood, and consists simply in cutting it into thin strips and hanging it out in the sun. A few days of bright warm sunshine will “jerk” it sufficiently; and meat thus dried will keep good for months. A slow fire will answer the purpose nearly as well; and in the absence of sunshine, the fire is often resorted to.

Sun-dried meat in South Africa is called “biltongue.” The Spaniards of Mexico name it “tasajo,” while those of Peru style it “charqui.” In English it is “jerked” meat.

Several hours were spent in cutting the elephant-beef into strips, and then a number of forked poles were set up, others were laid horizontally over the forks, and upon these the meat was suspended, and hung down in numberless festoons.

Before the sun went down, the neighbourhood of the camp presented a rare appearance. It looked somewhat like the enclosure of a yarn-bleacher, except that the hanging strips, instead of being white, were of a beautiful clear ruby colour.

But the work was not yet completed. The feet remained to be “preserved,” and the mode of curing these was entirely different. That was a secret known only to Swartboy, and in the execution of it the Bushman played first fiddle, with the important air of a chef de cuisine. He proceeded as follows:—

He first dug a hole in the ground, about two feet deep, and a little more in diameter—just large enough to admit one of the feet, which was nearly two

feet diameter at the base. The earth which came out of this hole Swartboy placed in the form of a loose embankment around the edge.

By his direction the boys had already collected upon the spot a large quantity of dried branches and logs. These Swartboy now built over the hole, into a pyramid of ten feet high, and then set the pile on fire. He next proceeded to make three other pits precisely similar, and built over each a fire like the first, until four large fires were burning upon the ground.

The fires being now fairly under way, he could only wait until each had burned down. This would carry the process into the night, and so it turned out; but Swartboy had a foresight of this. He knew he would get through with the more important portion of his work before bedtime.

When the first fire had burned quite to red cinders, Swartboy's hardest turn of duty began. With a shovel he lifted the cinders out of the hole, until it was empty; but he was more than an hour in performing this apparently simple labour. The difficulty arose from the intense heat he had to encounter, which drove him back after every few moments' work; so that he was compelled to retreat at intervals in order to cool himself.

The "baas," as well as Hendrik and Hans, took turns with him, until all four were perspiring as if they had been shut up for half-an-hour in a baker's oven.

When the hole was thoroughly scooped clean of coals, Swartboy, assisted by Von Bloom, lifted one of the huge feet; and, carrying it as near as they dare go on account of the scorching heat, they dropped it in upon its base.

The sandy earth which had been originally removed, and which was now as hot as molten lead, was pushed over, and around the foot; and then the cinders were raked on top, and over that another huge fire was kindled.

The same process was gone through with the other three feet, and all four were to be left in the "oven" until the fires should be burned down, when they would be found sufficiently baked.

Swartboy would then rake off the cinders, take out the feet with a sharp wooden spit, beat them well to get rid of the dust, scrape the sand clear, then pare off the outside skin, when they would be ready either to be eaten or would keep for a long time.

Swartboy would do all this as soon as the four huge bonfires should burn down.

But that would not be before the morning; so all of them, fatigued by the extraordinary exertions of the day, finished their suppers of broiled trunk, and went to rest under the protecting shadow of the nwana.

Chapter Twenty Two.

The hideous Hyena.

Fatigued as they were, they would soon have fallen asleep. But they were not permitted to do so. As they lay with closed eyes in that half-dreamy state that precedes sleep, they were suddenly startled by strange voices near the camp.

These voices were uttered in peals of loud laughter; and no one, unacquainted with them, would have pronounced them to be anything else than the voices of human beings. They exactly resembled the strong treble produced by the laugh of a maniac negro. It seemed as if some Bedlam of negroes had been let loose, and were approaching the spot.

I say approaching, because each moment the sounds grew clearer and louder; and it was evident that whatever gave utterance to them was coming nearer to the camp.

That there was more than one creature was evident—ay, and it was equally evident that there was more than one kind of creature; for so varied were the voices, it would have puzzled a ventriloquist to have given imitations of them all. There was howling, and whining, and grunting, and growling, and low melancholy moaning as of some one in pain, and hissing, and chattering, and short sharp intonations, as if it were the barking of dogs, and then a moment or two of deep silence, and again that chorus of human-like laughter, that in point of horror and hideous suggestions surpassed all the other sounds.

You will suppose that such a wild concert must have put the camp in a state of great alarm. Not a bit of it. Nobody was frightened the least—not even innocent little Trüey, nor the diminutive Jan.

Had they been strangers to these sounds, no doubt they would have been more than frightened. They would have been terrified by them; for they were calculated to produce such an effect upon any one to whose ears they were new.

But Von Bloom and his family had lived too long upon the wild karoo to be ignorant of those voices. In the howling, and chattering, and yelping, they heard but the cries of the jackal; and they well knew the maniac laugh of the hideous hyena.

Instead of being alarmed, and springing from their beds, they lay still and listened—not dreading any attack from the noisy creatures.

Von Bloom and the children slept in the wagon; Swartboy and Totty upon the ground—but these lay close to the fires, and therefore did not fear wild beasts of any kind.

But the hyenas and jackals upon this occasion appeared to be both numerous

and bold. In a few minutes after they were first heard, their cries rose around the camp on all sides, so near and so loud as to be positively disagreeable—even without considering the nature of the brutes that uttered them.

At last they came so close, that it was impossible to look in any direction without seeing a pair of green or red eyes gleaming under the light of the fires! White teeth, too, could be observed, as the hyenas opened their jaws, to give utterance to their harsh laughter-like cries.

With such a sight before their eyes, and such sounds ringing in their ears, neither Von Bloom nor any of his people—tired as they were—could go to sleep. Indeed, not only was sleep out of the question, but, worse than that, all—the field-cornet himself not excepted—began to experience some feelings of apprehension, if not actual alarm.

They had never beheld a troop of hyenas so numerous and fierce. There could not be less than two dozen of them around the camp, with twice that number of jackals.

Von Bloom knew that although, under ordinary circumstances, the hyena is not a dangerous animal, yet there are places and times when he will attack human beings. Swartboy knew this well, and Hans, too, from having read of it. No wonder, then, that some apprehension was felt by all of them.

The hyenas now behaved with such boldness, and appeared so ravenous, that sleep was out of the question. Some demonstration must be made to drive the brutes away from the camp.

Von Bloom, Hans, and Hendrik, laid hold of their guns, and got out of the wagon, while Swartboy armed himself with his bow and arrows. All four stood close by the trunk of the *mwana*, on the other side from that where the fires were. In this place they were in the shadow, where they could best observe anything that should come under the light of the fires without being themselves seen. Their position was well chosen.

They had scarcely fixed themselves in it, when they perceived a great piece of neglect they had been guilty of. Now, for the first time it occurred to them what had brought the hyenas around them in such numbers. Beyond a doubt it was the flesh of the elephant,—the *biltongue*.

That was what the beasts were after; and all now saw that a mistake had been committed in hanging the meat too low. The hyenas might easily get at it.

This was soon made manifest; for, even at the moment while they stood watching the red festoons, plainly visible under the light of Swartboy's fires, a shaggy spotted brute rushed forward, reared up on his hind-legs, seized one of the pieces, dragged it down from the pole, and then ran off with it into the darkness.

A rushing sound could be heard as the others joined him to get share of his plunder; and, no doubt, in less than half a minute the morsel was consumed; for, at the end of that time, glancing eyes and gleaming teeth showed that the whole troop was back again and ready to make a fresh seizure.

None of the hunters had fired, as the nimbleness with which the brutes moved about rendered it difficult to take aim at any one of them; and all knew that powder and lead were too precious to be wasted on a “flying shot.”

Emboldened by their success, the hyenas had now drawn nearer, and in a moment more would have made a general charge upon the scaffolds of flesh, and, no doubt, would have succeeded in carrying off a large quantity of it. But just then it occurred to Von Bloom that it would be best to lay aside their guns and remedy the mistake they had made, by putting the biltongue out of reach. If they did not do so, they would either have to remain awake all night and guard it, or else lose every string of it.

How was it to be put out of reach?

At first they thought of collecting it into a heap and stowing it away in the wagon. That would not only be an unpleasant job, but it would interfere with their sleeping-quarters.

An alternative, however, presented itself. They saw that if the scaffolds were only high enough, the meat might be easily hung so as to be out of reach of the hyenas. The only question was, how to place the cross-poles a little higher. In the darkness they could not obtain a new set of uprights, and therein lay the difficulty. How were they to get over it?

Hans had the credit of suggesting a way: and that was, to take out some of the uprights, splice them to the others, with the forked ends uppermost, and then rest the horizontal poles on the upper forks. That would give a scaffold tall enough to hang the meat beyond the reach of either jackals or hyenas.

Hans's suggestion was at once adopted. Half of the uprights were taken up and spliced against the others so as to raise their forks full twelve feet in the air; and then the cross-poles were rested over their tops. By standing upon one of the wagon-chests, Von Bloom was able to fling the strips of meat over the horizontal poles, and in such a manner that it hung only a few inches down, and was now quite beyond the reach of the ravenous brutes.

When the business was finished, the party resumed their station under the shadow of the tree, intending to watch for a while, and see how the wolfish intruders would act.

They had not long to watch. In less than five minutes the troop approached the biltongue, howling, and gibbering, and laughing, as before; only this time uttering peculiar cries, as if to express disappointment. They saw at a glance

that the tempting festoons were no longer within their reach!

They were not going to leave the ground, however, without assuring themselves of this fact; and several of the largest approached boldly under the scaffolds, and commenced leaping up to try the height.

After several attempts, springing each time as high as they were able, they appeared to grow discouraged; and no doubt would in time have imitated the fox with the grapes, and gone quietly away. But Von Bloom, indignant at being roused after such a fashion, from his pleasant rest, was determined to take some revenge upon his tormenters; so he whispered the word to the others, and a volley was delivered from behind the tree.

The unexpected discharge caused a quick scattering of both hyenas and jackals, and the pattering of their numerous feet could be heard as they ran off. When the ground under the scaffold was examined, two of the larger of these ravenous quadrupeds, and one of the smaller, were found to have bitten the dust.

Swartboy had discharged his arrow along with the guns, and it was he that had slain the jackal, for the poisoned shaft was seen sticking between the animal's ribs.

The guns were again loaded, the party took their stations as before; but, although they waited another half-hour, neither hyena nor jackal made their appearance.

They had not gone far away, however, as their wild music testified; but the reason they did not return was, that they had now discovered the half carcass of the elephant that lay in the lake, and upon that they were making their supper. Their plunging in the water could be distinctly heard from the camp, and during the whole night they quarrelled and growled, and laughed and yelled, as they gorged themselves on their ample prey.

Of course Von Bloom and his people did not sit up all night to listen to this medley of noises. As soon as they perceived that the brutes were not likely to come any more near the camp, they laid aside their weapons, returned to their respective sleeping-places, and were all soon buried in the sweet slumber that follows a day of healthy exercise.

Chapter Twenty Three.

Stalking the Ourebi.

Next morning the hyenas and jackals had disappeared from the scene, and, to the surprise of all, not a particle of flesh was left upon the bones of the

elephant. There lay the huge skeleton picked clean, the bones even polished white by the rough tongues of the hyenas. Nay, still stranger to relate, two of the horses—these poor brutes had been long since left to themselves,—had been pulled down during the night, and their skeletons lay at a short distance from the camp as cleanly picked as that of the elephant!

All this was evidence of the great number of ravenous creatures that must have their home in that quarter,—evidence, too, that game animals abounded, for where these are not numerous the beasts of prey cannot exist. Indeed, from the quantity of tracks that were seen upon the shores of the vley, it was evident that animals of various kinds had drunk there during the night. There was the round solid hoof of the quagga, and his near congener the dauw; and there was the neat hoof-print of the gemsbok, and the larger track of the eland; and among these Von Bloom did not fail to notice the spoor of the dreaded lion. Although they had not heard his roaring that night, they had no doubt but there were plenty of his kind in that part of the country. The presence of his favourite prey,—the quaggas, the gemsboks, and the elands,—were sure indications that the king of beasts was not far off.

Not much work was done that day. The heavy labour of curing the biltongue, that had occupied them the whole of the preceding day, and their disturbed rest, had rendered them all listless; and neither Von Bloom nor the others had any inclination for work. So they moved around the camp and did very little.

Swartboy took his elephant's feet from the oven, and cleaned them; and also let down the biltongue and arranged it so as to be better exposed to the sun. Von Bloom himself shot the three remaining horses, having driven them to a good distance from the camp. He did this to put an end to the suffering of the poor brutes,—for it was plain to every one that they could survive but a day or two longer; and to send a bullet through the heart of each was an act of mercy to them.

Out of all the live-stock of the field-cornet, the cow alone remained, and she was now tended with the greatest care. Without the precious milk, which she yielded in such quantity, their diet would have been savage enough; and they fully appreciated the service she rendered them. Each day she was driven out to the best pasture, and at night shut up in a safe kraal of wait-a-bit thorns, that had been built for her at a little distance from the tree. These thorns had been placed in such a manner that their shanks all radiated inward, while the bushy tops were turned out, forming a *chevaux-de-frise*, that scarce any animal would have attempted to get through. Such a fence will turn even the lion, unless when he has been rendered fierce and reckless by provocation.

Of course a gap had been left for the cow to pass in and out, and this was closed by one immense bush, which served all the purpose of a gate. Such was the kraal of "old Graaf." Besides the cow, the only living thing that remained

in camp was Trüey's little pet, the fawn of the gazelle.

But on that very day another pet was added, a dear little creature, not less beautiful than the springbok, and of still more diminutive proportions. That was the fawn of an "ourebi,"—one of the elegant little antelopes that are found in such variety over the plains and in the "bush" of Southern Africa.

It was to Hendrik they were indebted not only for this pet, but for a dinner of delicate venison, which they had that day eaten, and which all of them, except Swartboy, preferred to elephant-beef. Hendrik had procured the venison by a shot from his rifle, and in the following manner. About midday he went out—having fancied that upon a large grassy meadow near the camp he saw some animal. After walking about half a mile, and keeping among bushes, around the edge of the meadow, he got near enough to be sure that it was an animal he had observed, for he now saw two in the place he had marked.

They were of a kind he had not met with before. They were very small creatures,—smaller even than springboks,—but, from their general form and appearance, Hendrik knew they were either antelopes or deer; and, as Hans had told him there were no deer in Southern Africa, he concluded they must be some species of antelope. They were a buck and doe,—this he knew because one of them only carried horns. The buck was under two feet in height, of slender make, and pale tawny colour. He was white-bellied, with white arches above the eyes, and some long white hair under the throat. Below his knees were yellowish tufts of long hair, and his horns—instead of being lyrate, like those of the springbok—rose nearly vertical to the height of four inches. They were black in colour, round-shaped, and slightly ringed. The doe was without horns, and was a much smaller animal than her mate.

From all these marks Hendrik thought the little antelopes were "ourebis;" and such they were.

He continued to stalk in upon them, until he was as close as he could get. But he was still more than two hundred yards from them, and of course far from being within shooting distance with his small rifle.

A thick jong dora bush concealed him, but he dared not go farther else the game would have taken the alarm. He could perceive that they were shy creatures.

Every now and gain the buck would raise his graceful neck to its full stretch, utter a slight bleating call, and look suspiciously around him. From these symptoms Hendrik drew the inference that it was shy game, and would not be easily approached.

He lay for a moment, thinking what he should do. He was to leeward of the game, as he had purposely gone there; but after a while, to his chagrin, he saw that they were feeding up the wind, and of course widening the distance

between them and himself.

It occurred to Hendrik that it might be their habit to browse up the wind, as springboks and some other species do. If so, he might as well give it up, or else make a long circuit and head them. To do this would be a work of labour and of time, and a very uncertain stalk it would be in the end. After all his long tramping, and creeping, and crouching, the game would be like enough to scent him before they came within shot—for it is for this very reason that their instinct teaches them to browse against, and not with the wind.

As the plain was large, and the cover very distant, Hendrik was discouraged and gave up the design he had half formed of trying to head them.

He was about to rise to his feet, and return home, when it occurred to him that perhaps he might find a decoy available. He knew there were several species of antelopes, with whom curiosity was stronger than fear. He had often lured the springbok within reach. Why would not these obey the same impulse?

He determined to make trial. At the worst he could only fail, and he had no chance of getting a shot otherwise.

Without losing a moment he thrust his hand into his pocket. He should have found there a large red handkerchief which he had more than once used for a similar purpose. To his chagrin it was not there!

He dived into both pockets of his jacket, then into his wide trousers, then under the breast of his waistcoat. No. The handkerchief was not to be found. Alas! it had been left in the wagon! It was very annoying.

What else could he make use of? Take off his jacket and hold it up? It was not gay enough in colour. It would not do.

Should he raise his hat upon the end of his gun? That might be better, but still it would look too much like the human form, and Hendrik knew that all animals feared that.

A happy thought at length occurred to him. He had heard, that with the curious antelopes, strange forms or movements attract almost as much as glaring colours. He remembered a trick that was said to be practised with success by the hunters. It was easy enough, and consisted merely in the hunter standing upon his hands and head, and kicking his heels in the air!

Now Hendrik happened to be one of those very boys who had often practised this little bit of gymnastics for amusement; and he could stand upon his head like an acrobat.

Without losing a moment he placed his rifle upon the ground, between his hands, and hoisting his feet into the air, commenced kicking them about, clinking them together, and crossing them in the most fantastic manner.

He had placed himself so that his face was turned towards the animals, while he stood upon his head. Of course he could not see them while in this position, as the grass was a foot high; but, at intervals, he permitted his feet to descend to the earth; and then, by looking between his legs, he could tell how the ruse was succeeding.

It did succeed. The buck, on first perceiving the strange object, uttered a sharp whistle, and darted off with the swiftness of a bird—for the “ourebi” is one of the swiftest of African antelopes. The doe followed, though not so fast, and soon fell into the rear.

The buck, perceiving this, suddenly halted—as if ashamed of his want of gallantry—wheeled round, and galloped back, until he was once more between the doe and the odd thing that had alarmed him.

What could this odd thing be? he now seemed to inquire of himself. It was not a lion, nor a leopard, nor a hyena, nor yet a jackal. It was neither fox, nor fennec, nor earth-wolf, nor wild hound, nor any of his well-known enemies. It was not a Bushman neither, for they are not double-headed as it appeared. What could it be? It had kept its place—it had not pursued him. Perhaps it was not at all dangerous. No doubt it was harmless enough.

So reasoned the ourebi. His curiosity overcame his fear. He would go a little nearer. He would have a better view of the thing before he took to flight. No matter what it was, it could do no hurt at that distance; and as to overtaking him, pah! there wasn't a creature, biped or quadruped, in all Africa that he could not fling dust in the face of.

So he went a little nearer, and then a little nearer still, and continued to advance by successive runs, now this way and now that way, zigzagging over the plain, until he was within less than a hundred paces of the odd object that at first light had so terrified him.

His companion, the doe, kept close after him; and seemed quite as curious as himself—her large shining eyes opened to their full extent, as she stopped to gaze at intervals.

Sometimes the two met each other in their course; and halted a moment, as though they held consultation in whispers; and asked each other if they had yet made out the character of the stranger.

It was evident, however, that neither had done so—as they still continued to approach it with looks and gestures of inquiry and wonder.

At length the odd object disappeared for a moment under the grass; and then reappeared,—but this time in an altered form. Something about it glanced brightly under the sun, and this glancing quite fascinated the buck, so that he could not stir from the spot, but stood eyeing it steadily.

Fatal fascination! It was his last gaze. A bright flash shot up—something struck him through the heart, and he saw the shining object no more!

The doe bounded forward to where her mate had fallen, and stood bleating over him. She knew not the cause of his sudden death, but she saw that he was dead. The wound in his side—the stream of red blood—were under her eyes. She had never witnessed death in that form before, but she knew her lover was dead. His silence—his form stretched along the grass motionless and limber—his glassy eyes—all told her he had ceased to live.

She would have fled, but she could not leave him—she could not bear to part even from his lifeless form. She would remain a while, and mourn over him.

Her widowhood was a short one. Again flashed the priming,—again cracked the shining tube—and the sorrowing doe fell over upon the body of her mate.

The young hunter rose to his feet, and ran forward. He did not, according to usual custom, stop to load before approaching his quarry. The plain was perfectly level, and he saw no other animal upon it. What was his surprise on reaching the antelopes, to perceive that there was a third one of the party still alive!

Yes, a little fawn, not taller than a rabbit, was bounding about through the grass, running around the prostrate body of its mother, and uttering its tiny bleat.

Hendrik was surprised, because he had not observed this creature before; but, indeed, he had not seen much of the antelopes until the moment of taking aim, and the grass had concealed the tiny young one.

Hunter as Hendrik was, he could not help feeling strongly as he regarded the tableau before him. But he felt that he had not wantonly destroyed these creatures for mere amusement, and that satisfied his conscience.

The little fawn would make a famous pet for Jan, who had often wished for one, to be equal with his sister. It could be fed upon the cow's milk, and, though it had lost both father and mother, Hendrik resolved that it should be carefully brought up. He had no difficulty in capturing it, as it refused to leave the spot where its mother lay, and Hendrik soon held the gentle creature in his arms.

He then tied the buck and doe together; and, having fastened a strong cord round the horns of the latter, he set off dragging the two antelopes behind him.

As these lay upon the ground, heads foremost, they were drawn with the grain of the hair, which made it much easier; and as there was nothing but grass sward to be passed over, the young hunter succeeded in taking the whole of his game to camp without any great difficulty.

The joy of all was great, at seeing such a fine lot of venison, but Jan's

rejoicing was greater than all; and he no longer envied Trüey the possession of her little gazelle.

Chapter Twenty Four.

Little Jan's Adventure.

It would have been better that Jan had never seen the little "ourebi,"—better both for Jan and the antelope, for that night the innocent creature was the cause of a terrible panic in the camp.

They had all gone to sleep as on the previous night,—Von Bloom and the four children in the wagon, while the Bushman and Totty slept upon the grass. The latter lay under the wagon; but Swartboy had kindled a large fire at a little distance from it, and beside this had stretched himself, rolled up in his sheep-skin kaross.

They had all gone to sleep without being disturbed by the hyenas. This was easily accounted for. The three horses that had been shot that day occupied the attention of these gentry, for their hideous voices could be heard off in the direction where the carcasses lay. Having enough to give them a supper, they found no occasion to risk themselves in the neighbourhood of the camp, where they had experienced such a hostile reception on the previous night. So reasoned Von Bloom, as he turned over and fell asleep.

He did not reason correctly, however. It was true that the hyenas were just then making a meal upon the horses; but it was a mistake to suppose that that would satisfy these ravenous brutes, who never seem to have enough. Long before morning, had Von Bloom been awake he would have heard the maniac laugh closer to the camp, and might have seen the green eyes of the hyena glancing under the expiring blaze of Swartboy's camp-fire.

Indeed, he had heard the beasts once that he awoke; but, knowing that the biltongue had been this night placed out of their reach, and thinking that there was nothing to which they could do any harm, he gave no heed to their noisy demonstrations, and went to sleep again.

He was awakened, however, by a shrill squeak, as of some animal in the agonies of death; and then there was a second squeak, that seemed to be suddenly interrupted by the stifling of the creature's utterance!

In these cries Von Bloom, as well as the others—who were now also awake—recognised the bleat of the ourebi, for they had heard it several times during the afternoon.

"The hyenas are killing it!" thought they. But they had not time to say so,

before another and far different cry reached their ears, and caused them all to start as if a bomb-shell had burst under the wagon. That cry was the voice of Jan, and sounded in the same direction whence came the scream of the stifled antelope!

“O heaven! what could it mean?”

The child’s voice first reached them in a sudden screech—then there was a confused noise resembling a scuffle—and Jan was again heard crying aloud for help, while at the same time his voice was interrupted, and each call appeared to come from a greater distance! Something or somebody was carrying him off!

This idea occurred to Von Bloom, Hans, and Hendrik, at the same instant. Of course it filled them with consternation; and, as they were scarce yet awake, they knew not what to do.

The cries of Jan, however, soon brought them to their senses; and to run towards the direction whence these came was the first thought of all.

To grope for their guns would waste time, and all three leaped out of the wagon without them.

Totty was upon her feet and jabbering, but she knew no more than they what had happened.

They did not stop long to question her. The voice of Swartboy, uttered in loud barks and clicks, summoned them elsewhere; and they now beheld a red flaming brand rushing through the darkness, which no doubt was carried in the hands of that worthy.

They started off in the direction of the blazing torch, and ran as fast as they could. They still heard the Bushman’s voice, and to their dismay beyond it the screams of little Jan!

Of course they could not tell what was causing all this. They only pressed on with fearful apprehensions.

When they had got within some fifty paces of the torch, they perceived it suddenly descend, then raised again, and again brought down, in a rapid and violent manner! They could hear the voice of the Bushman barking and clicking louder than ever, as though he was engaged in chastising some creature.

But Jan’s voice they no longer heard—he was screaming no more—was he dead?

With terrible forebodings they rushed on.

When they arrived upon the spot, a singular picture presented itself to their eyes. Jan lay upon the ground, close in by the roots of some bushes which he

was holding tightly in his grasp. From one of his wrists extended a stout thong, or rheim, which passed through among the bushes to the distance of several feet; and, fast to its other end, was the ourebi fawn, dead, and terribly mangled! Over the spot stood Swartboy with his burning tree, which blazed all the brighter that he had just been using it over the back of a ravenous hyena. The latter was not in sight. It had long since skulked off, but no one thought of pursuit, as all were too anxious about Jan.

No time was lost in lifting the child to his feet. The eyes of all ran eagerly over him to see where he was wounded; and an exclamation of joy soon broke forth when they saw that, except the scratches of the thorns, and the deep track of a cord upon his wrist, nothing in the shape of a wound could be discovered upon his diminutive body. He had now come to himself, and assured them all that he was not hurt a bit. Hurrah! Jan was safe!

It now fell to Jan's lot to explain all this mysterious business.

He had been lying in the wagon along with the rest, but not like them asleep. No. He could not sleep a wink for thinking on his new pet, which, for want of room in the wagon, had been left below tied to one of the wheels.

Jan had taken it into his head that he would like to have another look at the ourebi before going to sleep. So, without saying a word to any one, he crept out of the cap-tent, and descended to where the antelope was tied. He unloosed it gently, and then led it forward to the light of the fire, where he sat down to admire the creature.

After gazing upon it for some time with delight, he thought that Swartboy could not do otherwise than share his feelings; and without more ado, he shook the Bushman awake.

The latter had no great stomach for being roused out of sleep to look at an animal, hundreds of which he had eaten in his time. But Jan and Swartboy were sworn friends, and the Bushman was not angry. He, therefore, indulged his young master in the fancy he had taken; and the two sat for a while conversing about the pet.

At length Swartboy proposed sleep. Jan would agree to this only upon the terms that Swartboy would allow him to sleep alongside of him. He would bring his blanket from the wagon, and would not trouble Swartboy by requiring part of the latter's kaross.

Swartboy objected at first; but Jan urged that he had felt cold in the wagon, and that was partly why he had come down to the fire. All this was sheer cunning in the little imp. But Swartboy could not refuse him anything, and at length consented. He could see no harm in it, as there were no signs of rain.

Jan then returned to the wagon, climbed noiselessly up, drew out his own

blankets, and brought them to the fire. He then wrapped himself up, and lay down alongside of Swartboy, with the ourebi standing near, and in such a situation that he could still have his eyes upon it, even when lying. To secure it from wandering, he had fastened a strong rheim around its neck, the other end of which he had looped tightly upon his own wrist.

He lay for some time contemplating his beautiful pet. But sleep at length overcame him, and the image of the ourebi melted before his eyes.

Beyond this Jan could tell little of what happened to him. He was awakened by a sudden jerking at his wrist, and hearing the antelope scream. But he had not quite opened his eyes, before he felt himself dragged violently over the ground.

He thought at first it was Swartboy playing some trick upon him; but as he passed the fire, he saw by its light that it was a huge black animal that had seized the ourebi, and was dragging both him and it along.

Of course he then began to scream for help, and caught at everything he could to keep himself from being carried away. But he could lay hold of nothing, until he found himself among thick bushes, and these he seized and held with all his might.

He could not have held out long against the strength of the hyena; but it was just at that moment that Swartboy came up with his firebrand, and beat off the ravisher with a shower of blows.

When they got back to the light of the fire they found that Jan was all right. But the poor ourebi—it had been sadly mangled, and was now of no more value than a dead rat.

Chapter Twenty Five.

A chapter upon Hyenas.

Hyenas are wolves—only wolves of a particular kind. They have the same general habits as wolves, and much of their look. They have heavier heads, broader thicker muzzles, shorter and stouter necks, and altogether a coarser and shaggier coat. One of the most characteristic marks of the hyena is the inequality in the development of its limbs. The hind-legs appear weaker and shorter than the fore ones, so that the rump is far lower than the shoulders; and the line of the back, instead of being horizontal, as in most animals, droops obliquely towards the tail.

The short thick neck and strong jaws are characteristics; the former so much so, that in the days of fabulous natural history the hyena was said to be without

cervical vertebrae. Its thick neck and powerful jaw-bones have their uses. It is by virtue of these that the hyena can make a meal upon bones, which would be of no use whatever to the ordinary wolf or other beast of prey. It can break almost the largest and strongest joints, and not only extract their marrow, but crush the bones themselves, and swallow them as food. Here, again, we have proof of Nature's adaptation. It is just where these large bones are found in greatest plenty that we find the hyena. Nature suffers nothing to be wasted.

Hyenas are the wolves of Africa—that is, they are in Africa the representatives of the large wolf, which does not exist there. It is true the jackal is a wolf in every respect, but only a small one; and there is no true wolf in Africa of the large kind, such as the gaunt robber of the Pyrenees, or his twin brother of America. But the hyena is the wolf of Africa.

And of all wolves he is the ugliest and most brute-like. There is not a graceful or beautiful bit about him. In fact, I was about to pronounce him the ugliest animal in creation, when the baboons came into my mind. They of course exhibit the ne plus ultra of ugliness; and, indeed, the hyenas are not at all unlike them in general aspect, as well as in some of their habits. Some early writers even classed them together.

Now we have been speaking of the hyena, as if there was but one species. For a long time but one was known—the common or “striped hyena” (*Hyena vulgaris*), and it was about this one that so many false stories have been told. Perhaps no other animal has held so conspicuous a place in the world of mystery and horror. Neither vampire nor dragon have surpassed him. Our ancestors believed that he could fascinate any one with his glance, lure them after him, and then devour them—that he changed his sex every year—that he could transform himself into a comely youth, and thus beguile young maidens off into the woods to be eaten up—that he could imitate the human voice perfectly—that it was his custom to conceal himself near a house, listen until the name of one of the family should be mentioned, then call out as if for assistance, pronouncing the name he had heard, and imitating the cries of one in distress. This would bring out the person called, who of course on reaching the spot would find only a fierce hyena ready to devour him!

Strange as it may seem, all these absurd stories were once very generally believed, and, strange as it may seem in me to say, not one of them but has some foundation. Exaggerated as they are, they all owe their origin to natural facts. At present I shall refer to only two of these. There is a peculiarity about the glance of the hyena that has given birth to the notion of his possessing the power to “charm” or fascinate, although I never heard of his luring any one to destruction by it; there is a peculiarity about the animal's voice that might well gain him credit for imitating the human voice, for the simple reason that the former bears a very near resemblance to the latter. I do

not say that the voice of the hyena is like the ordinary human voice, but there are some voices it does exactly resemble. I am acquainted with several people who have hyena voices. In fact, one of the closest imitations of a human laugh is that of the “spotted hyena.” No one can hear it, hideous as it is, without being amused at its close approximation to the utterance of a human being. There is a dash of the maniac in its tones, and it reminds me of the sharp metallic ring which I have noticed in the voices of negroes. I have already compared it to what I should fancy would be the laugh of a maniac negro.

The striped hyena, although the best known, is in my opinion the least interesting of his kind. He is more widely distributed than any of his congeners. Found in most parts of Africa, he is also an Asiatic animal, is common enough throughout all the southern countries of Asia, and is even found as far north as the Caucasus and the Altai. He is the only species that exists in Asia. All the others are natives of Africa, which is the true home of the hyena.

Naturalists admit but three species of hyena. I have not the slightest doubt that there are twice that number as distinct from each other as these three are. Five, at least, I know, without reckoning as hyenas either the “wild hound” of the Cape, or the little burrowing hyena (*Proteles*)—both of which we shall no doubt meet with in the course of our hunting adventures.

First, then, we have the “striped” hyena already mentioned. He is usually of an ashy grey colour with a slight yellowish tinge, and a set of irregular striae, or stripes of black or dark brown. These are placed transversely to the length of his body, or rather obliquely, following nearly the direction of the ribs. They are not equally well defined or conspicuous in different individuals of the species. The hair—like that of all hyenas—is long, harsh, and shaggy, but longer over the neck, shoulders, and back, where it forms a mane. This becomes erect when the animal is excited. The same may be observed among dogs.

The common hyena is far from being either strong or brave, when compared with the others of his kind. He is, in fact, the weakest and least ferocious of the family. He is sufficiently voracious, but lives chiefly on carrion, and will not dare attack living creatures of half his own strength. He preys only on the smallest quadrupeds, and with all his voracity he is an arrant poltroon. A child of ten years will easily put him to flight.

A second species is the hyena which so much annoyed the celebrated Bruce while travelling in Abyssinia, and may be appropriately named “Bruce’s hyena.” This is also a striped hyena, and nearly all naturalists have set him down as of the same species with the *Hyena vulgaris*. Excepting the “stripes,” there is no resemblance whatever between the two species; and even these are differently arranged, while the ground colour also differs.

Bruce's hyena is nearly twice the size of the common kind—with twice his strength, courage, and ferocity. The former will attack not only large quadrupeds, but man himself,—will enter houses by night, even villages, and carry off domestic animals and children.

Incredible as these statements may appear, about their truth there can be no doubt; such occurrences are by no means rare.

This hyena has the reputation of entering graveyards, and disinterring the dead bodies to feed upon them. Some naturalists have denied this. For what reason? It is well-known that in many parts of Africa, the dead are not interred, but thrown out on the plains. It is equally well-known that the hyenas devour the bodies so exposed. It is known, too, that the hyena is a “terrier”—a burrowing animal. What is there strange or improbable in supposing that it burrows to get at the bodies, its natural food? The wolf does so, the jackal, the coyote,—ay, even the dog! I have seen all of them at it on the battle-field. Why not the hyena?

A third species is very distinct from either of the two described—the “spotted hyena” (*Hyena crocuta*). This is also sometimes called the “laughing” hyena, from the peculiarity we have had occasion to speak of. This species, in general colour, is not unlike the common kind, except that, instead of stripes, his sides are covered with spots. He is larger than the *Hyena vulgaris*, and in character resembles Bruce's, or the Abyssinian hyena. He is a native of the southern half of Africa, where he is known among the Dutch colonists as the “tiger-wolf;” while the common hyena is by them simply called “wolf.”

A fourth species is the “brown hyena” (*Hyena villosa*). The name “brown” hyena is not a good one, as brown colour is by no means a characteristic of this animal. *Hyena villosa*, or “hairy hyena,” is better, as the long, straight hair falling down his sides gives him a peculiar aspect, and at once distinguishes him from any of the others. He is equally as large and fierce as any, being of the size of a Saint Bernard mastiff, but it is difficult to imagine how any one could mistake him for either a striped or spotted hyena. His colour is dark brown, or nearly black above, and dirty grey beneath. In fact, in general colour and the arrangement of his hair, he is not unlike a badger or wolverine.

And yet many naturalists describe this as being of the same species as the common hyena—the learned De Blainville among the rest. The most ignorant boor of South Africa—for he is a South African animal—knows better than this. Their very appellation of “straand-wolf” points out his different habits and haunts—for he is a seashore animal, and not even found in such places as are the favourite resorts of the common hyena.

There is still another “brown hyena,” which differs altogether from this one, and is an inhabitant of the Great Desert. He is shorter-haired and of uniform

brown colour, but like the rest in habits and general character. No doubt, when the central parts of Africa have been thoroughly explored, several species of hyena will be added to the list of those already known.

The habits of the hyenas are not unlike those of the larger wolves. They dwell in caves, or clefts of rocks. Some of them use the burrows of other animals for their lair, which they can enlarge for themselves—as they are provided with burrowing claws.

They are not tree-climbers, as their claws are not sufficiently retractile for that. It is in their teeth their main dependence lies, and in the great strength of their jaws.

Hyenas are solitary animals, though often troops of them are seen together, attracted by the common prey. A dozen or more will meet over a carcass, but each goes his own way on leaving it. They are extremely voracious; will eat up almost anything—even scraps of leather or old shoes! Bones they break and swallow as though these were pieces of tender flesh. They are bold, particularly with the poor natives, who do not hunt them with a view to extermination. They enter the miserable kraals of the natives, and often carry off their children. It is positively true that hundreds of children have been destroyed by hyenas in Southern Africa!

It is difficult for you to comprehend why this is permitted—why there is not a war of extermination carried on against the hyenas, until these brutes are driven out of the land. You cannot comprehend such a state of things, because you do not take into account the difference between savage and civilised existence. You will suppose that human life in Africa is held of far less value than it is in England; but if you thoroughly understood political science, you would discover that many a law of civilised life calls for its victims in far greater numbers than do the hyenas. The empty review, the idle court fête, the reception of an emperor, all require, as their natural sequence, the sacrifice of many lives!

Chapter Twenty Six.

A house among the tree-tops.

Von Bloom now reflected that the hyenas were likely to prove a great pest to him. No meat, nor anything, would be safe from them—even his very children would be in danger, if left alone in the camp; and no doubt he would often be compelled to leave them, as he would require the older ones upon his hunting excursions.

There were other animals to be dreaded still more than the hyenas. Even

during that night they had heard the roaring of lions down by the vley; and when it was morning, the spoor showed that several of these animals had drunk at the water.

How could he leave little Trüey—his dear little Trüey—or Jan, who was not a bit bigger—how could he leave them in an open camp while such monsters were roving about? He could not think of doing so.

He reflected what course he should pursue. At first he thought of putting up a house. That would necessarily be a work of time. There was no good building material convenient. A stone house would cost a great deal of labour—as the stones would have to be carried nearly a mile, and in their hands too. That would never do, as Von Bloom might only remain a short while at that place. He might not find many elephants there, and of course would be under the necessity of going elsewhere.

Why not build a log-house? you will say. That would not be so much of a job, as part of the country was well wooded, and they had an axe.

True, part of the country was wooded, but in a particular manner. With the exception of the nwana-trees, that stood at long distances apart—and regularly, as if they had been planted—there was nothing that deserved the name of timber. All the rest was mere “bush,”—a thorny jungle of mimosas, euphorbias, arborescent aloes, strelitzias, and the horrid zamia plants, beautiful enough to the eye, but of no utility whatever in the building of a house. The nwanas, of course, were too large for house-logs. To have felled one of them would have been a task equal almost to the building of a house; and to have made planks of them would have required a steam saw-mill. A log-house was not to be thought of either.

Now a frail structure of poles and thatch would not have given sufficient security. An angry rhinoceros, or elephant, would level such a house to the ground in a few moments.

Suppose, too, that there were man-eaters in the neighbourhood. Swartboy believed that there were, and that that region was notorious for them. As it was not far from Swartboy’s native country, Von Bloom, who had reason to believe what the Bushman told him, was inclined to credit this. What protection would a frail house afford against the man-eater? Not much, indeed.

Von Bloom was puzzled and perplexed. He could not commence his hunting excursions until this question was settled. Some place must be prepared, where the children would be safe during his absence.

While revolving the subject in his mind, he happened to cast his eyes upward among the branches of the nwana-tree. All at once his attention became fixed upon those huge limbs, for they had awakened within him a strange memory. He remembered having heard that, in some parts of the country, and perhaps

not very far from where he then was, the natives live in trees. That sometimes a whole tribe, of fifty or more, make their home in a single tree; and do so to secure themselves against savage beasts, and sometimes equally savage men. That they build their houses upon platforms, which they erect upon the horizontal branches; and that they ascend by means of ladders, which are drawn up after them at night when they go to rest.

All this Von Bloom had heard, and all of it is positively true. Of course the reflection occurred to him, why could he not do the same? Why could he not build a house in the gigantic *nwana*? That would give him all the security he desired. There they could all sleep with perfect confidence of safety. There, on going out to hunt, he could leave the children, with the certainty of finding them on his return. An admirable idea!—how about its practicability?

He began to consider this. If he only had planks to make a staging or platform, the rest would be easy. Any slight roof would be sufficient up there. The leaves almost formed a roof. But the flooring—this was the difficulty. Where were planks to be got? Nowhere, in that neighbourhood.

His eye, at that moment, chanced to fall upon the wagon. Ha! there were planks there. But to break up his beautiful wagon? No—no—no! Such a thing was not to be thought of.

But stay! there was no need to break it up—no need to knock out a single nail. It would serve every purpose without breaking a splinter off it. The fine vehicle was made to take to pieces, and put up again at will.

He could take it to pieces. The broad bottom alone should remain whole. That of itself would be the platform. Hurrah!

The field-cornet, excited with the development of this fine plan, now communicated it to the others. All agreed that it was just the thing; and as the day was before them, they made no more ado, but set about carrying out the design.

A ladder thirty feet long had first to be constructed. This occupied a good while; but at length a stout rough article was knocked up, which served the purpose admirably. It gave them access to the lowermost limb; and from this they could construct steps to all the others.

Von Bloom ascended, and after careful examination chose the site of the platform. This was to rest upon two strong horizontal limbs of equal height, and diverging very gradually from each other. The quantity of thick branches in the great tree afforded him a choice.

The wagon was now taken to pieces—a work of only a few minutes—and the first thing hauled up was the bottom. This was no slight performance, and required all the strength of the camp. Strong “rheims” were attached to one

end, and these were passed over a limb of the tree, still higher up than those on which the staging was to rest. One stood above to guide the huge piece of plank-work, while all the rest exerted their strength upon the ropes below. Even little Jan pulled with all his might—though a single pound avoirdupois weight would have been about the measure of his strength.

The piece was hoisted up, until it rested beautifully upon the supporting limbs; and then a cheer rose from below, and was answered by Swartboy among the branches.

The heaviest part of the work was over. The boxing of the wagon was passed up, piece by piece, and set in its place just as before. Some branches were lopped off to make room for the cap-tent, and then it was also hauled up, and mounted.

By the time the sun set, everything was in its place; and the aerial house was ready for sleeping in. In fact, that very night they slept in it, or, as Hans jocularly termed it, they all went to “roost.”

But they did not consider their new habitation quite complete as yet. Next day they continued to labour upon it. By means of long poles they extended their platform from the wagon quite up to the trunk of the tree, so as to give them a broad terrace to move about upon.

The poles were fast wattled together by rods of the beautiful weeping-willow (*Salix Babylonica*), which is a native of these parts, and several trees of which grew by the side of the vley. Upon the top of all, they laid a thick coating of clay, obtained from the edge of the lake; so that, if need be, they could actually kindle a fire, and took their suppers in the tree.

To make a still finer flooring, they procured a quantity of the material of which the ant-hills are composed; which, being of a glutinous nature, makes a mortar almost as binding as Roman cement.

After the main building had been finished off, Swartboy erected a platform for himself, and one for Totty in another part of the ample *nwana*. Above each of these platforms he had constructed a roof or screen, to shelter their occupants from rain or dew.

There was something odd in the appearance of these two screens, each of which was about the size of an ordinary umbrella. Their oddity consisted in the fact that they were ears of the elephant!

Chapter Twenty Seven.

The battle of the wild peacocks.

There was no longer anything to hinder the field-cornet from commencing the real business of his new life, viz. the hunting of the elephant. He resolved, therefore, to begin at once; for until he should succeed in “bagging” a few of these giant animals, he was not easy in his mind. He might not be able to kill a single one; and then what would become of all his grand hopes and calculations? They would end in disappointment, and he should find himself in as bad a condition as ever. Indeed worse: for to fail in any undertaking is not only to lose time, but energy of mind. Success begets genius, courage, and self-reliance—all of which contribute to new successes; while failure intimidates and leads to despair. In a psychological point of view it is a dangerous thing to fail in any undertaking; and, therefore, before undertaking anything, one should be well assured of its being possible and practicable.

Now Von Bloom was not sure that the great design he had formed was practicable. But in this case, he had no choice. No other means of livelihood was open to him just then; and he had resolved to make trial of this. He had faith in his calculations, and he had also good reason to hope he would succeed; but the thing was yet untried. No wonder he was in haste to begin the business—in haste to know what were his chances of success.

By early day, therefore, he was up and out. Hendrik and Swartboy only accompanied him, for he could not yet bring himself to leave the children with no other protection than Totty—almost as much a child as themselves. Hans, therefore, remained by the camp.

At first the hunters followed the little rivulet that ran from the spring and vley. They did so, because in this direction there was more “bush;” and they knew that elephants would be more likely to be found in woods than in open places. Indeed, it was only near the banks of the stream that any great quantity of wood was to be seen. A broad belt of jungle extended upon each side of it. After that, there were straggling groves and clumps; and then came the open plains, almost treeless, though covered with a rich carpet of grass for some distance farther. To this succeeded the wild karoo, stretching eastward and westward beyond the reach of vision. Along the north, as already mentioned, trended the line of “bluffs;” and beyond these there was nothing but the parched and waterless desert. To the south there lay the only thing that could be called “woods;” and although such a low jungle could lay no claim to the title of “forest,” it was, nevertheless, a likely enough haunt for elephants.

The trees consisted chiefly of mimosas—of several species; upon the leaves, roots, and tender shoots of which the great ruminant loves to browse. There were some “cameel-doorn” trees, with their shady umbrella-like tops. But above all rose the massive heads of the nwanas, giving a peculiar character to the landscape.

The hunters noticed, as they went on, that the channel of the rivulet became

wider and larger and that at times—no doubt after great rains—a large quantity of water must have run in its bed, forming a considerable river. But as the channel grew larger, the reverse was the case with the quantity of running water. The farther down they proceeded this became less and less; until, at the distance of a mile from camp, the current ceased altogether.

For half-a-mile farther on they found water in stagnant pools, but none running. The wide, dry channel, however, continued on as before; and the “bush” extended on both sides without interruption, so thick that they could only make way by keeping in the channel itself.

As they walked along, several kinds of small game were started. Hendrik would gladly have taken a shot at some of these, but his father would not permit him to fire just then. It might frighten away the great “game” they were in search of, and which they might fall in with at any moment. On their return Hendrik might do his best; and then the field-cornet intended to assist him in procuring an antelope, as there was no fresh venison in the camp. This, however, was a consideration of secondary importance, and the first thing to be done was to try and get a pair of tusks.

There was no objection to Swartboy using his bow, as that silent weapon would cause no alarm. Swartboy had been taken along to carry the axe and other implements, as well as to assist in the hunt. Of course he had brought his bow and quiver with him; and he was constantly on the watch for something at which to let fly one of his little poisoned arrows.

He found a mark at length worthy of his attention. On crossing the plain to avoid a large bend in the channel, they came upon a glade or opening of considerable size, and in the middle of this glade a huge bird appeared standing erect. “An ostrich!” exclaimed Hendrik. “No,” replied Swartboy; “um ar da pauw.”

“Yes,” said Von Bloom, confirming Swartboy’s statement, “it is the pauw.”

Now a “pauw” in the Dutch language is a “peacock.” But there are no peacocks in Africa. The peacock in its wild state inhabits only Southern Asia and the islands of the Indian Archipelago. The bird they saw, then, could not be a peacock.

Neither was it one. And yet it bore some resemblance to a peacock, with its long heavy tail and wings speckled and ocellated in a very striking manner, and something like the “marbled” feathers that adorn the peacock’s back. It had none of the brilliant colours, however, of that proudest of birds, though it was quite as stately, and much larger and taller. In fact, its great height and erect attitude was why Hendrik at first glance had taken it for an ostrich. It was neither peacock nor ostrich, but belonging to a different genus from either—to the genus *Otis* or bustard. It was the great bustard of South Africa—the *Otis*

kori—called “pauw” by the Dutch colonists, on account of its ocellated plumage and other points of resemblance to the Indian peacock.

Now Swartboy, as well as Von Bloom, knew that the pauw was one of the most delicious of fowls for the table. But they knew at the same time that it was one of the shyest of birds,—so shy that it is very difficult to get even a long shot at one. How, then, was it to be approached within range of the Bushman’s arrow? That was the point to be considered.

Where it stood, it was full two hundred yards from them; and had it perceived them, it would soon have widened that distance, by running off two hundred more. I say running off, for birds of the bustard family rarely take to wing, but use their long legs to escape from an enemy. On this account they are often hunted by dogs, and caught after a severe chase. Although but poor flyers, they are splendid runners,—swift almost as the ostrich itself.

The pauw, however, had not observed the hunters as yet. They had caught a glimpse of it, before appearing out of the bushes, and had halted as soon as they saw it.

How was Swartboy to approach it? It was two hundred yards from any cover, and the ground was as clean as a new-raked meadow. True, the plain was not a large one. Indeed, Swartboy was rather surprised to see a pauw upon so small a one, for these birds frequent only the wide open karoos, where they can sight their enemy at a great distance. The glade was not large, but, after watching the bustard for some minutes, the hunters saw that it was resolved to keep near the centre, and showed no disposition to feed in the direction of the thicket on either side.

Any one but a Bushman would have despaired of getting a shot at this kori; but Swartboy did not despair.

Begging the others to remain quiet, he crept forward to the edge of the jungle, and placed himself behind a thick leafy bush. He then commenced uttering a call, exactly similar to that made by the male of the kori when challenging an adversary to combat.

Like the grouse, the bustard is polygamous, and of course terribly jealous and pugnacious, at certain seasons of the year. Swartboy knew that it was just then the “fighting season” among the pauws, and hoped by imitating their challenge to draw the bird—a cock he saw it was—within reach of his arrow.

As soon as the kori heard the call, he raised himself to his full height, spread his immense tail, dropped his wings until the primary feathers trailed along the grass, and replied to the challenge.

But what now astonished Swartboy was, that instead of one answer to his call, he fancied he heard two, simultaneously uttered!

It proved to be no fancy, for before he could repeat the decoy the bird again gave out its note of defiance, and was answered by a similar call from another quarter.

Swartboy looked in the direction whence came the latter; and there, sure enough, was a second kori, that seemed to have dropped from the region of the clouds, or, more likely, had run out from the shelter of the bushes. At all events, it was a good way towards the centre of the plain, before the hunter had observed it.

The two were now in full view of each other; and by their movements any one might see that a combat was certain to come off.

Sure of this, Swartboy did not call again; but remained silent behind his bush.

After a good while spent in strutting, and wheeling round and round, and putting themselves in the most threatening attitudes, and uttering the most insulting expressions, the two koris became sufficiently provoked to begin the battle. They “clinched” in gallant style, using all three weapons,—wings, beak, and feet. Now they struck each other with their wings, now pecked with their bills; and at intervals, when a good opportunity offered, gave each other a smart kick—which, with their long muscular legs, they were enabled to deliver with considerable force.

Swartboy knew that when they were well into the fight, he might stalk in upon them unobserved; so he waited patiently, till the proper moment should arrive.

In a few seconds it became evident, he would not have to move from his ambush; for the birds were fighting towards him. He adjusted his arrow to the string, and waited.

In five minutes the birds were fighting within thirty yards of the spot where the Bushman lay. The twang of a bowstring might have been heard by one of the koris, had he been listening. The other could not possibly have heard it; for before the sound could have reached him, a poisoned arrow was sticking through his ears. The barb had passed through, and the shaft remained in his head, piercing it crosswise!

Of course the bird dropped dead upon the grass, less astonished than his antagonist.

The latter at first imagined he had done it, and began to strut very triumphantly around his fallen foe.

But his eye now fell upon the arrow sticking through the head of the latter. He knew nothing about that. He had not done that! What the deuce—

Perhaps if he had been allowed another moment’s reflection, he would have taken to his heels; but before he could make up his mind about the matter, there was another “twang” of the bowstring, another arrow whistled through

the air, and another kori lay stretched upon the grass.

Swartboy now rushed forward, and took possession of the game; which proved to be a pair of young cocks, in prime condition for roasting.

Having hung the birds over a high branch, so as to secure them from jackals and hyenas, the hunters continued on; and shortly after, having re-entered the channel of the stream, continued to follow it downward.

Chapter Twenty Eight.

Upon the "Spoor."

They had not gone above an hundred yards farther, when they came to one of the pools, already spoken of. It was a tolerably large one; and the mud around its edges bore the hoof-prints of numerous animals. This the hunters saw from a distance, but on reaching the spot, Swartboy a little in the advance, turned suddenly round, and, with rolling orbs and quivering lips, clicked out the words,—

"Mein baas! mein baas! da klow! spoor ob da groot olifant!"

There was no danger of mistaking the spoor of the elephant for that of any other creature. There, sure enough, were the great round tracks—full twenty-four inches in length, and nearly as wide—deeply imprinted in the mud by the enormous weight of the animal's body. Each formed an immense hole, large enough to have set a gatepost in.

The hunters contemplated the spoor with emotions of pleasure—the more so that the tracks had been recently made. This was evident. The displaced mud had not yet crusted, but looked damp and fresh. It had been stirred within the hour.

Only one elephant had visited the pool that night. There were many old tracks, but only one fresh spoor,—and that of an old and very large bull.

Of course the tracks told this much. To make a spoor twenty-four inches long, requires the animal to be a very large one; and to be very large, he should be a bull, and an old one too.

Well, the older and larger the better, provided his tusks have not been broken by some accident. When that happens they are never recovered again. The elephant does cast his tusks, but only in the juvenile state, when they are not bigger than lobster's claws; and the pair that succeeds these is permanent, and has to last him for life—perhaps for centuries—for no one can tell how long the mighty elephant roams over this sublunary planet. When the tusks get broken—a not uncommon thing—he must remain toothless or "tuskless" for

the rest of his life. Although the elephant may consider the loss of his huge tusks a great calamity, were he only a little wiser, he would break them off against the first tree. It would, in all probability, be the means of prolonging his life; for the hunter would not then consider him worth the ammunition it usually takes to kill him.

After a short consultation among the hunters, Swartboy started off upon the spoor, followed by Von Bloom and Hendrik. It led straight out from the channel, and across the jungle.

Usually the bushes mark the course of an elephant, where these are of the sort he feeds upon. In this case he had not fed; but the Bushman, who could follow spoor with a hound, had no difficulty in keeping on the track, as fast as the three were able to travel.

They emerged into open glades; and, after passing through several of these, came upon a large ant-hill that stood in the middle of one of the openings. The elephant had passed close to the ant-hill—he had stopped there a while—stay, he must have lain down!

Von Bloom did not know that elephants were in the habit of lying down. He had always heard it said that they slept standing. Swartboy knew better than that. He said that they sometimes slept standing, but oftener lay down, especially in districts where they were not much hunted. Swartboy considered it a good sign that this one had lain down. He reasoned from it that the elephants had not been disturbed in that neighbourhood, and would be the more easily approached and killed. They would be less likely to make off from that part of the country, until they—the hunters—had had a “good pull” out of them.

This last consideration was one of great importance. In a district where elephants have been much hunted, and have learnt what the crack of a gun signifies, a single day’s chase will often set them travelling; and they will not bring up again, until they have gone far beyond the reach of the hunters. Not only the particular individuals that have been chased act in this way; but all the others,—as though warned by their companions,—until not an elephant remains in the district. This migratory habit is one of the chief difficulties which the elephant-hunter must needs encounter; and, when it occurs, he has no other resource but to change his “sphere of action.”

On the other hand, where elephants have remained for a long time undisturbed, the report of a gun does not terrify them; and they will bear a good deal of hunting before “showing their heels” and leaving the place.

Swartboy, therefore, rejoiced on perceiving that the old bull had lain down. The Bushman drew a world of conclusions from that circumstance.

That the elephant had been lying was clear enough. The abrasion upon the stiff

mud of the ant-heap showed where his back had rested,—the mark of his body was visible in the dust, and a groove-like furrow in the turf had been made by his huge tusk. A huge one it must have been, as the impression of it testified to the keen eyes of the Bushman.

Swartboy stated some curious facts about the great quadruped,—at least, what he alleged to be facts. They were,—that the elephant never attempts to lie down without having something to lean his shoulders against,—a rock, an ant-hill, or a tree; that he does this to prevent himself from rolling over on his back,—that when he does by accident get into that position he has great difficulty in rising again, and is almost as helpless as a turtle; and, lastly, that he often sleeps standing beside a tree with the whole weight of his body leaning against the trunk!

Swartboy did not think that he leans against the trunk when first taking up his position; but that he seeks the tree for the shade it affords, and as sleep overcomes him he inclines towards it, finding that it steadies and rests him!

The Bushman stated, moreover, that some elephants have their favourite trees, to which they return again and again to take a nap during the hot midday hours,—for that is their time of repose. At night they do not sleep. On the contrary, the hours of night are spent in ranging about, on journeys to the distant watering-places, and in feeding; though in remote and quiet districts they also feed by day—so that it is probable that most of their nocturnal activity is the result of their dread of their watchful enemy, man.

Swartboy communicated these facts, as the hunters all together followed upon the spoor.

The traces of the elephant were now of a different character, from what they had been before arriving at the ant-hill. He had been browsing as he went. His nap had brought a return of appetite; and the wait-a-bit thorns showed the marks of his prehensile trunk. Here and there branches were broken off, stripped clean of their leaves, and the ligneous parts left upon the ground. In several places whole trees were torn up by their roots, and those, too, of considerable size. This the elephant sometimes does to get at their foliage, which upon such trees grows beyond the reach of his proboscis. By prostrating them of course he gets their whole frondage within easy distance of his elastic nose, and can strip it off at pleasure. At times, however, he tears up a tree to make a meal of its roots—as there are several species with sweet juicy roots, of which the elephant is extremely fond. These he drags out of the ground with his trunk, having first loosened them with his tusks, used as crowbars. At times he fails to effect his purpose; and it is only when the ground is loose or wet, as after great rains, that he can uproot the larger kinds of mimosas. Sometimes he is capricious; and, after drawing a tree from the ground, he carries it many yards along with him, flings it to the ground, root upwards, and

then leaves it, after taking a single mouthful. Destructive to the forest is the passage of a troop of elephants!

Small trees he can tear up with his trunk alone, but to the larger ones he applies the more powerful leverage of his tusks. These he inserts under the roots, imbedded as they usually are in loose sandy earth, and then, with a quick jerk, he tosses roots, trunk, and branches, high into the air,—a wonderful exhibition of gigantic power.

The hunters saw all these proof's of it, as they followed the spoor. The traces of the elephant's strength were visible all along the route.

It was enough to beget fear and awe, and none of them were free from such feelings. With so much disposition to commit havoc and ruin in his moments of quietude, what would such a creature be in the hour of excitement and anger? No wonder there was fear in the hearts of the hunters, unpractised as some of them were.

Still another consideration had its effect upon their minds, particularly on that of the Bushman. There was every reason to believe that the animal was a “rover” (rodeur),—what among Indian hunters is termed a “rogue.” Elephants of this kind are far more dangerous to approach than their fellows. In fact, under ordinary circumstances, there is no more danger in passing through a herd of elephants than there would be in going among a drove of tame oxen. It is only when the elephant has been attacked or wounded, that he becomes a dangerous enemy.

With regard to the “rover” or “rogue,” the case is quite different. He is habitually vicious; and will assail either man or any other animal in sight, and without the slightest provocation. He seems to take a pleasure in destruction, and woe to the creature who crosses his path and is not of lighter heels than himself!

The rover leads a solitary life, rambling alone through, the forest, and never associating with others of his kind. He appears to be a sort of outlaw from his tribe, banished for bad temper or some other fault, to become more fierce and wicked in his outlawry.

There were good reasons for fearing that the elephant they were spooring was a “rover.” His being alone was of itself a suspicious circumstance, as elephants usually go, from two to twenty, or even fifty, in a herd. The traces of ruin he had left behind him, his immense spoor, all seemed to mark him out as one of these fierce creatures. That such existed in that district they already had evidence. Swartboy alleged that the one killed by the rhinoceros was of this class, else he would not have attacked the latter as he had done. There was a good deal of probability in this belief of the Bushman.

Under these impressions, then, it is less to be wondered, that our hunters felt

some apprehensions of danger from the game they were pursuing.

The spoor grew fresher and fresher. The hunters saw trees turned bottom upward, the roots exhibiting the marks of the elephant's teeth, and still wet with the saliva from his vast mouth. They saw broken branches of the mimosas giving out their odour, that had not had time to waste itself. They concluded the game could not be distant.

They rounded a point of timber—the Bushman being a little in the advance.

Suddenly Swartboy stopped and fell back a pace. He turned his face upon his companions. His eyes rolled faster than ever; but, although his lips appeared to move, and his tongue to wag, he was too excited to give utterance to a word. A volley of clicks and hisses came forth, but nothing articulate!

The others, however, did not require any words to tell them what was meant. They knew that Swartboy intended to whisper that he had seen “da oliphant;” so both peeped silently around the bush, and with their own eyes looked upon the mighty quadruped.

Chapter Twenty Nine.

A rogue Elephant.

The elephant was standing in a grove of mokhala trees. These, unlike the humbler mimosas, have tall naked stems, with heads of thick foliage, in form resembling an umbrella or parasol. Their pinnate leaves of delicate green are the favourite food of the giraffe, hence their botanical appellation of *Acacia giraffae*; and hence also their common name among the Dutch hunters of “cameel-doorns” (camel-thorns).

The tall giraffe, with his prehensile lip, raised nearly twenty-feet in the air, can browse upon these trees without difficulty. Not so the elephant, whose trunk cannot reach so high; and the latter would often have to imitate the fox in the fable, were he not possessed of a means whereby he can bring the tempting morsel within reach—that is, simply by breaking down the tree. This his vast strength enables him to do, unless when the trunk happens to be one of the largest of its kind.

When the eyes of our hunters first rested upon the elephant, he was standing by the head of a prostrate mokhala, which he had just broken off near the root. He was tearing away at the leaves, and filling his capacious stomach.

As soon as Swartboy recovered the control over his tongue, he ejaculated in a hurried whisper:—

“Pas op! (take care!) baas Bloom,—hab good care—don't go near um—he da

skellum ole klow. My footy! he wicked!—I know de ole bull duyvel.”

By this volley of queer phrases, Swartboy meant to caution his master against rashly approaching the elephant, as he knew him to be one of the wicked sort—in short, a “rogue.”

How Swartboy knew this would appear a mystery, as there were no particular marks about the animal to distinguish him from others of his kind. But the Bushman, with his practised eye, saw something in the general physiognomy of the elephant—just as one may distinguish a fierce and dangerous bull from those of milder disposition, or a bad from a virtuous man, by some expression that one cannot define.

Von Bloom himself, and even Hendrik, saw that the elephant had a fierce and ruffian look.

They did not stand in need of Swartboy’s advice to act with caution.

They remained for some minutes, gazing through the bushes at the huge quadruped. The more they gazed, the more they became resolved to make an attack upon him. The sight of his long tusks was too tempting to Von Bloom, to admit for a moment the thought of letting him escape without a fight. A couple of bullets he should have into him, at all events; and if opportunity offered, a good many more, should these not be sufficient. Von Bloom would not relinquish those fine tusks without a struggle.

He at once set about considering the safest mode of attack; but was not allowed time to mature any plan. The elephant appeared to be restless, and was evidently about to move forward. He might be off in a moment, and carry them after him for miles, or, perhaps, in the thick cover of wait-a-bits get lost to them altogether.

These conjectures caused Von Bloom to decide at once upon beginning the attack, and without any other plan than to stalk in as near as would be safe, and deliver his fire. He had heard that a single bullet in the forehead would kill any elephant; and if he could only get in such a position as to have a fair shot at the animal’s front, he believed he was marksman enough to plant his bullet in the right place.

He was mistaken as to killing an elephant with a shot in the forehead. That is a notion of gentlemen who have hunted the elephant in their closets, though other closet gentlemen the anatomists—to whom give all due credit—have shown the thing to be impossible, from the peculiar structure of the elephant’s skull and the position of his brain.

Von Bloom at the time was under this wrong impression, and therefore committed a grand mistake. Instead of seeking a side shot, which he could have obtained with far less trouble—he decided on creeping round in front of

the elephant, and firing right in the animal's face.

Leaving Hendrik and Swartboy to attack him from behind, he took a circuit under cover of the bushes; and at length arrived in the path the elephant was most likely to take.

He had scarcely gained his position, when he saw the huge animal coming towards him with silent and majestic tread; and although the elephant only walked, half-a-dozen of his gigantic strides brought him close up to the ambushed hunter. As yet the creature uttered no cry; but as he moved, Von Bloom could hear a rumbling gurgling sound, as of water dashing to and fro in his capacious stomach!

Von Bloom had taken up his position behind the trunk of a large tree. The elephant had not yet seen him, and, perhaps, would have passed on without knowing that he was there, had the hunter permitted him. The latter even thought of such a thing, for although a man of courage, the sight of the great forest giant caused him for a moment to quail.

But, again, the curving ivory gleamed in his eyes—again he remembered the object that had brought him into that situation; he thought of his fallen fortunes—of his resolve to retrieve them—of his children's welfare.

These thoughts resolved him. His long roer was laid over a knot in the trunk—its muzzle pointed at the forehead of the advancing elephant—his eye gleamed through the sights—the loud detonation followed—and a cloud of smoke for a moment hid everything from his view.

He could hear a hoarse bellowing trumpet-like sound—he could hear the crashing of branches and the gurgling of water; and, when the smoke cleared away, to his chagrin he saw that the elephant was still upon his feet, and evidently not injured in the least!

The shot had struck the animal exactly where the hunter had aimed it; but, instead of inflicting a mortal wound, it had only excited the creature to extreme rage. He was now charging about, striking the trees with his tusks, tearing branches off, and tossing them aloft with his trunk—though all the while evidently in ignorance of what had tickled him so impertinently upon the forehead!

Fortunately for Von Bloom, a good thick tree sheltered him from the view of the elephant. Had the enraged animal caught sight of him at that moment, it would have been all up with him; but the hunter knew this, and had the coolness to remain close and quiet.

Not so with Swartboy. When the elephant moved forward, he and Hendrik had crept after through the grove of mokhalas. They had even followed him across the open ground into the bush, where Von Bloom awaited him. On hearing the

shot, and seeing that the elephant was still unhurt, Swartboy's courage gave way; and leaving Hendrik, he ran back towards the mokhala grove, shouting as he went.

His cries reached the ears of the elephant, that at once rushed off in the direction in which he heard them. In a moment he emerged from the bush, and, seeing Swartboy upon the open ground, charged furiously after the flying Bushman. Hendrik—who had stood his ground, and in the shelter of the bushes was not perceived—delivered his shot as the animal passed him. His ball told upon the shoulder, but it only served to increase the elephant's fury. Without stopping, he rushed on after Swartboy, believing, no doubt, that the poor Bushman was the cause of the hurts he was receiving, and the nature of which he but ill understood.

It was but a few moments, from the firing of the first shot, until things took this turn. Swart boy was hardly clear of the bushes before the elephant emerged also; and as the former struck out for the mokhala trees, he was scarce six steps ahead of his pursuer.

Swartboy's object was to get to the grove, in the midst of which were several trees of large size. One of these he proposed climbing—as that seemed his only chance for safety.

He had not got half over the open ground, when he perceived he would be too late. He heard the heavy rush of the huge monster behind him—he heard his loud and vengeful bellowing—he fancied he felt his hot breath. There was still a good distance to be run. The climbing of the tree, beyond the reach of the elephant's trunk, would occupy time. There was no hope of escaping to the tree.

These reflections occurred almost instantaneously. In ten seconds Swartboy arrived at the conclusion, that running to the tree would not save him; and all at once he stopped in his career, wheeled round, and faced the elephant!

Not that he had formed any plan of saving himself in that way. It was not bravery, but only despair, that caused him to turn upon his pursuer. He knew that, by running on, he would surely be overtaken. It could be no worse if he faced round; and, perhaps, he might avoid the fatal charge by some dexterous manoeuvre.

The Bushman was now right in the middle of the open ground; the elephant rushing straight towards him.

The former had no weapon to oppose to his gigantic pursuer. He had thrown away his bow—his axe too—to run the more nimbly. But neither would have been of any avail against such an antagonist. He carried nothing but his sheep-skin kaross. That had encumbered him in his flight; but he had held on to it for a purpose.

His purpose was soon displayed.

He stood until the extended trunk was within three feet of his face; and then, flinging his kaross so that it should fall over the long cylinder, he sprang nimbly to one side, and started to run back.

He would, no doubt, have succeeded in passing to the elephant's rear, and thus have escaped; but as the kaross fell upon the great trunk it was seized in the latter, and swept suddenly around. Unfortunately Swartboy's legs had not yet cleared the circle—the kaross lapped around them—and the Bushman was thrown sprawling upon the plain.

In a moment the active Swartboy recovered his feet, and was about to make off in a new direction. But the elephant, having discovered the deception of the kaross, had dropped it, and turned suddenly after him. Swartboy had hardly made three steps, when the long ivory curve was inserted between his legs from behind; and the next moment his body was pitched high into the air.

Von Bloom and Hendrik, who had just then reached the edge of the glade, saw him go up; but to their astonishment he did not come to the ground again! Had he fallen back upon the elephant's tusks? and was he held there by the trunk? No. They saw the animal's head. The Bushman was not there, nor upon his back, nor anywhere to be seen. In fact, the elephant seemed as much astonished as they at the sudden disappearance of his victim! The huge beast was turning his eyes in every direction, as if searching for the object of his fury!

Where could Swartboy have gone? Where? At this moment the elephant uttered a loud roar, and was seen rushing to a tree, which he now caught in his trunk, and shook violently. Von Bloom and Hendrik looked up towards its top, expecting to see Swartboy there.

Sure enough he was there, perched among the leaves and branches where he had been projected! Terror was depicted in his countenance, for he felt that he was not safe in his position. But he had scarce time to give utterance to his fears; for the next moment the tree gave way with a crash, and fell to the ground, bringing the Bushman down among its branches.

It happened that the tree, dragged down by the elephant's trunk, fell towards the animal. Swartboy even touched the elephant's body in his descent, and slipped down over his hind-quarters. The branches had broken the fall, and the Bushman was still unhurt, but he felt that he was now quite at the mercy of his antagonist. He saw no chance of escape by flight. He was lost!

Just at that moment an idea entered his mind—a sort of despairing instinct—and springing at one of the hind-legs of the quadruped, he slung his arms around it, and held fast! He at the same time planted his naked feet upon the sabots of those of the animal: so that, by means of this support, he was enabled

to keep his hold, let the animal move as it would!

The huge mammoth, unable to shake him off, unable to get at him with his trunk—and, above all, surprised and terrified by this novel mode of attack—uttered a shrill scream, and with tail erect and trunk high in air, dashed off into the jungle!

Swartboy held on to the leg until fairly within the bushes; and then, watching his opportunity, he slipped gently off. As soon as he touched terra firma again, he rose to his feet, and ran with all his might in an opposite direction.

He need not have run a single step; for the elephant, as much frightened as he, kept on through the jungle, laying waste the trees and branches in his onward course. The huge quadruped did not stop, till he had put many miles between himself and the scene of his disagreeable adventure!

Von Bloom and Hendrik had by this time reloaded, and were advancing to Swartboy's rescue; but they were met right in the teeth by the swift-flying Bushman, as he returned from his miraculous escape.

The hunters, who were now warmed to their work, proposed to follow up the spoor; but Swartboy, who had had enough of that "old rogue," declared that there would be not the slightest chance of again coming up with him without horses or dogs; and as they had neither, spooring him any farther would be quite useless.

Von Bloom saw that there was truth in the remark, and now more than ever did he regret the loss of his horses. The elephant, though easily overtaken on horseback, or with dogs to bring him to bay, can as easily escape from a hunter on foot; and once he has made up his mind to flight, it is quite a lost labour to follow him farther.

It was now too late in the day to seek for other elephants; and with a feeling of disappointment, the hunters gave up the chase, and turned their steps in the direction of the camp.

Chapter Thirty.

The missing hunter, and the Wildebeests.

A well-known proverb says that "misfortunes seldom come single."

On nearing the camp, the hunters could perceive that all was not right there. They saw Totty with Trüey and Jan standing by the head of the ladder; but there was something in their manner that told that all was not right. Where was Hans?

As soon as the hunters came in sight, Jan and Trüey ran down the rounds, and out to meet them. There was that in their glances that bespoke ill tidings, and their words soon confirmed this conjecture.

Hans was not there—he had gone away hours ago—they knew not where, they feared something had happened to him,—they feared he was lost!

“But what took him away from the camp?” asked Von Bloom, surprised and troubled at the news.

That, and only that, could they answer. A number of odd-looking animals—very odd-looking, the children said,—had come to the vley to drink. Hans had taken his gun and followed them in a great hurry, telling Trüey and Jan to keep in the tree, and not come down until he returned. He would be gone only a very little while, and they needn’t fear.

This was all they knew. They could not even tell what direction he had taken. He went by the lower end of the vley; but soon the bushes hid him from their view, and they saw no more of him.

“At what time was it?”

It was many hours ago,—in the morning in fact,—not long after the hunters themselves had started. When he did not return the children grew uneasy; but they thought he had fallen in with papa and Hendrik, and was helping them to hunt; and that was the reason why he stayed so long.

“Had they heard any report of a gun?” No—they had listened for that, but heard none. The animals had gone away before Hans could get his gun ready; and they supposed he had to follow some distance before he could overtake them—that might be the reason they had heard no shot.

“What sort of animals were they?” They had all seen them plain enough, as they drank. They had never seen any of the kind before. They were large animals of a yellow brown colour, with shaggy manes, and long tufts of hair growing out of their breasts, and hanging down between their fore-legs. They were as big as ponies, said Jan, and very like ponies. They curvetted and capered about just as ponies do sometimes. Trüey thought that they looked more like lions!

“Lions!” ejaculated her father and Hendrik, with an accent that betokened alarm.

Indeed, they reminded her of lions, Trüey again affirmed, and Totty said the same. “How many were there of them?”

“Oh! a great drove, not less than fifty.” They could not have counted them, as they were constantly in motion, galloping from place to place, and butting each other with their horns.

“Ha! they had horns then?” interrogated Von Bloom, relieved by this announcement.

Certainly they had horns, replied all three.

They had seen the horns, sharp-pointed ones, which first came down, and then turned upwards in front of the animals’ faces. They had manes too, Jan affirmed; and thick necks that curved like that of a beautiful horse; and tufts of hair like brushes upon their noses; and nice round bodies like ponies, and long white tails that reached near the ground, just like the tails of ponies, and finely-shaped limbs as ponies have.

“I tell you,” continued Jan, with emphasis, “if it hadn’t been for their horns and the brushes of long hair upon their breasts and noses, I’d have taken them for ponies before anything. They galloped about just like ponies when playing, and ran with their heads down, curving their necks and tossing their manes,—ay, and snorting too, as I’ve heard ponies; but sometimes they bellowed more like bulls; and, I confess, they looked a good deal like bulls about the head; besides I noticed they had hoofs split like cattle. Oh! I had a good look at them while Hans was loading his gun. They stayed by the water till he was nearly ready; and when they galloped off, they went in a long string one behind the other with the largest one in front, and another large one in the rear.”

“Wilbeests!” exclaimed Hendrik.

“Gnoos!” cried Swartboy.

“Yes, they must have been wilbeests,” said Von Bloom; “Jan’s description corresponds exactly to them.”

This was quite true. Jan had correctly given many of the characteristic points of that, perhaps, the most singular of all ruminant animals, the wilbeest or gnoo (*Catoblepas gnoo*). The brushlike tuft over the muzzle, the long hair between the fore-legs, the horns curving down over the face, and then sweeping abruptly upward, the thick curving neck, the rounded, compact, horse-shaped body, the long whitish tail, and full flowing mane—all were descriptive of the gnoo.

Even Trüey had not made such an unpardonable mistake. The gnoos, and particularly the old bulls, bear a very striking resemblance to the lion, so much so that the sharpest hunters at a distance can scarce tell one from the other.

Jan, however, had observed them better than Trüey; and had they been nearer, he might have further noticed that the creatures had red fiery eyes and a fierce look; that their heads and horns were not unlike those of the African buffalo; that their limbs resembled those of the stag, while the rest corresponded well enough to his “pony.” He might have observed, moreover, that the males were larger than the females, and of a deeper brown. Had there been any “calves”

with the herd, he would have seen that these were still lighter-coloured—in fact, of a white or cream colour.

The gnoos that had been seen were the common kind called by the Dutch colonists “wildebeests” or wild-oxen, and by the Hottentots “gnoo” or “gnu,” from a hollow moaning sound to which these creatures sometimes give utterance, and which is represented by the word “gnoo-o-oo.”

They roam in vast flocks upon the wild karoos of South Africa; are inoffensive animals, except when wounded; and then the old bulls are exceedingly dangerous, and will attack the hunter both with horns and hoot. They can run with great swiftness, though they scarce ever go clear off, but, keeping at a wary distance, circle around the hunter, curvetting in all directions, menacing with their heads lowered to the ground, kicking up the dust with their heels, and bellowing like bulls, or indeed like lions—for their “rout” bears a resemblance to the lion’s roar.

The old bulls stand sentry while the herd is feeding, and protect it both in front and rear. When running off they usually go in single file, as Jan had represented.

Old bulls hang between the rear of the herd and the hunter; and these caper back and forward, butting each other with their horns, and often fighting apparently in serious earnest! Before the hunter comes within range, however, they drop their conflict and gallop out of his way. Nothing can exceed the capricious antics which these animals indulge in, while trooping over the plain.

There is a second species of the same genus common in South Africa, and a third inhabits still farther to the north; but of the last very little is known. Both species are larger than the wildebeest, individuals of either being nearly five feet in height, while the common gnoo is scarce four.

The three kinds are quite distinct, and never herd together, though each of them is often found in company with other animals. All three are peculiar to the continent of Africa, and are not found elsewhere.

The “brindled gnoo” (*Catoblepas gorgon*) is the other species that inhabits the South of Africa. It is known among the hunters and colonists as “blauw wildebeest” (blue wild-ox). It is of a bluish colour—hence the name, and “brindled,” or striped along the sides. Its habits are very similar to those of the common gnoo, but it is altogether a heavier and duller animal, and still more eccentric and ungainly in its form.

The third species (*Catoblepas taurina*) is the “ko-koon” of the natives. It approaches nearer to the brindled gnoo in form and habits; but as it is not found except in the more central and less-travelled portions of Africa, less is known about it than either of the others. It is, however, of the same kind; and

the three species, differing widely from any other animals known, are entitled to form a distinct and separate genus.

They have hitherto generally been classed with the antelopes, though for what reason it is hard to tell. They have far less affinity with the antelope than with the ox; and the everyday observations of the hunter and frontier boor have guided them to a similar conclusion—as their name for these animals (wild-oxen) would imply. Observation of this class is usually worth far more than the “speculations” of the closet-naturalist.

The gnoo has long been the favourite food of the frontier farmer and hunter. Its beef is well flavoured, and the veal of a gnoo-calf is quite a delicacy. The hide is manufactured into harness and straps of different sorts; and the long silky tail is an article of commerce. Around every frontier farm-house large piles of gnoo and springbok horns may be seen—the remains of animals that have been captured in the chase.

“Jaging de wildebeest” (hunting the gnoo) is a favourite pastime of the young boors. Large herds of these animals are sometimes driven into valleys, where they are hemmed in, and shot down at will. They can also be lured within range, by exhibiting a red handkerchief or any piece of red cloth—to which colour they have a strong aversion. They may be tamed and domesticated easily enough; but they are not favourite pets with the farmer, who dreads their communicating to his cattle a fatal skin-disease to which the gnoos are subject, and which carries off thousands of them every year.

Of course Von Bloom and his companions did not stay to talk over these points. They were too anxious about the fate of the missing Hans, to think of anything else.

They were about to start out in search of him, when just at that moment my gentleman was seen coming around the end of the lake, trudging very slowly along, under the weight of some large and heavy object, that he carried upon his shoulders.

A shout of joy was raised, and in a few moments Hans stood in their midst.

Chapter Thirty One.

The Ant-Eater of Africa.

Hans was saluted by a volley of questions, “Where have you been? What detained you? What has happened to you? You’re all safe and sound? Not hurt, I hope?” These and a few others were asked in a breath.

“I’m sound as a bell,” said Hans; “and for the rest of your inquiries I’ll answer

them all as soon as Swartboy has skinned this ‘aard-vark,’ and Totty has cooked a piece of it for supper; but I’m too hungry to talk now, so pray excuse me.”

As Hans gave this reply, he cast from his shoulders an animal nearly as big as a sheep, covered with long bristly hair of a reddish-grey colour, and having a huge tail, thick at the root, and tapering like a carrot; a snout nearly a foot long, but quite slender and naked; a very small mouth; erect pointed ears resembling a pair of horns; a low flattish body; short muscular legs; and claws of immense length, especially on the fore-feet, where, instead of spreading out, they were doubled back like shut fists, or the fore hands of a monkey. Altogether a very odd animal was that which Hans had styled an “aard-vark,” and which he desired should be cooked for supper.

“Well, my boy,” replied Von Bloom, “we’ll excuse you, the more so that we are all of us about as hungry as yourself, I fancy. But I think we may as well leave the ‘aard-vark’ for to-morrow’s dinner. We’ve a couple of peacocks here, and Totty will get one of them ready sooner than the aard-vark.”

“As for that,” rejoined Hans, “I don’t care which. I’m just in the condition to eat anything—even a steak of tough old quagga, if I had it; but I think it would be no harm if Swartboy—that is, if you’re not too tired, old Swart—would just peel the skin off this gentleman.”

Hans pointed to the “aard-vark.” “And dress him so that he don’t spoil,” he continued; “for you know, Swartboy, that he’s a tit-bit—a regular *bonne bouche*—and it would be a pity to let him go to waste in this hot weather. An aard-vark’s not to be bagged every day.”

“You spreiken true, Mynheer Hans,—Swartboy know all dat. Him skin an’ dress da goup.”

And, so saying, Swartboy out knife, and set to work upon the carcass.

Now this singular-looking animal which Hans called an “aard-vark,” and Swartboy a “goup,” was neither more nor less than the African ant-eater (*Orycteropus Capensis*).

Although the colonists term it “aard-vark,” which is the Dutch for “ground-hog,” the animal has but little in common with the hog kind. It certainly bears some resemblance to a pig about the snout and cheeks; and that, with its bristly hair and burrowing habits, has no doubt given rise to the mistaken name. The “ground” part of the title is from the fact that it is a burrowing animal,—indeed, one of the best “terriers” in the world. It can make its way under ground faster than the spade can follow it, and faster than any badger. In size, habits, and the form of many parts of its body, it bears a striking resemblance to its South American cousin the “tamanoir” (*Myrmecophaga jubata*), which of late years has become so famous as almost to usurp the title

of “ant-eater.” But the “aard-vark” is just as good an ant-eater as he,—can “crack” as thick-walled a house, can rake up and devour as many termites as any “ant-bear” in the length and breadth of the Amazon Valley. He has got, moreover, as “tall” a tail as the tamanoir, very nearly as long a snout, a mouth equally small, and a tongue as extensive and extensile. In claws he can compare with his American cousin any day, and can walk just as awkwardly upon the sides of his fore-paws with “toes turned in.” Why, then, may I ask, do we hear so much talk of the “tamanoir,” while not a word is said of the “aard-vark?” Every museum and menagerie is bragging about having a specimen of the former, while not one cares to acknowledge their possession of the latter! Why this envious distinction? I say it’s all Barnum. It’s because the “aard-vark” is a Dutchman—a Cape boor—and the boors have been much bullied of late. That’s the reason why zoologists and showmen have treated my thick-tailed boy so shabbily. But it shan’t be so any longer; I stand up for the aard-vark; and, although the tamanoir has been specially called *Myrmecophaga*, or ant-eater, I say that the *Orycteropus* is as good an ant-eater as he. He can break through ant-hills quite as big and bigger—some of them twenty-feet high—he can project as long and as gluey a tongue—twenty inches long—he can play it as nimbly and “lick up” as many white ants, as any tamanoir. He can grow as fat too, and weigh as heavy, and, what is greatly to his credit, he can provide you with a most delicate roast when you choose to kill and eat him. It is true he tastes slightly of formic acid, but that is just the flavour that epicures admire. And when you come to speak of “hams,”—ah! try his! Cure them well and properly, and eat one, and you will never again talk of “Spanish” or “Westphalian.”

Hans knew the taste of those hams—well he did, and so too Swartboy; and it was not against his inclination, but *con amore*, that the latter set about butchering the “goup.” Swartboy knew how precious a morsel he held between his fingers,—precious, not only on account of its intrinsic goodness, but from its rarity; for although the aard-vark is a common animal in South Africa, and in some districts even numerous, it is not every day the hunter can lay his hands upon one. On the contrary, the creature is most difficult to capture; though not to kill, for a blow on the snout will do that.

But just as he is easily killed when you catch him, in the same proportion is he hard to catch. He is shy and wary, scarce ever comes out of his burrow but at night; and even then skulks so silently along, and watches around him so sharply, that no enemy can approach without his knowing it. His eyes are very small, and, like most nocturnal animals, he sees but indifferently; but in the two senses of smell and hearing he is one of the sharpest. His long erect ears enable him to catch every sound that may be made in his neighbourhood, however slight.

The “aard-vark” is not the only ant-eating quadruped of South Africa. There is another four-footed creature as fond of white ants as he; but this is an animal of very different appearance. It is a creature without hair; but, instead its body is covered all over with a regular coat of scales, each as large as a half-crown piece. These scales slightly overlies each other, and can be raised on end at the will of the animal. In form it resembles a large lizard, or a small crocodile, more than an ordinary quadruped, but its habits are almost exactly like those of the aard-vark. It burrows, digs open the ant-hills by night, projects a long viscous tongue among the insects, and devours them with avidity.

When suddenly overtaken, and out of reach of its underground retreat, it “clews” up like the hedgehog, and some species of the South American armadillos—to which last animal it bears a considerable resemblance on account of its scaly coat of mail.

This ant-eater is known as the “pangolin,” or “manis,” but there are several species of “pangolin” not African. Some are met with in Southern Asia and the Indian islands. That which is found in South Africa is known among naturalists as the “long-tailed” or “Temminck” pangolin (*Manis Temminckii*).

Totty soon produced a roasted “peacock,” or rather a hastily-broiled bustard. But, although, perhaps, not cooked “to a turn,” it was sufficiently well done to satisfy the stomachs for which it was intended. They were all too hungry to be fastidious, and, without a word of criticism, they got through their dinner.

Hans then commenced relating the history of his day’s adventure.

Chapter Thirty Two.

Hans chased by the Wildebeest.

“Well,” began Hans, “you had not been gone more than an hour, when a herd of wildebeests was seen approaching the vley. They came on in single file; but they had broken rank, and were splashing about in the water, before I thought of molesting them in any way.

“Of course I knew what they were, and that they were proper game; but I was so interested in watching their ludicrous gambols, that I did not think about my gun, until the whole herd had nearly finished drinking. Then I remembered that we were living on dry biltong, and would be nothing the worse of a change. I noticed, moreover, that in the herd of gnoos there were some young ones—which I was able to tell from their being smaller than the rest, and also by their lighter colour. I knew that the flesh of these is most excellent eating, and therefore made up my mind we should all dine upon it.

“I rushed up the ladder for my gun; and then discovered how imprudent I had been in not loading it at the time you all went away. I had not thought of any sudden emergency,—but that was very foolish, for how knew I what might happen in a single hour or minute even?

“I loaded the piece in a grand hurry, for I saw the wildebeests leaving the water; and, as soon as the bullet was rammed home, I ran down the ladder. Before I had reached the bottom, I saw that I had forgotten to bring either powder-horn or pouch. I was in too hot a haste to go back for them, for I saw the last of the wildebeests moving off, and I fancied I might be too late. But I had no intention of going any great distance in pursuit. A single shot at them was all I wanted, and that in the gun would do.

“I hastened after the game, keeping as well as I could under cover. I found, after a little time, that I need not have been so cautious. The wildebeests, instead of being shy—as I had seen them in our old neighbourhood—appeared to have very little fear of me. This was especially the case with the old bulls, who capered and careered about within an hundred yards’ distance, and sometimes permitted me to approach even nearer. It was plain they had never been hunted.

“Once or twice I was within range of a pair of old bulls, who seemed to act as a rearguard. But I did not want to shoot one of them. I knew their flesh would turn out tough. I wished to get something more tender. I wished to send a bullet into a heifer, or one of the young bulls whose horns had not yet begun to curve. Of these I saw several in the herd.

“Tame as the animals were, I could not manage to get near enough to any of these. The old bulls at the head always led them beyond my range; and the two, that brought up the rear, seemed to drive them forward as I advanced upon them.

“Well, in this way they beguiled me along for more than a mile; and the excitement of the chase made me quite forget how wrong it was of me to go so far from the camp. But thinking about the meat, and still hopeful of getting a shot, I kept on.

“At length the hunt led me into ground where there was no longer any bush; but there was good cover, notwithstanding, in the ant-hills, that, like great tents, stood at equal distances from each other scattered over the plain. These were very large—some of them more than twelve feet high—and differing from the dome-shaped kind so common everywhere. They were of the shape of large cones, or rounded pyramids, with a number of smaller cones rising around their bases, and clustering like turrets along their sides. I knew they were the hills of a species of white ant called by entomologists *Termes bellicosus*.

“There were other hills, of cylinder shape and rounded tops, that stood only about a yard high; looking like rolls of unbleached linen set upright—each with an inverted basin upon its end. These were the homes of a very different species, the *Termes mordax* of the entomologists; though still another species of *Termes* (*Termes atrox*) build their nests in the same form.

“I did not stop then to examine these curious structures. I only speak of them now, to give you an idea of the sort of place it was, so that you may understand what followed.

“What with the cone-shaped hills and the cylinders, the plain was pretty well covered. One or the other was met with every two hundred yards; and I fancied with these for a shelter I should have but little difficulty in getting within shot of the gnoos.

“I made a circuit to head them, and crept up behind a large cone-shaped hill, near which the thick of the drove was feeding. When I peeped through the turrets, to my chagrin, I saw that the cows and younger ones had been drawn off beyond reach, and the two old bulls were, as before, capering between me and the herd.

“I repeated the manoeuvre, and stalked in behind another large cone, close to which the beasts were feeding. When I raised myself for a shot, I was again disappointed. The herd had moved off as before, and the brace of bulls still kept guard in the rear.

“I began to feel provoked. The conduct of the bulls annoyed me exceedingly, and I really fancied that they knew it. Their manoeuvres were of the oddest kind, and some of them appeared to be made for the purpose of mocking me. At times they would charge up very close—their heads set in a menacing attitude; and I must confess that with their black shaggy fronts, their sharp horns, and glaring red eyes, they looked anything but pleasant neighbours.

“I got so provoked with them at last, that I resolved they should bother me no longer. If they would not permit me to shoot one of the others, I was determined they themselves should not escape scot-free, but should pay dearly for their temerity and insolence. I resolved to put a bullet through one of them, at least.

“Just as I was about raising my gun to fire, I perceived that they had placed themselves in attitude for a new fight. This they did by dropping on their knees, and sliding forward until their heads came in contact. They would then spring up, make a sudden bound forward, as if to get uppermost, and trample one another with their hoofs. Failing in this, both would rush past, until they were several yards apart; then wheel round, drop once more to their knees; and advance as before.

“Hitherto I had looked upon these conflicts as merely playful; and so I fancy

most of them were. But this time the bulls seemed to be in earnest. The loud cracking of their helmet-covered foreheads against each other, their fierce snorting and bellowing, and, above all, their angry manner, convinced me that they had really quarrelled, and were serious about it.

“One of them, at length, seemed to be getting knocked over repeatedly. Every time he had partially risen to his feet, and before he could quite recover them, his antagonist rushed upon him, and butted him back upon his side.

“Seeing them so earnestly engaged, I thought I might as well make a sure shot of it, by going a little nearer; so I stepped from behind the ant-hill, and walked towards the combatants. Neither took any notice of my approach—the one because he had enough to do to guard himself from the terrible blows, and the other because he was so occupied in delivering them.

“When within twenty paces I levelled my gun. I chose the bull who appeared victor, partly as a punishment for his want of feeling in striking a fallen antagonist, but, perhaps, more because his broadside was towards me, and presented a fairer mark.

“I fired.

“The smoke hid both for a moment. When it cleared off, I saw the bull that had been conquered still down in a kneeling attitude, but, to my great surprise, the one at which I had aimed was upon his feet, apparently as brisk and sound as ever! I knew I had hit him somewhere—as I heard the ‘thud’ of the bullet on his fat body—but it was plain I had not crippled him.

“I was not allowed time for reflection as to where I had wounded him. Not an instant indeed, for the moment the smoke cleared away, instead of the bulls clearing off also, I saw the one I had shot at fling up his tail, lower his shaggy front, and charge right towards me!

“His fierce eyes glanced with a revengeful look, and his roar was enough to have terrified one more courageous than I. I assure you I was less frightened the other day when I encountered the lion.

“I did not know what to do for some moments. I thought of setting myself in an attitude of defence, and involuntarily had turned my gun which was now empty—intending to use it as a club. But I saw at once, that the slight blow I could deliver would not stop the onset of such a strong fierce animal, and that he would butt me over, and gore me, to a certainty.

“I turned my eyes to see what hope there lay in flight. Fortunately they fell upon an ant-hill—the one I had just emerged from. I saw at a glance, that by climbing it I would be out of reach of the fierce wildebeest. Would I have time to get to it before he could overtake me?

“I ran like a frightened fox. You, Hendrik, can beat me running upon ordinary

occasions. I don't think you could have got quicker to that ant-hill than I did.

"I was not a second too soon. As I clutched at the little turrets, and drew myself up, I could hear the rattle of the wildebeest's hoofs behind me, and I fancied I felt his hot breath upon my heels.

"But I reached the top cone in safety; and then turned and looked down at my pursuer. I saw that he could not follow me any farther. Sharp as his horns were, I saw that I was safe out of their reach."

Chapter Thirty Three.

Besieged by the Bull.

"Well," continued Hans, after a pause, "I began to congratulate myself on my fortunate escape; for I was convinced that but for the ant-hill I would have been trampled and gored to death. The bull was one of the largest and fiercest of his kind, and a very old one too, as I could tell by the bases of his thick black horns nearly meeting over his forehead, as well as by his dark colour. I had plenty of time to note these things. I felt that I was now safe—that the wildebeest could not get near me; and I sat perched upon the top of the central cone, watching his movements with perfect coolness.

"It is true he did everything to reach my position. A dozen times he charged up the hill, and more than once effected a lodgment among the tops of the lower turrets, but the main one was too steep for him. No wonder! It, had tried my own powers to scale it.

"At times he came so close to me in his desperate efforts, that I could have touched his horns with the muzzle of my gun; and I had prepared to give him a blow whenever I could get a good chance. I never saw a creature behave so fiercely. The fact was, that I had hit him with my bullet,—the wound was there along his jaw, and bleeding freely. The pain of it maddened him; but that was not the only cause of his fury, as I afterwards discovered.

"Well. After several unsuccessful attempts to scale the cone, he varied his tactics, and commenced butting the ant-heap as though he would bring it down. He repeatedly backed, and then charged forward upon it with all his might; and, to say the truth, it looked for some time as though he would succeed.

"Several of the lesser cones were knocked over by his powerful blows; and the hard tough clay yielded before his sharp horns, used by him as inverted pickaxes. In several places I could see that he had laid open the chambers of the insects, or rather the ways and galleries that are placed in the outer crust of

the hill.

“With all this I felt no fear. I was under the belief that he would soon exhaust his rage and go away; and then I could descend without danger. But after watching him a good long spell, I was not a little astonished to observe that, instead of cooling down, he seemed to grow more furious than ever. I had taken out my handkerchief to wipe the perspiration off my face. It was as hot as an oven where I sat. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the rays of the sun, glaring right down and then reflecting up again from the white clay, brought the perspiration out of me in streams. Every minute I was obliged to rub my eyes clear of it with the handkerchief.

“Now, before passing the kerchief over my face, I always shook it open; and each time I did so, I noticed that the rage of the wildebeest seemed to be redoubled! In fact, at such times he would leave off goring the heap, and make a fresh attempt to rush up at me, roaring his loudest as he charged against the steep wall!

“I was puzzled at this, as well as astonished. What could there be in my wiping my face to provoke the wildebeest anew? And yet such was clearly the case. Every time I did so, he appeared to swell with a fresh burst of passion!

“The explanation came at length. I saw that it was not the wiping off the perspiration that provoked him. It was the shaking out of my handkerchief. This was, as you know, of a bright scarlet colour. I thought of this, and then, for the first time, remembered having heard that anything scarlet has a most powerful effect upon the wildebeest, and excites him to a rage resembling madness.

“I did not wish to keep up his fury. I crumpled up the handkerchief and buried it in my pocket—preferring to endure the perspiration rather than remain there any longer. By hiding the scarlet, I conceived a hope he would the sooner cool down, and go away.

“But I had raised a devil in him too fierce to be so easily laid. He showed no signs of cooling down. On the contrary, he continued to charge, butt, and bellow, as vengefully as ever—though the scarlet was no longer before his eyes.

“I began to feel really annoyed. I had no idea the gnou was so implacable in his rage. The bull evidently felt pain from his wound. I could perceive that he moaned it. He knew well enough it was I who had given him this pain.

“He appeared determined not to let me escape retribution. He showed no signs of an intention to leave the place; but laboured away with hoof and horns, as if he would demolish the mound.

“I was growing very tired of my situation Though not afraid that the bull could

reach me, I was troubled by the thought of being so long absent from our camp. I knew I should have been there. I thought of my little sister and brother. Some misfortune might befall them. I was very sad about that, though up to that time I had little or no fears for myself. I was still in hopes the wildebeest would tire out and leave me, and then I could soon run home.

“I say, up to that time I had no very serious fears for myself—excepting the moment or two when the bull was chasing me to the hill; but that little fright was soon over.

“But now appeared a new object of dread—another enemy, as terrible as the enraged bull—that almost caused me to sprint down upon the horns of the latter in my first moments of alarm!

“I have said that the wildebeest had broken down several of the lesser turrets—the outworks of the ant-hill—and had laid open the hollow spaces within. He had not penetrated to the main dome, but only the winding galleries and passages that perforate the outer walls.

“I noticed, that, as soon as these were broken open, a number of ants had rushed out from each. Indeed, I had observed many of the creatures crawling outside the hill, when I first approached it, and had wondered at this—as I knew that they usually keep under ground when going and coming from their nests. I had observed all this, without taking note of it at the time—being too intent in my stalk to think of anything else. For the last half-hour I was too busy watching the manoeuvres of the wildebeest bull, to take my gaze off him for a moment.

“Something in motion directly under me at length caught my eye, and I looked down to see what it was. The first glance caused me to jump to my feet; and, as I have already said, very nearly impelled me to leap down upon the horns of the bull!

“Swarming all over the hill, already clustering upon my shoes, and crawling still higher, were the crowds of angry ants. Every hole that the bull had made was yielding out its throng of spiteful insects; and all appeared moving towards me!

“Small as the creatures were, I fancied I saw design in their movements. They seemed all actuated with the same feeling—the same impulse—that of attacking me. I could not be mistaken in their intent. They moved all together, as if guided and led by intelligent beings; and they advanced towards the spot on which I stood.

“I saw, too, that they were the soldiers. I knew these from the workers, by their larger heads and long horny mandibles. I knew they could bite fiercely and painfully.

“The thought filled me with horror. I confess it, I never was so horrified before. My late encounter with the lion was nothing to compare with it.

“My first impression was that I would be destroyed by the termites. I had heard of such things—I remembered that I had. It was that, no doubt, that frightened me so badly. I had heard of men in their sleep being attacked by the white ants, and bitten to death. Such memories came crowding upon me at the moment, until I felt certain, that if I did not soon escape from that spot, the ants would sting me to death and eat me up!”

Chapter Thirty Four.

A helpless beast.

“What was to be done? How was I to avoid both enemies? If I leaped down, the wildebeest would kill me to a certainty. He was still there, with his fierce eye bent upon me continually. If I remained where I was, I would soon be covered with the swarming hideous insects, and eaten up like an old rag.

“Already I felt their terrible teeth. Those that had first crawled to my feet I had endeavoured to brush off; but some had got upon my ankles, and were biting me through my thick woollen socks! My clothes would be no protection.

“I had mounted to the highest part of the cone, and was standing upon its apex. It was so sharp I could scarcely balance myself, but the painful stings of the insects caused me to dance upon it like a mountebank.

“But what signified those, that had already stung my ankles, to the numbers that were likely soon to pierce me with their venomous darts? Already these were swarming up the last terrace. They would soon cover the apex of the cone upon which I was standing. They would crawl up my limbs in myriads—they would—

“I could reflect no longer on what they would do. I preferred taking my chance with the wildebeest. I would leap down. Perhaps some lucky accident might aid me. I would battle with the gnou, using my gun. Perhaps I might succeed in escaping to some other hill. Perhaps—

“I was actually on the spring to leap down, when a new thought came into my mind; and I wondered I had been so silly as not to think of it before. What was to hinder me from keeping off the termites? They had no wings—the soldiers have none—nor the workers neither, for that matter. They could not fly upon me. They could only crawl up the cone. With my jacket I could brush them back. Certainly I could—why did I not think of it before?

“I was not long in taking off my jacket. I laid aside my useless gun, dropping

it upon one of the lower terraces. I caught the jacket by the collar; and, using it as a duster, I cleared the sides of the cone in a few moments, having sent thousands of the termites tumbling headlong below.

“Pshaw! how simply the thing was done! why had I not done it before? It cost scarcely an effort to brush the myriads away, and a slight effort would keep them off as long as I pleased.

“The only annoyance I felt now was from the few that had got under my trousers, and that still continued to bite me; but these I would get rid of in time.

“Well—I remained on the apex, now bending down to beat back the soldiers that still swarmed upward, and then occupying myself in trying to get rid of the few that crawled upon me. I felt no longer any uneasiness on the score of the insects—though I was not a bit better off as regarded the bull, who still kept guard below. I fancied, however, that he now showed symptoms of weariness, and would soon raise the siege; and this prospect made me feel more cheerful.

“A sudden change came over me. A new thrill of terror awaited me.

“While jumping about upon the top of the cone, my footing suddenly gave way—the baked clay broke with a dead crash, and I sank through the roof. My feet shot down into the hollow dome—till I thought I must have crushed the great queen in her chamber—and I stood buried to the neck.

“I was surprised, and a little terrified, not by the shock I had experienced in the sudden descent. That was natural enough, and a few moments would have restored my equanimity; but it was something else that frightened me. It was something that moved under my feet as they touched bottom,—something that moved and heaved under them, and then passed quickly away, letting me still farther down!

“What could it be? Was it the great swarm of living ants that I pressed upon: I did not think it was. It did not feel like them. It seemed to be something bulky and strong, for it held up my whole weight for a moment or two, before it slipped from under me.

“Whatever it was, it frightened me very considerably; and I did not leave my feet in its company for five seconds time. No: the hottest furnace would scarce have scorched them during the time they remained inside the dark dome. In five seconds they were on the walls again—on the broken edges, where I had mounted up, and where I now stood quite speechless with surprise!

“What next? I could keep the ants off no longer. I gazed down the dark cavity; they were swarming up that way in thick crowds. I could brush them down no more.

“My eyes at this moment chanced to wander to the bull. He was standing at three or four paces distance from the base of the hill. He was standing sideways with his head turned to it, and regarding it with a wild look. His attitude was entirely changed, and so, I thought, was the expression of his eye. He looked as if he had just run off to his new position, and was ready to make a second start. He looked as if something had also terrified him!

“Something evidently had; for, in another moment, he uttered a sharp rout, galloped several paces farther out, wheeled again, halted, and stood gazing as before!

“What could it mean? Was it the breaking through of the roof and my sudden descent that had frightened him?

“At first I thought so, but I observed that he did not look upward to the top. His gaze seemed bent on some object near the base of the hill—though from where I stood I could see nothing there to frighten him.

“I had not time to reflect what it could be, before the bull uttered a fresh snort; and, raising his tail high into the air, struck off at full gallop over the plain!

“Rejoiced at seeing this, I thought no more of what had relieved me of his company. It must have been my curious fall, I concluded; but no matter now that the brute was gone. So seizing hold of my gun, I prepared to descend from the elevated position, of which I was thoroughly tired.

“Just as I had got half down the side, I chanced to look below; and there was the object that terrified the old bull. No wonder. It might have terrified anything,—the odd-looking creature that it was. From out a hole in the clay wall protruded a long naked cylindrical snout, mounted by a pair of ears nearly as long as itself, that stood erect like the horns of a steinbuck, and gave to the animal that bore them a wild and vicious look. It would have badly frightened me, had I not known what it was; but I recognised it at once as one of the most inoffensive creatures in the world—the ‘aard-vark.’

“His appearance accounted for the retreat of the bull, and also explained why the ants had been crawling about on my first reaching their hill.

“Without saying a word, or making the slightest noise, I clubbed my gun; and, bending downward, struck the protruded snout a blow with the butt. It was a most wicked blow; and, considering the service the creature had just done me in frightening off the wildebeest, a most ungrateful return. But I was not master of my feelings at the moment. I did not reflect—only that I liked aard-vark flesh—and the blow was given.

“Poor fellow! It did the job for him. With scarce a kick he dropped dead in the opening he had scraped with his own claws.

“Well—my day’s adventures were not yet ended. They seemed as though they

were never to end. I had got the aard-vark over my shoulders, and was about heading homeward, when, to my astonishment, I observed that the bull-gnoo—not the one that had besieged me, but his late antagonist—was still out upon the plain where I had last seen him! I observed, moreover, that he was still in a sort of half-lying half-kneeling attitude, with his head close to the ground!

“His odd movements seemed stranger than anything else. I fancied he had been badly hurt by the other, and was not able to get away.

“At first I was cautious about going near him—remembering my late narrow escape—and I thought of giving him a wide berth, and leaving him alone. Even though wounded, he might be strong enough to charge upon me; and my empty gun, as I had already proved, would be but a poor weapon with which to defend myself.

“I hesitated about going near him; but curiosity grew strong within me, as I watched his queer manoeuvres; until at length I walked up within a dozen yards of where he was kneeling.

“Fancy my surprise on discovering the cause of his oblique movements. No hurt had he received of any kind—not even a scratch; but for all that, he was as completely crippled as if he had lost his best pair of legs.

“In a very singular manner was he rendered thus helpless. In his struggle with the other bull, one of his fore-legs had, somehow or other, got passed over his horn; and there it stuck—not only depriving him of the use of the limb itself, but holding his head so close to the ground that he was quite unable to stir from the spot!

“At first I designed helping him out of his difficulty, and letting him go. On second thoughts, I remembered the story of the husbandman and the frozen snake, which quite changed my intention.

“I next thought of killing him for venison; but having no bullet, I did not like to beat him to death with my gun. Besides the aard-vark was my load to camp, and I knew that the jackals would eat the bull up before we could go back for him. I thought it probable he would be safer left as he was—as these ravenous brutes, seeing him alive, might not so readily approach him.

“So I left him with his ‘head under his arm,’ in hopes that we may find him there to-morrow.”

So ended Hans’s narrative of his day’s adventures.

Chapter Thirty Five.

The elephant’s sleeping-roost.

The field-cornet was far from satisfied with his day's work. His first attempt at elephant-hunting had proved a failure. Might it not be always so?

Notwithstanding the interest with which he listened to Hans's narrative of the day's adventures, he felt uneasy in his mind when he reflected upon his own.

The elephant had escaped so easily. Their bullets seemed to have injured him not the least. They had only served to render him furious, and dangerous. Though both had hit him in places where their wounds should have been mortal, no such effect was produced. The elephant seemed to go off as unscathed, as if they had fired only boiled peas at him!

Would it be always so?

True, they had given him but two shots. Two, if well directed, may bring down a cow-elephant and sometimes a bull, but oftener it requires ten times two before a strong old bull can be made to "bite the dust."

But would any elephant wait until they could load and fire a sufficient number of shots?

That was an undecided point with our tyro elephant-hunters. If not, then they would be helpless indeed. It would be a tedious business spooring the game afoot, after it had once been fired upon. In such cases the elephant usually travels many miles before halting again; and only mounted men can with any facility overtake him.

How Von Bloom sighed when he thought of his poor horses! Now more than ever did he feel the want of them—now more than ever did he regret their loss.

But he had heard that the elephant does not always make off when attacked. The old bull had shown no intention of retreating, after receiving their shots. It was the odd conduct of Swartboy that had put him to flight. But for that, he would no doubt have kept the ground, until they had given him another volley, and perhaps his death-wound.

The field-cornet drew consolation from this last reflection. Perhaps their next encounter would have a different ending. Perhaps a pair of tusks would reward them.

The hope of such a result, as well as the anxiety about it, determined Von Bloom to lose no time in making a fresh trial. Next morning, therefore, before the sun was up, the hunters were once more upon the trail of their giant game.

One precaution they had taken, which they had not thought of before. All of them had heard that an ordinary leaden bullet will not penetrate the tough thick skin of the great "pachyderm." Perhaps this had been the cause of their failure on the preceding day. If so they had provided against the recurrence of failure from such a cause. They had moulded a new set of balls of harder material,—solder it should have been, but they had none. They chanced,

however, to be in possession of what served the purpose equally well—the old “plate” that had often graced the field-cornet’s table in his better byegone days of the Graaf Reinet. This consisted of candlesticks, and snuffer-trays, and dish-covers, and cruet-stands, and a variety of articles of the real “Dutch metal.”

Some of these were condemned to the alembic of the melting-pan; and, mixed with the common lead, produced a set of balls hard enough for the hide of the rhinoceros itself—so that this day the hunters had no fears of failure upon the score of soft bullets.

They went in the same direction as upon the preceding day, towards the forest or “bush” (bosch), as they termed it.

They had not proceeded a mile when they came upon the spoor of elephants nearly fresh. It passed through the very thickest of the thorny jungle—where no creature but an elephant, a rhinoceros, or a man with an axe, could have made way. A family must have passed, consisting of a male, a female or two, and several young ones of different ages. They had marched in single file, as elephants usually do; and had made a regular lane several feet wide, which was quite clear of bushes, and trampled by their immense footsteps. The old bull, Swartboy said, had gone in advance, and had cleared the way of all obstructions, by means of his trunk and tusks. This had evidently been the case, for the hunters observed huge branches broken off, or still hanging and turned to one side, out of the way—just as if the hand of man had done it.

Swartboy further affirmed, that such elephant-roads usually led to water; and by the very easiest and shortest routes—as if they had been planned and laid open by the skill of an engineer—showing the rare instinct or sagacity of these animals.

The hunters, therefore, expected soon to arrive at some watering-place; but it was equally probable the spoor might be leading them from the water.

They had not followed it more than a quarter of a mile, when they came upon another road of a similar kind, that crossed the one they were spooring upon. This had also been made by a number of elephants—a family most likely—and the tracks upon it were as recent as those they had been following.

They hesitated for a moment which to take; but at length concluded upon keeping straight on; and so they moved forward as before.

To their great disappointment the trail at last led out into more open ground, where the elephants had scattered about; and after following the tracks of one, and then another without success, they got bewildered, and lost the spoor altogether.

While casting about to find it in a place where the bush was thin and

straggling, Swartboy suddenly ran off to one side, calling to the others to follow him. Von Bloom and Hendrik went after to see what the Bushman was about. They thought he had seen an elephant, and both, considerably excited, had already pulled the covers off their guns.

There was no elephant, however. When they came up with Swartboy, he was standing under a tree, and pointing to the ground at its bottom.

The hunters looked down. They saw that the ground upon one side of the tree was trampled, as though horses or some other animals had been tied there for a long time, and had worn off the turf, and worked it into dust with their hoofs. The bark of the tree—a full-topped shady acacia—for some distance up was worn smooth upon one side, just as though cattle had used it for a rubbing-post.

“What has done it?” asked the field-cornet and Hendrik in a breath.

“Da olifant’s slapen-boom,” (the elephant’s sleeping-tree), replied Swartboy.

No further explanation was necessary. The hunters remembered what they had been told about a curious habit which the elephant has—of leaning against a tree while asleep. This, then, was one of the sleeping-trees of these animals.

But of what use to them, farther than to gratify a little curiosity? The elephant was not there.

“Da ole karl come again,” said Swartboy.

“Ha! you think so, Swart?” inquired Von Bloom.

“Ya, baas, lookee da! spoor fresh—da groot olifant hab slap here yesterday.”

“What then? you think we should lie in wait, and shoot him when he returns.”

“No, baas, better dan shoot, we make him bed—den wait see um lie down.”

Swartboy grinned a laugh as he gave this piece of advice.

“Make his bed! what do you mean?” inquired his master.

“I tell you, baas, we get da olifant sure, if you leave da job to ole Swart. I gib you de plan for take him, no waste powder, no waste bullet.”

The Bushman proceeded to communicate his plan, to which his master—remembering their failure of yesterday—readily gave his consent.

Fortunately they had all the implements that would be necessary for carrying it out,—a sharp axe, a strong rope or “rheim” of raw-hide, and their knives—and they set about the business without loss of time.

Chapter Thirty Six.

Making the elephant's bed.

To the hunters time was a consideration. If the elephant should return that day, it would be just before the hottest hours of noon. They had, therefore, scarce an hour left to prepare for him—to “make his bed,” as Swartboy had jocosely termed it. So they went to work with alacrity, the Bushman acting as director-general, while the other two received their orders from him with the utmost obedience.

The first work which Swartboy assigned to them was, to cut and prepare three stakes of hard wood. They were to be each about three feet long, as thick as a man's arm, and pointed at one end. These were soon procured. The iron-wood (*Olca undulata*) which grew in abundance in the neighbourhood, furnished the very material; and after three pieces of sufficient length had been cut down with the axe, they were reduced to the proper size, and pointed by the knives of the hunters.

Meanwhile Swartboy had not been idle. First with his knife he had cut a large section of bark from the elephant's tree, upon the side against which the animal had been in the habit of leaning, and about three feet from the ground. Then with the axe he made a deep notch, where the bark had been removed—in fact, such a notch as would have caused the tree to fall had it been left to itself. But it was not, for before advancing so far in his work, Swartboy had taken measures to prevent that. He had stayed the tree by fastening the rheim to its upper branches on the opposite side, and then carrying the rope to the limbs of another tree that stood out in that direction.

Thus adjusted, the elephant's tree was only kept from falling by the rheim-stay; and a slight push, in the direction of the latter, would have thrown over.

Swartboy now replaced the section of bark, which he had preserved; and after carefully collecting the chips, no one, without close examination, could have told that the tree had ever felt the edge of an axe.

Another operation yet remained to be performed—that was the planting of the stakes, already prepared by Von Bloom and Hendrik. To set these firmly deep holes had to be made. But Swartboy was just the man to make a hole; and in less than ten minutes he had sunk three, each over a foot deep, and not a half-inch wider than the thickness of the stakes!

You may be curious to know how he accomplished this. You would have dug a hole with a spade, and necessarily as wide as the spade itself. But Swartboy had no spade, and would not have used it if there had been one—since it would have made the holes too large for his purpose.

Swartboy sunk his holes by “crowing”—which process he performed by means of a small pointed stick. With this he first loosened the earth in a circle

of the proper size. He then took out the detached mould, flung it away, and used the point of the “crowing stick” as before. Another clearing out of mould, another application of the stick; and so on, till the narrow hole was deemed of sufficient depth. That was how Swartboy “crowed” the holes.

They were sunk in a kind of triangle near the bottom of the tree, but on the side opposite to that where the elephant would stand, should he occupy his old ground.

In each hole Swartboy now set a stake, thick end down and point upwards; some small pebbles, and a little mould worked in at the sides, wedged them as firmly as if they had grown there.

The stakes were now daubed over with soft earth, to conceal the white colour of the wood; the remaining chips were picked up, and all traces of the work completely obliterated. This done, the hunters withdraw from the spot.

They did not go far; but choosing a large bushy tree to leeward, all three climbed up into it, and sat concealed among its branches.

The field-cornet held his long “roer” in readiness, and so did Hendrik his rifle. In case the ingenious trap of Swartboy should fail, they intended to use their guns, but not otherwise.

It was now quite noon, and the day had turned into one of the hottest. But for the shade afforded by the leaves, they would have felt it very distressing. Swartboy prognosticated favourably from this. The great heat would be more likely than anything else to send the elephant to his favourite sleeping-place under the cool shady cover of the cameel-doorn.

It was now quite noon. He could not be long in coming, thought they.

Sure enough he came, and soon, too.

They had not been twenty minutes on their perch, when they heard a strange, rumbling noise, which they knew proceeded from the stomach of an elephant. The next moment they saw one emerge from the jungle, and walk, with sweeping step, straight up to the tree. He seemed to have no suspicion of any danger; but placed himself at once alongside the trunk of the acacia—in the very position and on the side Swartboy had said he would take. From his spoor the Bushman knew he had been in the habit of so standing.

His head was turned from the hunters, but not so much as to prevent them from seeing a pair of splendid tusks,—six feet long at the least.

While gazing in admiration at these rich trophies, they saw the animal point his proboscis upward, and discharge a vast shower of water into the leaves, which afterwards fell dripping in bright globules over his body!

Swartboy said that he drew the water from his stomach. Although closet-

naturalists deny this, it must have been so; for shortly after, he repeated the act again and again—the quantity of water at each discharge being as great as before. It was plain that his trunk, large as it was, could not have contained it all.

He seemed to enjoy this “shower-bath;” and the hunters did not wonder at it, for they themselves, suffering at the time from heat and thirst, would have relished something of a similar kind. As the crystal drops fell back from the acacia leaves, the huge animal was heard to utter a low grunt expressive of gratification. The hunters hoped that this was the prelude to his sleep, and watched him with intense earnestness.

It proved to be so.

As they sat gazing, they noticed that his head sunk a little, his ears ceased their flapping, his tail hung motionless, and his trunk, now twined around his tusks, remained at rest.

They gaze intently. Now they see his body droop a little to one side—now it touches the tree—there is heard a loud crack, followed by a confused crashing of branches—and the huge dark body of the elephant sinks upon its side.

At the same instant a terrible scream drowns all other sounds, causing the forest to echo, and the very leaves to quake. Then follows a confused roaring, mingled with the noise of cracking branches, and the struggles of the mighty brute where he lies kicking his giant limbs along the earth, in the agonies of death!

The hunters remain in the tree. They see that the elephant is down—that he is impaled. There will be no need for their puny weapons. Their game has already received the death-wound.

The struggle is of short duration. The painful breathing that precedes death is heard issuing from the long proboscis; and then follows a deep ominous silence.

The hunters leap down, and approach the prostrate body. They see that it still lies upon the terrible chevaux de frise, where it had fallen. The stakes have done their work most effectively. The elephant breathes no more. He is dead!

It was the work of an hour to cut out those splendid tusks. But our hunters thought nothing of that; and they were only the more pleased to find each of them a heavy load—as much as a man could carry!

Von Bloom shouldered one, Swartboy the other while Hendrik loaded himself with the guns and implements; and all three, leaving the carcass of the dead elephant behind them, returned triumphantly to camp.

Chapter Thirty Seven.

The Wild-Asses of Africa.

Notwithstanding the success of the day's hunt the mind of Von Bloom was not at rest. They had "bagged" their game, it was true, but in what manner? Their success was a mere accident, and gave them no earnest of what might be expected in the future. They might go long before finding another "sleeping-tree" of the elephants, and repeating their easy capture.

Such were the not very pleasant reflections of the field-cornet, on the evening after returning from their successful hunt.

But still less pleasant were they, two weeks later, at the retrospect of many an unsuccessful chase from which they had returned—when, after twelve days spent in "jaging" the elephant, they had added only a single pair of tusks to the collection, and these the tusks of a cow-elephant, scarce two feet in length, and of little value!

The reflection was not the less painful, that nearly every day they had fallen in with elephants, and had obtained a shot or two at these animals. That did not mend the matter a bit. On the contrary, it taught the hunter how easily they could run away from him, as they invariably did. It taught him how small his chances were of capturing such game, so long as he could only follow it afoot.

The hunter on foot stands but a poor chance with the elephant. Stalking in upon one is easy enough, and perhaps obtaining a single shot; but when the animal trots off through the thick jungle, it is tedious work following him. He may go miles before halting, and even if the hunter should overtake him, it may be only to deliver a second shot, and see the game once more disappear into the bushes—perhaps to be spooed no farther.

Now the mounted hunter has this advantage. His horse can overtake the elephant; and it is a peculiarity of this animal, that the moment he finds that his enemy, whatever it be, can do that thing, he disdains to run any farther, but at once stands to bay; and the hunter may then deliver as many shots as he pleases.

Herein lies the great advantage of the hunter on horseback. Another advantage is the security the horse affords, enabling his rider to avoid the charges of the angry elephant.

No wonder Von Bloom sighed for a horse. No wonder he felt grieved at the want of this noble companion, that would have aided him so much in the chase.

He grieved all the more, now that he had become acquainted with the district, and had found it so full of elephants. Troops of an hundred had been seen; and

these far from being shy, or disposed to make off after a shot or two. Perhaps they had never heard the report of a gun before that of his own long roer pealed in their huge ears.

With a horse the field-cornet believed he could have killed many, and obtained much valuable ivory. Without one, his chances of carrying out his design were poor indeed. His hopes were likely to end in disappointment.

He felt this keenly. The bright prospects he had so ardently indulged in, became clouded over; and fears for the future once more harassed him. He would only waste his time in this wilderness. His children would live without books, without education, without society. Were he to be suddenly called away, what would become of them? His pretty Gertrude would be no better off than a little savage—his sons would become not in sport, as he was wont to call them, but in reality a trio of “Bush-boys.”

Once more these thoughts filled the heart of the father with pain. Oh! what would he not have given at that moment for a pair of horses, of any sort whatever?

The field-cornet, while making these reflections, was seated in the great nwana-tree, upon the platform, that had been built on the side towards the lake, and from which a full view could be obtained of the water. From this point a fine view could also be obtained of the country which lay to the eastward of the lake. At some distance off it was wooded, but nearer the vley a grassy plain lay spread before the eye like a green meadow.

The eyes of the hunter were turned outward on this plain, and just then his glance tell upon a troop of animals crossing the open ground, and advancing towards the vley.

They were large animals—nearly of the shape and size of small horses—and travelling in single file; as they were, the troop at a distance presented something of the appearance of a “cafila,” or caravan. There were in all about fifty individuals in the line; and they marched along with a steady sober pace, as if under the guidance and direction of some wise leader. How very different from the capricious and eccentric movements of the gnoos!

Individually they bore some resemblance to these last-named animals. In the shape of their bodies and tails, in their general ground colour, and in the “brindled” or tiger-like stripes that could be perceived upon their cheeks, neck, and shoulders. These stripes were exactly of the same form as those upon a zebra; but far less distinct, and not extending to the body or limbs, as is the case with the true zebra. In general colour, and in some other respects, the animals reminded one of the ass; but their heads, necks, and the upper part of their bodies, were of darker hue, slightly tinged with reddish-brown. In fact, the new-comers had points of resemblance to all four—horse, ass, gnoo, and

zebra—and yet they were distinct from any. To the zebra they bore the greatest resemblance—for they were in reality a species of zebra—they were quaggas.

Modern naturalists have divided the Equidae, or horse family, into two genera—the horse (*equus*) and the ass (*asinus*)—the principal points of distinction being, that animals of the horse kind have long flowing manes, full tails, and warty callosities on both hind and fore limbs; while asses, on the contrary, have short, meagre, and upright manes, tails slender and furnished only with long hairs at the extremity, and their hind limbs wanting the callosities. These, however, are found on the fore-legs as upon horses.

Although there are many varieties of the horse genus—scores of them, widely differing from each other—they can all be easily recognised by these characteristic marks, from the “Suffolk Punch,” the great London dray-horse, down to his diminutive little cousin the “Shetland Pony.”

The varieties of the ass are nearly as numerous, though this fact is not generally known.

First, we have the common ass (*Asinus vulgaris*), the type of the genus; and of this there are many breeds in different countries, some nearly as elegant and as highly prized as horses. Next there is the “onagra,” “koulán,” or “wild-ass” (*Asinus onager*), supposed to be the origin of the common kind. This is a native of Asia, though it is also found in the north-eastern parts of Africa. There is also the “dziggetai,” or “great wild-ass” (*Asinus hemionus*), of Central and Southern Asia, and another smaller species the “ghur” (*Asinus Hamar*) found in Persia. Again, there is the “kiang” (*Asinus kiang*) met with in Ladakh, and the “yo-totze” (*Asinus equulus*), an inhabitant of Chinese Tartary.

All these are Asiatic species, found in a wild state, and differing from one another in colour, size, form, and even in habits. Many of them are of elegant form, and swift as the swiftest horses.

In this little book we cannot afford room for a description of each, but must confine our remarks to what is more properly our subject—the wild-asses of Africa. Of these there are six or seven kinds—perhaps more.

First, there is the “wild-ass” (*Asinus onager*), which, as already stated, extends from Asia into the north-eastern parts of Africa, contiguous to the former continent.

Next there is the “koomrah,” of which very little is known, except that it inhabits the forests of Northern Africa, and is solitary in its habits, unlike most of the other species. The koomrah has been described as a “wild horse,” but, most probably, it belongs to the genus *asinus*.

Now there are four other species of “wild-asses” in Africa—wild horses some call them—and a fifth reported by travellers, but as yet undetermined. These

species bear such a resemblance to one another in their form, the peculiar markings of their bodies, size, and general habits, that they may be classed together under the title of the zebra family. First, there is the true zebra (*Equus zebra*), perhaps the most beautiful of all quadrupeds, and of which no description need be given. Second, the “dauw,” or “Burchell’s zebra,” as it is more frequently called (*Equus Burchellii*). Third, the “Congo dauw” (*Equus hippotigris*), closely resembling the dauw. Fourth, the “quagga” (*Equus quagga*); and fifth, the undetermined species known as the “white zebra” (*Equus Isabellinus*), so-called from its pale yellow, or Isabella colour.

These five species evidently have a close affinity with each other—all of them being more or less marked with the peculiar transversal bands or “stripes,” which are the well-known characteristics of the zebra. Even the quagga is so banded upon the head and upper parts of its body.

The zebra proper is “striped” from the tip of the nose to its very hoofs, and the bands are of a uniform black, while the ground colour is nearly white, or white tinged with a pale yellow. The “dauws,” on the other hand, are not banded upon the legs; the rays are not so dark or well defined, and the ground colour is not so pure or clean-looking. For the rest, all these three species are much alike; and it is more than probable that either “Burchell’s” or the “congo dauw”, was the species to which the name of “zebra” was first applied; for that which is now called the “true zebra” inhabits those parts of Africa where it was less likely to have been the first observed of that genus. At all events, the “congo dauw” is the “hippotigris,” or tiger-horse, of the Romans; and this we infer from its inhabiting a more northerly part of Africa than the others, all of which belong to the southern half of that continent. The habitat of the zebra is said to extend as far north as Abyssinia; but, perhaps, the “congo dauw,” which certainly inhabits Abyssinia, has been mistaken for the true zebra.

Of the four species in South Africa, the zebra is a mountain animal, and dwells among the cliffs, while the dauw and quagga rove over the plains and wild karoo deserts. In similar situations to these has the “white zebra” been observed—though only by the traveller Le Vaillant—and hence the doubt about its existence as a distinct species.

None of the kinds associate together, though each herds with other animals! The quagga keeps company with the gnoo, the “dauw” with the “brindled gnoo,” while the tall ostrich stalks in the midst of the herds of both!

There is much difference in the nature and disposition of the different species. The mountain zebra is very shy and wild; the dauw is almost untameable; while the quagga is of a timid docile nature, and may be trained to harness with as much facility as a horse.

The reason why this has not been done, is simply because the farmers of South

Africa have horses in plenty, and do not stand in need of the quagga, either for saddle or harness.

But though Von Bloom the farmer had never thought of “breaking in” a quagga, Von Bloom the hunter now did.

Chapter Thirty Eight.

Planning the capture of the Quaggas.

Up to this time the field-cornet had scarce deigned to notice the quaggas. He knew what they were, and had often seen a drove of them—perhaps the same one—approach the vley and drink. Neither he nor any of his people had molested them, though they might have killed many. They knew that the yellow oily flesh of these animals was not fit for food, and is only eaten by the hungry natives—that their hides, although sometimes used for grain-sacks and other common purposes, are of very little value. For these reasons, they had suffered them to come and go quietly. They did not wish to waste powder and lead upon them; neither did they desire wantonly to destroy such harmless creatures.

Every evening, therefore, the quaggas had drunk at the vley and gone off again, without exciting the slightest interest.

Not so upon this occasion. A grand design now occupied the mind of Von Bloom. The troop of quaggas became suddenly invested with as much interest as if it had been a herd of elephants; and the field-cornet had started to his feet, and stood gazing upon them—his eyes sparkling with pleasure and admiration.

He admired their prettily-striped heads, their plump well-turned bodies, their light elegant limbs; in short, he admired everything about them, size, colour, and proportions. Never before had quaggas appeared so beautiful in the eyes of the vee-boor.

But why this new-born admiration for the despised quaggas?—for despised they are by the Cape farmer, who shoots them only to feed his Hottentot servants. Why had they so suddenly become such favourites with the field-cornet? That you will understand by knowing the reflections that were just then passing through his mind. They were as follows:—

Might not a number of these animals be caught and broken in?—Why not? Might they not be trained to the saddle?—Why not? Might they not serve him for hunting the elephant just as well as horses?—Why not?

Von Bloom asked these three questions of himself. Half a minute served to answer them all in the affirmative. There was neither impossibility nor

improbability in any of the three propositions. It was clear that the thing could be done, and without difficulty.

A new hope sprang up in the heart of the field-cornet. Once more his countenance became radiant with joy.

He communicated his thoughts both to the Bushman and “Bush-boys”—all of whom highly approved of the idea, and only wondered that none of them had thought of it before.

And now the question arose, as to how the quaggas were to be captured. This was the first point to be settled; and the four,—Von Bloom himself, Hans, Hendrik, and Swartboy,—sat deliberately down to concoct some plan of effecting this object.

Of course they could do nothing just then, and the drove that had come to drink was allowed to depart peacefully. The hunters knew they would return on the morrow about the same hour; and it was towards their return that the thought of all were bent.

Hendrik advised “creasing,” which means sending a bullet through the upper part of the neck near the withers, and by this means a quagga can be knocked over and captured. The shot, if properly directed, does not kill the animal. It soon recovers, and may be easily “broken,” though its spirit is generally broken at the same time. It is never “itself again.” Hendrik understood the mode of “creasing.” He had seen it practised by the boor-hunters. He knew the spot where the bullet should hit. He believed he could do it easily enough.

Hans considered the “creasing” too cruel a mode. They might kill many quaggas before obtaining one that was hit in the proper place. Besides there would be a waste of powder and bullets—a thing to be considered. Why could they not snare the animals? He had heard of nooses being set for animals as large as the Quaggas, and of many being caught in that manner.

Hendrik did not think the idea of snaring a good one. They might get one in that way—the foremost of the drove; but all the others, seeing the leader caught, would gallop off and return no more to the vley; and where would they set their snare for a second? It might be a long time before they should find another watering-place of these animals; whereas they might stalk and crease them upon the plains at any time.

Swartboy now put in his plan. It was the pit-fall. That was the way by which Bushmen most generally caught large animals, and Swartboy perfectly understood how to construct a pit for quaggas.

Hendrik saw objections to this, very similar to those he had urged against the snare. The foremost of the quaggas might be caught, but the others would not be fools enough to walk into the pit—after their leader had fallen in and laid

the trap open. They of course would gallop off, and never come back that way again.

If it could be done at night, Hendrik admitted, the thing might be different. In the darkness several might rush in before catching the alarm. But no—the quaggas had always come to drink in day-time—one only could be trapped, and then the others alarmed would keep away.

There would have been reason in what Hendrik said, but for a remarkable fact which the field-cornet himself had observed when the quaggas came to the lake to drink. It was, that the animals had invariably entered the water at one point, and gone out at another. It was of course a mere accident that they did so, and owing to the nature of the ground; but such was the case, and Von Bloom had observed it on several occasions. They were accustomed to enter by the gorge, already described; and, after drinking, wade along the shallow edge for some yards, and then pass out by another break in the bank.

The knowledge of this fact was of the utmost importance, and all saw that at once. A pit-fall dug upon the path by which the animals entered the lake, would no doubt operate as Hendrik said—one might be caught, and all the rest frightened off. But a similar trap placed upon the trail that led outward, would bring about a very different result. Once the quaggas had finished drinking, and just at the moment they were heading out of the water, the hunters could show themselves upon the opposite side, set the troop in quick motion, and gallop them into the trap. By this means not only one, but a whole pit-full might be captured at once!

All this appeared so feasible that not another suggestion was offered—the plan of the pit-fall was at once, and unanimously adopted.

It remained only to dig the pit, cover it properly, and then wait the result.

During all the time their capture was being planned, the herd of quaggas had remained in sight, disporting themselves upon the open plain. It was a tantalising sight to Hendrik, who would have liked much to have shown his marksman skill by “creasing” one. But the young hunter saw that it would be imprudent to fire at them there, as it would prevent them from returning to the vley; so he restrained himself, and along with the others remained watching the quaggas—all regarding them with a degree of interest which they had never before felt in looking at a drove of these animals.

The quaggas saw nothing of them, although quite near to the great nwana-tree. They—the hunters—were up among the branches, where the animals did not think of looking, and there was nothing around the bottom of the tree to cause them alarm. The wagon-wheels had long ago been disposed of in the bush, partly to shelter them from the sun, and partly because game animals frequently came within shot of the tree, and were thus obtained without any

trouble. There were scarce any traces upon the ground that would have betrayed the existence of a “camp” in the tree; and a person might have passed very near without noticing the odd aerial dwelling of the hunter family.

All this was design upon the part of the field-cornet. As yet he knew little of the country around. He did not know but that it might contain worse enemies than either hyenas or lions.

While they sat watching the manoeuvres of the quaggas, a movement was made by one of these creatures more singular than any that had yet been witnessed.

The animal in question was browsing quietly along, and at length approached a small clump of bushes that stood out in the open ground. When close to the copse it was observed to make a sudden spring forward; and almost at the same instant, a shaggy creature leaped out of the bushes, and ran off. This last was no other than the ugly “striped” hyena. Instead of turning upon the quagga and showing fight, as one might have supposed so strong and fierce a brute would have done, the hyena uttered a howl of alarm, and ran off as fast as its legs would carry it.

They did not carry it far. It was evidently making for a larger tract of bush that grew near: but before it had got half-way across the open ground, the quagga came up behind, and uttering his shrill “couaag,” reared forward, and dropped with his fore-hoofs upon the hyena’s back. At the same instant the neck of the carnivorous animal was clutched by the teeth of the ruminant and held as fast, as if grasped by a vice.

All looked to see the hyena free itself and run off again. They looked in vain. It never ran another yard. It never came alive out of the clutch of those terrible teeth.

The quagga still held his struggling victim with firm hold—trampling it with his hoofs, and shaking it in his strong jaws, until in a few minutes the screams of the hyena ceased, and his mangled carcass lay motionless upon the plain!

One would think that this incident might have been enough to warn our hunters to be cautious in their dealings with the quagga. Such a sharp biter would be no pleasant horse to “bit and bridle.”

But all knew the antipathy that exists between the wild horse and the hyena; and that the quagga, though roused to fury at the sight of one of these animals, is very different in its behaviour towards man. So strong, in fact, is this antipathy, and so complete is the mastery of the ruminant over the carnivorous animal, that the frontier farmers often take advantage of these peculiar facts, and keep the hyenas from their cattle by bringing up with the herd a number of quaggas, who act as its guards and protectors.

Chapter Thirty Nine.

The Pit-Trap.

While they were watching the movements of the quaggas, Von Bloom rose suddenly to his feet. All turned their eyes upon him as he did so. They saw by his manner that he was about to propose something. What could it be?

The thought had just occurred to him that they should at once set about digging the pit.

It was near sunset—wanting only half-an-hour of it; and one would suppose he would have done better to leave the work till next morning. But no. There was a good reason why they should set about it at once; and that was, that they might not be able to complete it in time if they did not do part of it that night.

It would be no slight undertaking to dig a pit of proper size, for they would require one that would at least hold half-a-dozen quaggas at a time. Then there was the carrying away the earth that should come out of it, the cutting the poles and branches to cover it, and the placing of these in a proper manner.

To do all these things would take up a great deal of time; and they must be all done against the return of the quaggas, else the whole scheme would be a failure. Should the animals arrive upon the ground before the pit was covered in and all traces of the work removed, they would make off without entering the water, and perhaps never visit that vley again.

Such were the conjectures of the field-cornet. Hans, Hendrik, and Swartboy, acknowledged their justice. All saw the necessity of going to work at once, and to work they all went.

Fortunately among the “implements,” were two good spades, a shovel, and a pick-axe, and all of them could be busy at the same time. There were baskets in which the dirt could be sanded off, and thrown into the deep channel close by, where it would not be seen. This was also a fortunate circumstance; for to have carried the stuff any great distance, would have made the job still heavier, and more difficult to execute in proper time.

Having marked the outlines of the pit, they went to work with spade, shovel, and pick. The ground proved tolerably loose, and the pick was but little needed. The field-cornet himself handled one of the spades, Hendrik the other, while Swartboy acted as shoveller, and filled the baskets as fast as Hans and Totty, assisted by Trüey and little Jan, could empty them. These last carried a small basket of their own, and contributed very materially to the progress of the work, by lightening the labours of Hans and Totty.

And so the work went merrily on until midnight, and even after that hour,

under the light of a full moon; by which time the diggers were buried to their necks.

But they were now fatigued. They knew they could easily complete the pit next day; and so they laid down their implements, and after performing their ablutions in the crystal water of the stream, retired to their sleeping-quarters in the tree.

By early dawn they were at it again, busy as bees; and the pit progressed so rapidly that before they stopped to take breakfast Von Bloom could scarce see out of it standing on his toes, and the crown of Swartboy's woolly head was nearly two feet below the surface. A little more digging would do.

After breakfast they went to work as briskly as ever; and laboured away until they considered that the hole was sunk to a sufficient depth. It would have taken a springbok to have leaped out of it; and no quagga could possibly have cleared itself from such a pit.

Poles and bushes were now cut; and the pit was neatly covered with these, and strewn over, as well as a large tract of the adjoining ground, with rushes and grass. The most sagacious animal would have been deceived by the appearance; even a fox could not have discovered the trap before tumbling into it.

They had completed the work before going to dinner,—which, consequently, fell late on that day—so nothing more remained to be done but to dine, and await the coming of the quaggas.

At dinner they were all very merry, notwithstanding the immense fatigue they had gone through. The prospect of capturing the quaggas was very exciting, and kept the party in high spirits.

Each offered a prognostication as to the result. Some said they would trap three quaggas at the least; while others were more sanguine, and believed they might take twice that number. Jan did not see why the pit should not be full; and Hendrik thought this probable enough—considering the way they intended to drive the quaggas into it.

It certainly seemed so. The pit had been made of sufficient width to preclude the possibility of the animals leaping over it, while it was dug lengthwise across the path, so that they could not miss it. The lay of the ground would guide them directly into it.

It is true that, were they to be left to themselves, and permitted to follow their usual method of marching—that is, in single file—only one, the leader, might be caught. The rest, seeing him fall in, would be sure to wheel round, and gallop off in a different direction.

But it was not the intention of the hunters to leave things thus. They had

planned a way by which the quaggas, at a certain moment, would be thrown into a complete panic, and thus forced pell-mell upon the pit. In this lay their hopes of securing a large number of the animals.

Four was as many as were wanted. One for each of the hunters. Four would do; but of course it mattered not how many more got into the pit. The more the better, as a large number would give them the advantage of “pick and choose.”

Dinner over, the hunters set about preparing for the reception of their expected visitors. As already stated, the dinner had been later than usual; and it was now near the hour when the quaggas might be looked for.

In order to be in time, each took his station. Hans, Hendrik, and Swartboy, placed themselves in ambush around the lake—at intervals from one another; but the lower end, where the animals usually approached and went out, was left quite open. Von Bloom remained on the platform in the tree, so as to mark the approach of the quaggas, and give warning by a signal to the other three. The positions taken by these were such, that they could guide the herd in the direction of the pit by merely coming out of the bushes where they lay concealed. In order that they should show themselves simultaneously, and at the proper moment, they were to wait for a signal from the tree. This was to be the firing of the great “roer,” loaded blank. Hans and Hendrik were also to fire blank shots on discovering themselves, and by this means the desired panic would be produced.

The whole scheme was well contrived, and succeeded admirably. The herd appeared filing over the plain, just as on the preceding days. Von Bloom announced their approach to the three in ambush, by repeating in a subdued tone the words,—

“Quaggas are coming!”

The unsuspecting animals filed through the gorge, scattered about in the water, drank their fill, and then commenced retiring by the path on which lay the trap.

The leader having climbed the bank, and seeing the fresh grass and rushes strewn upon the path, uttered a snorting bark, and seemed half inclined to wheel round. But just at that moment boomed the loud detonation of the roer; and, then, like lesser echoes, the reports of the smaller guns on the right and left, while Swartboy shouted at the top pitch of his voice, from another quarter.

A look back showed the quaggas that they were well-nigh surrounded by strange enemies. But one course appeared open to them—the way they were wont to go; and barking with affright, the whole drove dashed up the bank, and crowded on towards the pit.

Then was heard a confused noise—the cracking of the poles—the trampling of many hoofs—the dull sounds of heavy bodies falling together, and mingling in

a continuous struggle—and the wild snorting, as the creatures hurried forward in affright. Some were seen springing high in the air, as if to overleap the pit. Others poised themselves on their hind hoofs, and wheeling round, ran back into the lake. Some dashed off through the bushes, and escaped in that way; but the great body of the drove came running back, and plunging through the water, made off by the gorge through which they had come. In a few minutes not one was in sight.

The boys thought they had all escaped; but Von Bloom, from his more elevated position in the tree, could perceive the snouts of several protruding above the edge of the pit.

On arriving at the spot, to their great satisfaction the hunters discovered no less than eight full-grown quaggas in the trap—just twice the number required to mount the party.

In less than two weeks from that time, four of the quaggas were broken to the saddle, and perfectly obedient to the bit. Of course there was a good deal of kicking, and plunging, and flinging, and many hard gallops, and some ugly falls, before it came to this; but both the Bushman Swartboy and the Bush-boy Hendrik were expert in the manège of horses, and soon tamed the quaggas to a proper degree of docility.

Upon the very first occasion when these animals were used in the hunt of the elephant, they rendered the very service expected of them. The elephant, as usual, bolted after receiving the first shot; but the hunters on “quagga-back” were enabled to keep him in sight, and follow rapidly upon his heels. As soon as the elephant discovered that, run as he would, his pursuers had the power of overtaking him, he disdained to fly farther, and stood to bay; thus giving them the opportunity of delivering shot after shot, until a mortal wound brought his huge body to the earth.

Von Bloom was delighted. His hopes were high, his benignant star was once more in the ascendant.

He would yet accomplish his design. He would yet be rich. A few years would enable him to build up his fortune—to construct a pyramid of ivory!

Chapter Forty.

Driving in the Eland.

Of all the family Hendrik was the hunter par excellence. It was he who habitually stored the larder; and upon days when they were not engaged in the chase of the elephant, Hendrik would be abroad alone in pursuit of antelopes,

and other creatures, that furnished their usual subsistence. Hendrik kept the table well supplied.

Antelopes are the principal game of South Africa—for Africa is the country of the antelope above all others. You may be surprised to hear that there are seventy different species of antelopes over all the earth—that more than fifty of these are African, and that thirty at least belong to South Africa—that is, the portion of the continent lying between the Cape of Good Hope and the Tropic of Capricorn.

It would require the space of a whole book, therefore, to give a fair account—a monograph—of the antelopes alone; and I cannot afford that space here. At present I can only say that Africa is the great antelope country, although many fine species exist also in Asia—that in America there is but one kind, the prong-horn, with which you are already well acquainted—and that in Europe there are two, though one of these, the well-known “chamois,” is as much goat as antelope.

I shall farther remark, that the seventy species of animals, by naturalists classed as antelopes, differ widely from one another in form, size, colour, pelage, habits; in short, in so many respects, that their classification under the name of Antelope is very arbitrary indeed. Some approximate closely to the goat tribe; others are more like deer; some resemble oxen; others are closely allied to the buffalo; while a few species possess many of the characteristics of wild sheep!

As a general thing, however, they are more like to deer than any other animals; and many species of them are, in common parlance, called deer. Indeed, many antelopes are more like to certain species of deer than to others of their own kind. The chief distinction noted between them and the deer is, that the antelopes have horny horns, that are persistent or permanent, while those of the deer are osseous or bony, and are annually cast.

Like the deer the different species of antelopes possess very different habits. Some frequent the wide open plains; some the deep forest; some wander by the shady banks of streams; while others love to dwell upon the rocky steep, or the dry ravines of the mountains. Some browse upon the grass; while others, goat-like, prefer the leaves and tender twigs of trees. In fact, so different are these creatures in habits, that whatever be the natural character of a district of country, it will be found the favourite home of one or more species. Even the very desert has its antelopes, that prefer the parched and waterless plain to the most fertile and verdant valley.

Of all antelopes the “eland,” or “caana” (*Antelope oreas*) is the largest. It measures full seventeen hands at the shoulder—being thus equal in height to a very large horse. A large eland weighs one thousand pounds. It is a heavily

formed animal, and an indifferent runner, as a mounted hunter can gallop up to one without effort. Its general proportions are not unlike those of a common ox, but its horns are straight and rise vertically from the crown, diverging only slightly from one another. These are two feet in length, and marked by a ridge that passes spirally around them nearly to the tips. The horns of the female are longer than those of the male.

The eyes of the eland, like those of most antelopes, are large, bright, and melting, without any expression of fierceness; and the animal, though so very large and strong, is of the most innocuous disposition—showing fight only when driven to desperation.

The general colour of this antelope is dun, with a rufous tinge. Sometimes ashy grey touched with ochre is the prevailing hue.

The eland is one of those antelopes that appear to be independent of water. It is met with upon the desert plains, far from either spring or stream; and it even seems to prefer such situations—perhaps from the greater security it finds there—though it is also a denizen of the fertile and wooded districts. It is gregarious, the sexes herding separately, and in groups of from ten to a hundred individuals.

The flesh of the eland is highly esteemed, and does not yield in delicacy to that of any of the antelope, deer, or bovine tribes. It has been compared to tender beef with a game flavour; and the muscles of the thighs when cured and dried produce a *bonne bouche*, known under the odd appellation of “thigh-tongues.”

Of course the eland affording such excellent meat, and in so large a quantity, is zealously hunted for his spoils. Being only a poor runner and always very fat, the hunt is usually a short one; and ends in the eland being shot down, skinned, and cut up. There is no great excitement about this chase, except that it is not every day an eland can be started. The ease with which they can be captured, as well as the value of their venison, has led to the thinning off of these antelopes; and it is only in remote districts where a herd of them can be found.

Now since their arrival, no elands had been seen, though now and then their spoor was observed; and Hendrik, for several reasons, was very desirous of getting one. He had never shot an eland in his life—that was one reason—and another was, that he wished to procure a supply of the fine venison which lies in such quantities over the ribs of these animals.

It was, therefore, with great delight, that Hendrik one morning received the report that a herd of elands had been seen upon the upper plain, and not far off. Swartboy, who had been upon the cliffs, brought this report to camp.

Without losing any more time than sufficed to get the direction from Swartboy, Hendrik mounted his quagga, shouldered his rifle, and rode off in

search of the herd.

Not far from the camp there was an easy pass, leading up the cliff to the plain above. It was a sort of gorge or ravine; and from the numerous tracks of animals in its bottom, it was evidently much used as a road from the upper plain to that in which were the spring and stream. Certain animals, such as the zebras and quaggas, and others that frequent the dry desert plains from preference, were in the habit of coming by this path when they required water.

Up the gorge rode Hendrik; and no sooner had he arrived at its top, than he discovered the herd of elands—seven old bulls—about a mile off upon the upper plain.

There was not cover enough to have sheltered a fox. The only growth near the spot where the elands were, consisted of straggling aloe-plants, euphorbias, with some stunted bushes, and tufts of dry grass, characteristic of the desert. There was no clump large enough to have sheltered a hunter from the eye of his game; and Hendrik at once came to the conclusion, that the elands could not be “stalked” in the situation they then occupied.

Now, though Hendrik had never hunted this antelope, he was well acquainted with its habits, and knew how it ought to be chased. He knew that it was a bad runner; that any old horse could bring up with it; and that his quagga—the fastest of the four that had been tamed—could do the same.

It was only a question of “start,” therefore. Could he get near enough the bulls to have a fair start, he would run one of them down to a certainty. The result might be different should the elands take the alarm at a long distance off, and scour away over the plain.

To get within fair starting distance, that was the point to be attempted.

But Hendrik was a wary hunter, and soon accomplished this. Instead of riding direct for the elands, he made a grand circuit—until he had got the herd between him and the cliff—and then, heading his quagga for them, he rode quietly forward.

He did not sit erect in the saddle, but held himself bent down, until his breast almost touched the withers of the quagga. This he did to deceive the elands, who would otherwise have recognised him as an enemy. In such a fashion they could not make out what kind of creature was coming towards them; but stood for a long while gazing at Hendrik and his quagga with feelings of curiosity, and of course some little alarm.

They, however, permitted the hunter to get within five hundred yards distance—near enough for him—before they broke off in their heavy lumbering gallop.

Hendrik now rose in his saddle, put spurs to his quagga, and followed the herd

at full speed.

As he had designed, so it came to pass. The elands ran straight in the direction of the cliff—not where the pass was, but where there was none—and, on reaching the precipice, were of course forced to turn into a new direction, transverse to their former one. This gave Hendrik the advantage, who, heading his quagga diagonally, was soon upon the heels of the herd.

It was Hendrik's intention to single out one of the bulls, and run him down—leaving the others to gallop off wherever they wished.

His intention was carried out; for shortly after, the fattest of the bulls shot to one side, as if to escape in that way, while the rest ran on.

The bull was not so cunning as he thought himself. Hendrik's eye was upon him; and in a moment the quagga was turned upon his track.

Another burst carried both game and pursuer nearly a mile across the plain. The eland had turned from a rufous dun colour to that of a leaden blue; the saliva fell from his lips in long streamers, foam dappled his broad chest, the tears rolled out of his big eyes, and his gallop became changed to a weary trot. He was evidently “blown.”

In a few minutes more the quagga was close upon his heels; and then the huge antelope, seeing that farther running could not serve him, halted in despair, and faced round towards his pursuer.

Now Hendrik had his loaded rifle in his hand, and you expect to hear that he instantly raised it to his shoulder, took aim, fired, and brought down the eland.

I must disappoint you, then, by telling you that he did no such thing.

Hendrik was a real hunter—neither rash nor wasteful of his resources. He knew a better plan than to kill the eland upon the spot. He knew that the animal was now quite in his power; and that he could drive him wherever he pleased, just like a tame ox. To have killed the creature on the spot would have been a waste of powder and shot. More than that, it would have rendered necessary all the trouble of transporting its flesh to camp—a double journey at least—and with the risk of the hyenas eating up most of it in his absence. Whereas he could save all this trouble by driving the eland to camp; and this was his design.

Without firing a shot, therefore, he galloped on past the blown bull, headed him, turned him round, and then drove him before him in the direction of the cliff.

The bull could make neither resistance nor opposition. Now and again, he would turn and trot off in a contrary direction; but he was easily headed again, and at length forced forward to the top of the pass.

Chapter Forty One.

A wild ride on Quagga-back.

Hendrik was congratulating himself on his success. He anticipated some pleasure in the surprise he was about to create at camp, when he should march in with the eland—for he had no doubt that he would succeed in doing so.

Indeed, there appeared no reason to doubt it. The bull had already entered the gorge, and was moving down it, while Hendrik and his quagga were hurrying forward to follow.

The hunter had arrived within a few yards of the top, when a loud trampling noise sounded in his ears, as if a band of heavy-footed animals were coming up the gorge.

He spurred his quagga forward, in order to reach the edge, and get a view down the ravine. Before he was able to do so, he was surprised to see the eland gallop up again, and try to pass him upon the plain. It had evidently received fresh alarm, from something in the gorge; and preferred facing its old enemy to encountering the new.

Hendrik did not give his attention to the eland. He could ride it down at any time. He was more anxious first to know what had given it the start backward; so he continued to press forward to the head of the ravine.

He might have thought of lions, and acted with greater prudence; but the trampling of hoofs which still echoed up the pass told him that lions were not the cause of the eland's alarm.

He at length reached a point where he could see down the declivity. He had not far to look—for already the animals that were making the noise were close up to him; and he perceived they were nothing more than a troop of quaggas.

He was not over-pleased at this interruption to his drive; and the less did he like it, that the intruders were quaggas—ill-conditioned brutes that they were! Had they been game animals, he would have shot one; but the only motive that would have induced him to shoot one of the quaggas would have been a feeling of anger—for, at that moment, he was really angry at them.

Without knowing it, poor brutes! they had likely given him cause for a good deal of trouble; for it would cost him a good deal, before he could head the eland again, and get it back into the pass. No wonder, then, he was vexed a little.

But his vexation was not so grievous as to cause him to fire upon the approaching herd; and, turning aside, he rode after the eland.

He had hardly left the spot, when the quaggas came out of the pass, following each other to the number of forty or fifty. Each, as he saw the mounted hunter, started with affright, and bolted off, until the whole drove stretched out in a long line over the plain, snorting and uttering their loud “coua-a-g” as they ran.

Hendrik would hardly have regarded this movement under ordinary circumstances. He had often seen herds of quaggas, and was in no way curious about them. But his attention was drawn to this herd, from his noticing, as they passed him, that four of them had their tails docked short; and from this circumstance, he recognised them as the four that had been caught in the pit-trap and afterwards set free. Swartboy, for some purpose of his own, had cut off the hair before letting them go.

Hendrik had no doubt it was they, and that the herd was the same that used to frequent the vley, but that on account of the ill-treatment they had met with, had never since shown themselves in the neighbourhood.

Now these circumstances coming into Hendrik’s mind at the moment, led him to regard the quaggas with a certain feeling of curiosity. The sudden fright which the animals took on seeing him, and the comic appearance of the four with the stumped tails, rather inclined Hendrik towards merriment, and he laughed as he galloped along.

As the quaggas went off in the same direction which the eland had taken, of course Hendrik’s road and theirs lay so far together; and on galloped he at their heels. He was curious to try the point—much disputed in regard to horses—how far a mounted quagga would be able to cope with an unmounted one. He was curious, moreover, to find out whether his own quagga was quite equal to any of its old companions. So on swept the chase—the eland leading, the quaggas after, and Hendrik bringing up the rear.

Hendrik had no need to ply the spur. His gallant steed flew like the wind. He seemed to feel that his character was staked upon the race. He gained upon the drove at every spring.

The heavy-going eland was soon overtaken, and as it trotted to one side, was passed. It halted, but the quaggas kept on.

Not only the drove kept on, but Hendrik’s quagga following close at their heels; and in less than five minutes they had left the eland a full mile in their rear, and were still scouring onward over the wide plain.

What was Hendrik about? Was he going to forsake the eland, and let it escape? Had he grown so interested in the race? Was he jealous about his quagga’s speed, and determined it should beat all the others?

So it would have appeared to any one witnessing the race from a distance. But

one who could have had a nearer view of it, would have given a different explanation of Hendrik's conduct.

The fact was, that as soon as the eland halted Hendrik intended to halt also; and for that purpose pulled strongly upon his bridle. But, to his astonishment, he found that his quagga did not share his intention. Instead of obeying the bit, the animal caught the steel in his teeth, and laying his ears back, galloped straight on!

Hendrik then endeavoured to turn the quagga to one side, and for this purpose wrenched his right rein; but with such fierceness, that the old bit-ring gave way—the bit slipped through the animal's jaws—the head-stall came off with the jerk—and the quagga was completely unbridled!

Of course the animal was now free to go just as he liked; and it was plain that he liked to go with his old comrades. His old comrades he well knew them to be, as his snorting and occasional neigh of recognition testified.

At first Hendrik was disposed to look upon the breaking of his bit as only a slight misfortune. For a boy he was one of the best riders in South Africa, and needed no rein to steady him. He could keep his seat without one. The quagga would soon stop, and he could then repair the bit, and re-adjust the bridle which he still held in his hands. Such were his reflections at first.

But their spirit began to alter, when he found that the quagga, instead of lessening his pace kept on as hard as ever, and the herd still ran wildly before him without showing the slightest signs of coming to a halt.

In fact, the quaggas were running through fear. They saw the mounted hunter behind them in hot pursuit; and although their old comrade knew who they were, how were they to tell what he was, with such a tall hunch upon his back? No quagga he, but some terrible monster, they imagined, thirsting for their lives, and eager to devour one and all of them!

No wonder they showed their heels in the best style they knew how; and so well did they show them, that Hendrik's quagga—notwithstanding his keen desire to get forward among them, and explain away the awkward business upon his back—was not able to come an inch closer.

He did not lose ground, however. His eagerness to regain his old associates—to partake once more of their wild freedom—for he was desperately tired of civilised society, and sick of elephant-hunting—all these ideas crowded into his mind at the moment, and nerved him to the utmost exertion. Could he only get up into the body of the crowd—for the herd now ran in a crowd—a few whimpers would suffice to explain—they would come to a halt at once,—they would gather around him, and assist both with hoofs and teeth to get “shed” of the ugly two-legged thing that clung so tightly to his dorsal vertebrae.

It was “no go,” however. Although he was so close to their heels, that they flung dust in his face, and small pebbles in the face of his rider, to the no slight inconvenience of the latter; although he “whighered” whenever he could spare breath, and uttered his “couag,—couag!” in reality calling them by name, it was “no go.” “They would not stay. They would not hear.”

And what did Hendrik during all this time? Nothing—he could do nothing. He could not stay the impetuous flight of his steed. He dared not dismount. He would have been hurled among sharp rocks, had he attempted such a thing. His neck would have been broken. He could do nothing—nothing but keep his seat.

What thought he? At first, not much. At first he regarded the adventure lightly. When he was about completing his third mile, he began to deem it more serious; and as he entered upon the fifth, he became convinced that he was neither more nor less than in a very awkward scrape.

But the fifth mile was left behind, and then a sixth, and a seventh; and still the quaggas galloped wildly on—the drove actuated by the fear of losing their liberty, and their old comrade by the desire of regaining his.

Hendrik now felt real uneasiness. Where were they going? Where was the brute carrying him? Perhaps off to the desert, where he might be lost and perish of hunger or thirst! Already he was many miles from the cliffs, and he could no longer tell their direction. Even had he halted then and there, he could not tell which way to turn himself. He would be lost!

He grew more than anxious. He became frightened in earnest.

What was he to do? Leap down, and risk his neck in the fall? He would lose his quagga and his saddle as well—he regarded the eland as already lost—he would have to walk back to camp, and get laughed at on his return.

No matter for all that; his life was in danger if he kept on. The quaggas might gallop twenty,—ay, fifty miles before halting. They showed no symptoms of being blown—no signs of giving out. He must fling himself to the ground, and let quagga and saddle go.

He had formed this resolution, and was actually about to put it in practice. He was just considering how he might best escape an ugly fall—looking for a soft spot—when, all at once, a grand idea rushed into his mind.

He remembered that in taming this same quagga and breaking him to the saddle, he had been vastly aided by a very simple contrivance—that was a “blind.” The blind was nothing more than a piece of soft leather tied over the animal’s eyes; but so complete had been its effect, that it had transformed the quagga at once from a kicking screaming creature into a docile animal.

Hendrik now thought of the blind.

True, he had none. Was there nothing about him that would serve as one? His handkerchief? No, it would be too thin. Hurrah! His jacket would do!

His rifle was in the way. It must be got rid of. It must be dropped to the ground, he could return for it.

It was let down as gently as possible, and soon left far behind.

In a twinkling Hendrik stripped off his jacket. How was it to be arranged so as to blind the quagga? It would not do to drop it.

A moment's consideration served the ready boy to mature his plan. After a moment he bent down, passed a sleeve upon each side under the quagga's throat, and then knotted them together. The jacket thus rested over the animal's mane, with the collar near its withers, and the peak or skirt upon the small of its neck.

Hendrik next leaned as far forward as he could, and with his extended arms pushed the jacket up the animal's neck, until the skirt passed over its ears, and fell down in front of its face.

It was with some difficulty that the rider, bent down as he was, could retain his seat; for as soon as the thick flap of cloth came down over the eyes of the quagga, the latter halted as if he had been shot dead in his tracks. He did not fall, however, but only stood still, quivering with terror. His gallop was at an end!

Hendrik leaped to the ground. He was no longer afraid that the quagga, blinded as he now was, would make any attempt to get off; nor did he.

In a few minutes the broken bit-ring was replaced by a strong rein of raw leather; the bit inserted between the quagga's teeth, the head-stall safely buckled, and Hendrik once more in the saddle, with his jacket upon his back.

The quagga felt that he was conquered. His old associates were no longer in sight to tempt him from his allegiance; and with these considerations, aided by a slight dose of bit and spur, he turned his head, and moved sullenly upon the back-track. Hendrik knew nothing about the route he should take. He followed back the spoor of the quaggas to the place where he had dropped his gun, which after riding a mile or two he recovered.

As there was no sun in the sky, nor other object to guide him, he thought he could not do better than trace back the spoor; and although it led him by many a devious route, and he saw nothing more of his eland, before night he reached the pass in the cliff, and was soon after sitting under the shadow of the nwanatree, regaling a most interested audience with the narrative of his day's adventures.

Chapter Forty Two.

The Gun-Trap.

It was about this time that the field-cornet and his people were very much annoyed by beasts of prey. The savoury smell which their camp daily sent forth, as well as the remains of antelopes, killed for their venison, attracted these visitors. Hyenas and jackals were constantly skulking in the neighbourhood, and at night came around the great nwana-tree in scores, keeping up their horrid chorus for hours together. It is true that nobody feared these animals, as the children at night were safe in their aerial home, where the hyenas could not get at them. But for all that, the presence of the brutes was very offensive, as not a bit of meat—not a hide, nor rheim, nor any article of leather—could be left below without their getting their teeth upon it, and chewing it up.

Quarters of venison they had frequently stolen, and they had eaten up the leathern part of Swartboy's saddle, and rendered it quite useless for a while. In short, so great a pest had the hyenas grown to be, that it became necessary to adopt some mode of destroying them.

It was not easy to get a shot at them. During the day they were wary, and either hid themselves in caves of the cliff or in the burrows of the ant-eater. At night they were bold enough, and came into the very camp; but then the darkness hindered a good aim, and the hunters knew too well the value of powder and lead to waste it on a chance shot, though now and then, when provoked by the brutes, they ventured one.

But some way must be thought of to thin the numbers of these animals, or get rid of them altogether. This was the opinion of everybody.

Two or three kinds of traps were tried, but without much success. A pit they could leap out of, and from a noose they could free themselves by cutting the rope with their sharp teeth!

At length the field-cornet resorted to a plan—much practised by the boors of Southern Africa for ridding their farms of these and similar vermin. It was the “gun-trap.”

Now there are several ways of constructing a gun-trap. Of course a gun is the principal part of the mechanism, and the trigger pulled by a string is the main point of the contrivance. In some countries the bait is tied to the string, and the animal on seizing the bait tightens the string, draws the trigger, and shoots itself. In this way, however, there is always some uncertainty as to the result. The animal may not place its body in the proper position with regard to the muzzle, and may either escape the shot altogether, or may be only “creased,” and of course get off.

The mode of setting the “gun-trap” in South Africa is a superior plan; and the creature that is so unfortunate as to draw the trigger rarely escapes, but is either killed upon the spot, or so badly wounded as to prevent its getting away.

Von Bloom constructed his trap after the approved fashion, as follows:—Near the camp he selected a spot where three saplings or young trees grew, standing in a line, and about a yard between each two of them. Had he not found three trees so disposed, stakes firmly driven into the ground would have answered his purpose equally well.

Thorn-bushes were now cut, and a kraal built in the usual manner—that is, with the tops of the bushes turned outwards. The size of the kraal was a matter of no consequence; and, of course, to save labour, a small one was constructed.

One point, however, was observed in making the kraal. Its door or opening was placed so that two of the three saplings stood like posts, one on each side of it; and an animal going into the enclosure must needs pass between these two trees.

Now for the part the gun had to play.

The weapon was placed in a horizontal position against two of the saplings,—that is, the stock against the one outside the kraal, and the barrel against one of the door-posts, and there firmly lashed. In this position the muzzle was close to the edge of the entrance, and pointing directly to the sapling on the opposite side. It was at such a height as to have ranged with the heart of a hyena standing in the opening.

The next move was to adjust the string. Already a piece of stick, several inches in length, had been fixed to the small of the stock, and, of course, behind the trigger. This was fastened transversely, but not so as to preclude all motion. A certain looseness in its adjustment gave it the freedom required to be worked as a lever—for that was its design.

To each end of this little stick was fastened a string. One of these strings was attached to the trigger; the other, after being carried through the thimbles of the ramrod, traversed across the entrance of the kraal, and was knotted upon the opposite side to the sapling that stood there. This string followed the horizontal direction of the barrel, and was just “taut;” so that any farther strain upon it would act upon the little lever, and by that means pull the trigger; and then of course “bang” would go the roer.

When this string was adjusted, and the gun loaded and cocked, the trap was set.

Nothing remained to be done but bait it. This was not a difficult task. It consisted simply in placing a piece of meat or carcass within the enclosure,

and these leaving it to attract the prowling beasts to the spot.

When the gun had been set, Swartboy carried up the bait—the offal of an antelope killed that day—and flung it into the kraal; and then the party went quietly to their beds, without thinking more of the matter.

They had not slept a wink, however, before they were startled by the loud “crack” of the roer, followed by a short stifled cry that told them the gun-trap had done its work.

A torch was procured, and the four hunters proceeded to the spot. There they found the dead body of a huge “tiger-wolf” lying doubled up in the entrance, and right under the muzzle of the gun. He had not gone a step after receiving the shot—in fact, had hardly kicked before dying—as the bullet, wad, and all, had gone quite through his ribs and entered his heart, after making a large ugly hole in his side. Of course he must have been within a few inches of the muzzle, when his breast, pressing against the string, caused the gun to go off.

Having again loaded the roer, the hunters returned to their beds. One might suppose they would have dragged the suicidal hyena away from the spot, lest his carcass should serve as a warning to his comrades, and keep them away from the trap. But Swartboy knew better than that. Instead of being scared by the dead body of one of their kind, the hyenas only regard it as proper prey, and will devour it as they would the remains of a tender antelope!

Knowing this, Swartboy did not take the dead hyena away, but only drew it within the kraal to serve as a farther inducement for the others to attempt an entrance there.

Before morning they were once more awakened by the “bang” of the great gun. This time they lay still; but when day broke they visited their trap, and found that a second hyena had too rashly pressed his bosom against the fatal string.

Night after night they continued their warfare against the hyenas, changing the trap-kraal to different localities in the surrounding neighbourhood.

At length these creatures were nearly exterminated, or, at all events, became so rare and shy, that their presence by the camp was no longer an annoyance one way or the other.

About this time, however, there appeared another set of visitors, whose presence was far more to be dreaded, and whose destruction the hunters were more anxious to accomplish. That was a family of lions.

The spoor of these had been often seen in the neighbourhood; but it was some time before they began to frequent the camp. However, about the time the hyenas had been fairly got rid of, the lions took their place, and came every night, roaring about the camp in a most terrific manner.

Dreadful as these sounds were, the people were not so much afraid of them as one might imagine. They well knew that the lions could not get at them in the tree. Had it been leopards they might have felt less secure, as the latter are true tree-climbers; but they had seen no leopards in that country, and did not think of them.

They were not altogether without fear of the lions, however. They were annoyed, moreover, that they could not with safety descend from the tree after nightfall, but were every night besieged from sunset till morning. Besides, although the cow and the quaggas were shut in strong kraals, they dreaded each night that the lions would make a seizure of one or other of these animals; and the loss of any one of them, but especially their valuable friend “old Graaf,” would have been a very serious misfortune.

It was resolved, therefore, to try the gun-trap upon the lions, as it had succeeded so well with the hyenas.

There was no difference in the construction or contrivance of the trap. The gun only had to be placed upon a higher level, so that its muzzle might be opposite the lion’s heart, and the proper range was easily obtained. The bait, however, was not carcass, but an animal freshly killed; and for this purpose an antelope was procured.

The result was as desired. On the first night the old male lion “breasted” the fatal string and bit the dust. Next night the lioness was destroyed in a similar way; and shortly after a full-grown young male.

The trap then lay idle for a while; but about a week after a half-grown “cub” was shot near the camp by Hendrik, no doubt the last of that family, as no lions were seen for a long time after.

A great enemy to night-plunderers was that same gun-trap.

Chapter Forty Three.

The Weaver-Birds.

Now that the beasts of prey had been destroyed, or driven from about the camp, there was no longer any danger in that quarter, and the children could be left by themselves. Totty of course always stayed with them; while the four hunters went forth upon the chase of the elephant—each mounted upon his quagga.

They had done so many a time, and as no harm had happened to the children in their absence, such a course became habitual with them. Jan and Trüey were cautioned not to stray far from the nwana, and always to climb to the tree,

should they perceive any animal that might be dangerous. Before the destruction of the hyenas and lions, they had been used to remain altogether in the tree, while the hunters were absent. But this had been quite an imprisonment to them; and now that the danger was not considered much, they were allowed to come down and play upon the grassy plain, or wander along the shore of the little lake.

On one occasion when the hunters were abroad, Trüey had strayed down to the edge of the water. She was alone, if we except the company of the gazelle, which followed at her heels wherever she went. This pretty creature had grown to full size, and had turned out a great beauty, with large round eyes that had a lovely melting expression, like the eyes of Trüey herself.

Well, as I have said, Trüey was alone. Jan was busy near the bottom of the tree, working a new rod into his bird-cage, and Totty was out upon the plain herding “old Graaf”—so Trüey and the pet springbok went strolling along by themselves.

Now Trüey had not gone down to the water without an object. She had one. She had gone to give her pet a drink, and collect some blue lilies for a bouquet. All this she had done, and still continued to walk along the shore.

On one side of the lake, and that the farthest from the nwana-tree, a low spit of land projected into the water. It had once been but a sand-bar, but grass had grown upon it, until a green turf was formed. There was not over a square perch of it altogether, but it was not square in shape. On the contrary, it was of oval form, and much narrower nearest the land, where it formed a neck, or isthmus, not more than three feet in width. It was, in short, a miniature peninsula, which by a very little work with the spade could have been converted into a miniature island—had that been desired.

Now there is nothing very remarkable about a little peninsula projecting into a lake. In nearly every lake such a thing may be seen. But about this one there was something remarkable.

Upon its extreme end grew a tree of singular form and foliage. It was not a large tree, and its branches drooped downwards until their tips almost touched the water. The pendulous boughs, and long lanceolate silvery leaves, rendered it easy to tell what sort of tree it was. It was the weeping or Babylonian willow—so-called, because it was upon trees of this species that the captive Jews hung their harps when they “sat and wept by the streams of Babel.” This beautiful tree casts its waving shadow over the streams of South Africa, as well as those of Assyria; and often is the eye of the traveller gladdened by the sight of its silvery leaves, as he beholds them,—sure indications of water—shining afar over the parched and thirsty desert. If a Christian, he fails not to remember that highly poetical passage of sacred writing, that speaks of the

willow of Babylon.

Now the one which grew upon the little peninsula had all these points of interest for little Trüey—but it had others as well. Upon its branches that overhung the water a very singular appearance presented itself. Upon these was suspended—one upon the end of each branch—a number of odd-shaped objects, that hung drooping down until their lower ends nearly rested upon the surface of the water. These objects, as stated, were of a peculiar shape. At the upper ends—where they were attached to the branches—they were globe-shaped, but the lower part consisted of a long cylinder of much smaller diameter, and at the bottom of this cylinder was the entrance. They bore some resemblance to salad-oil bottles inverted, with their necks considerably lengthened; or they might be compared to the glass retorts seen in the laboratory of the chemist.

They were each twelve or fifteen inches in length, and of a greenish colour—nearly as green as the leaves of the tree itself. Were they its fruit?

No. The weeping-willow bears no fruit of that size. They were not fruit. They were nests of birds!

Yes; they were the nests of a colony of harmless finches of the genus *Ploceus*,—better known to you under the appellation of “weaver-birds.”

I am sure you have heard of weaver-birds before this; and you know that these creatures are so-called on account of the skill which they exhibit in the construction of their nests. They do not build nests, as other birds, but actually weave them, in a most ingenious manner.

You are not to suppose that there is but one species of weaver-bird—one kind alone that forms these curious nests. In Africa—which is the principal home of these birds—there are many different kinds, forming different genera, whose hard names I shall not trouble you with. Each of these different kinds builds a nest of peculiar shape, and each chooses a material different from the others. Some, as the *Ploceus icterocephalus*, make their nests of a kidney-shape, with the entrance upon the sides, and the latter not circular, but like an arched doorway. Others of the genus *Plocepasser* weave their nests in such a manner, that the thick ends of the stalks stick out all around the outside, giving them the appearance of suspended hedgehogs; while the birds of another genus closely allied to the latter, construct their nests of slender twigs, leaving the ends of these to project in a similar manner. The “social gros-beak” (*Loxia socia*) fabricates a republic of nests in one clump, and all under one roof. The entrances are in the under-surface of this mass, which, occupying the whole top of a tree, has the appearance of a haystack, or a dense piece of thatch.

All these weaver-birds, though of different genera, bear a considerable resemblance to each other in their habits. They are usually granivorous, though

some are insectivorous; and one species, the red-billed weaver-bird, (*Textor erythrorhynchus*), is a parasite of the wild buffaloes.

It is a mistake to suppose that weaver-birds are only found in Africa and the Old World, as stated in the works of many naturalists. In tropical America, birds of this character are found in many species of the genera *Cassicus* and *Icterus*, who weave pensile nests of a similar kind upon the trees of the Amazon and Orinoco. But the true weaver-birds—that is to say, those which are considered the type of the class,—are those of the genus *Ploceus*; and it was a species of this genus that had hung their pendulous habitations upon the weeping-willow. They were of the species known as the “pensile weaver-bird” (*Ploceus pensilis*).

There were full twenty of their nests in all, shaped as already described, and of green colour—for the tough “Bushman’s grass,” out of which they had been woven, had not yet lost its verdant hue, nor would it for a long time. Being of this colour, they actually looked like something that grew upon the tree,—like great pear-shaped fruits. No doubt from this source have been derived the tales of ancient travellers, who represented that in Africa were trees with fruits upon them, which, upon being broken open, disclosed to view either living birds or their eggs!

Now the sight of the weaver-birds, and their nests, was nothing new to Trüey. It was some time since the colony had established itself upon the willow-tree, and she and they had grown well acquainted. She had often visited the birds, had collected seeds, and carried them down to the tree; and there was not one of the whole colony that would not have perched upon her wrist or her pretty white shoulders, or hopped about over her fair locks, without fear. It was nothing unusual to her to see the pretty creatures playing about the branches, or entering the long vertical tunnels that led upward to their nests—nothing unusual for Trüey to listen for hours to their sweet twittering, or watch their love-gambols around the borders of the vley.

She was not thinking of them at the moment, but of something else, perhaps of the blue water-lilies—perhaps of the springbok—but certainly not of them, as she tripped gaily along the edge of the lake.

Her attention, however, was suddenly attracted to the birds.

All at once, and without any apparent cause, they commenced screaming and fluttering around the tree, their cries and gestures betokening a high state of excitement or alarm.

Chapter Forty Four.

The Spitting-Snake.

“What can be the matter with my pretty birds?” asked Trüey of herself. “Something wrong surely! I see no hawk. Perhaps they are fighting among themselves. I shall go round and see. I shall soon pacify them.”

And so saying she mended her pace; and passing round the end of the lake, walked out upon the peninsula until she stood under the willow.

There was no underwood. The tree stood alone upon the very end of the spit of land, and Trüey went close in to its trunk. Here she stopped and looked up among the branches, to ascertain what was causing so much excitement among the birds.

As she approached, several of the little creatures had flown towards her, and alighted upon her arms and shoulders; but not as was their wont when desiring to be fed. They appeared to be in a state of alarm, and had come to her for protection.

Some enemy certainly must be near, thought Trüey, though she could see none.

She looked around and above. There were no hawks in the air, nor on the neighbouring trees,—no birds of prey of any kind. Had there been one in the willow, she could easily have seen it, as the foliage was light and thin; besides a hawk would not have remained in the tree with her standing so near. What, then, caused the trouble among the birds? what was still causing it—for they were as noisy and terrified as ever? Ha! At last the enemy appears—at last Trüey’s eyes have fallen upon the monster who has disturbed the peaceful colony of weavers, and roused them to such a pitch of excitement.

Slowly gliding along a horizontal branch, grasping the limb in its many spiral folds, appeared the body of a large serpent. Its scales glittered as it moved, and it was the shining of these that had caught Trüey’s eyes, and directed them upon the hideous reptile.

When she first saw it, it was gliding spirally along one of the horizontal branches of the willow, and coming, as it were, from the nests of the birds. Her eyes, however, had scarce rested upon it, before its long slippery body passed from the branch, and the next moment it was crawling head-foremost down the main trunk of the tree.

Trüey had scarce time to start back, before its head was opposite the spot where she had stood. No doubt, had she kept her place she would have been bitten by the serpent at once; for the reptile, on reaching that point, detached its head from the tree, spread its jaws wide open, projected its forked tongue, and hissed horribly. It was evidently enraged—partly because it had failed in its plundering intentions, not having been able to reach the nests of the birds, —and partly that the latter had repeatedly struck it with their beaks—no doubt

causing it considerable pain. It was further provoked by the arrival of Trüey, in whom it recognised the rescuer of its intended victims.

Whatever were its thoughts at that moment, it was evidently in a rage—as the motion of its head and the flashing of its eyes testified; and it would have sprung upon any creature that had unfortunately come in its way.

Trüey, however, had no intention of getting in its way if she could avoid it. It might be a harmless serpent for all she knew; but a snake, nearly six feet in length, whether it be harmless or venomous, is a terrible object to be near; and Trüey had instinctively glided to one side, and stood off from it as far as the water would allow her.

She would have run back over the narrow isthmus; but something told her that the snake was about to take that direction, and might overtake her; and this thought induced her to pass to one side of the peninsula, in hopes the reptile would follow the path that led out to the mainland.

Having got close to the water's edge, she stood gazing upon the hideous form, and trembled as she gazed.

Had Trüey known the character of that reptile, she would have trembled all the more. She saw before her one of the most venomous of serpents, the black naja, or "spitting-snake"—the cobra of Africa—far more dangerous than its congener the cobra de capello of India, because far more active in its movements, and equally fatal in its bite.

Trüey knew not this. She only knew that there was a great ugly snake, nearly twice her own length, with a large open mouth and glistening tongue, apparently ready to eat her up. That was fearful enough for her, poor thing! and she gazed and trembled, and trembled and gazed again.

Angry as the cobra appeared, it did not turn aside to attack her. Neither did it remain by the tree. After uttering its long loud hiss, it descended to the ground, and glided rapidly off.

It made directly for the isthmus, as if intending to pass it, and retreat to some bushes that grew at a distance off on the mainland.

Trüey was in hopes that such was its design, and was just beginning to feel safe again, when, all at once, the snake coiled itself upon the narrow neck of land, as if it intended to stay there.

It had executed this manoeuvre so suddenly, and so apparently without premeditation, that Trüey looked to discover the cause. The moment before, it was gliding along in rapid retreat, its glistening form stretched to its full length along the earth. The next instant it had assumed the appearance of a coiled cable, over the edge of which projected its fierce head, with the scaly skin of its neck broadly extended, into that hood-like form which characterises the

cobra.

Trüey, we have said, looked for the cause of this sudden change in the tactics of the reptile. She learnt it at the first glance.

There stretched a piece of smooth sloping ground from the edge of the lake back into the plain. By this the little peninsula was approached. As she glanced outward, she saw the springbok advancing down this slope. It was the approach of the antelope that had interrupted the retreat of the serpent!

Trüey, on first discovering the snake, had uttered a cry of alarm. This cry had summoned her pet—that had lingered behind browsing upon the grass—and it was now bounding forward, with its white tail erect, and its large brown eyes glistening with an expression of inquiry.

It saw its mistress out upon the peninsula. Had she called it? Why had she uttered that strange cry? They were not sounds of joyful import it had heard. Was anything amiss? Yonder she stood. It would gallop to her and see what was wanted; and with such thoughts passing through its brain, the bright little creature bounded down the bank towards the edge of the lake.

Trüey trembled for her pet. Another spring, and it would be upon the lurking serpent—another— “Ha! it is safe!”

These words escaped from the lips of the young girl, as she saw the springbok rise high into the air, and leap far and clear over the coiled reptile. The antelope had observed the snake in time, and saved itself by one of those tremendous bounds, such as only a springbok can make. The fond creature, having passed the danger, now ran on to its mistress, and stood with its big shining eyes bent upon her inquiringly.

But the cry that Trüey had uttered had summoned another individual. To her horror, she now saw little Jan running down the slope, and coming directly upon the path where the cobra lay coiled!

Chapter Forty Five.

The Serpent-Eater.

Jan's danger was imminent. He was rushing impetuously forward upon the coiled serpent. He knew not that it was before him. No warning would reach him in time to stay his haste. In another moment he would be on the narrow path, and then no power could save him from the deadly bite. It would be impossible for him to leap aside or over the reptile, as the antelope had done; for even then Trüey had noticed that the cobra had darted its long neck several feet upwards. It would be certain to reach little Jan, perhaps, coil itself around

him. Jan would be lost!

For some moments Trüey was speechless. Terror had robbed her of the power of speech. She could only scream, and fling her arms wildly about.

But these demonstrations, instead of warning Jan of the danger, only rendered it the more certain. He connected the cries which Trüey now uttered with that which had first summoned him. She was in some trouble—he knew not what; but as she continued to scream, he believed that something had attacked her. A snake he thought it might be; but whatever it was, his first impulse was to hurry up to her rescue. He could do no good until close to her; and, therefore, he did not think of halting until he should reach the spot where she stood.

Her screams, therefore, and the wild gestures that accompanied them, only caused him to run the faster; and as his eyes were bent anxiously on Trüey, there was not the slightest hope that he would perceive the serpent until he had either trodden upon it, or felt its fatal bite.

Trüey uttered one last cry of warning, pronouncing at the same time the words:—

“O, brother! back! The snake! the snake!”

The words were uttered in vain. Jan heard them, but did not comprehend their meaning. He heard the word “snake.” He was expecting as much; it had attacked Trüey; and although he did not see it, it was no doubt wound about her body. He hurried on.

Already he was within six paces of the dread reptile, that had erected its long spread neck to receive him. Another moment, and its envenomed fangs would pierce deep into his flesh.

With a despairing scream Trüey rushed forward. She hoped to attract the monster upon herself. She would risk her own life to save that of her brother!

She had got within six feet of the threatening reptile. Jan was about the same distance from it on the opposite side. They were equally in peril; and one or the other—perhaps both—would have fallen a sacrifice to the deadly cobra; but at that moment their saviour was nigh. A dark shadow passed under their eyes—in their ears was a rushing sound like the “whish” of a falling body—and at the same instant a large bird darted down between them!

It did not stay to alight. For a moment its strong broad wings agitated the air in their faces; but the next moment the bird made a sudden effort, and rose vertically upwards.

Trüey’s eyes fell upon the ground. The cobra was no longer there.

With an exclamation of joy she sprang forward, and, throwing her arms around Jan, cried out,—

“We are saved, brother!—we are saved!”

Jan was somewhat bewildered. As yet he had seen no snake. He had seen the bird dart down between them; but so adroitly had it seized the cobra and carried it off, that Jan, looking only at Trüey, had not perceived the serpent in its beak. He was bewildered and terrified, for he still fancied that Trüey was in danger.

When he heard her exclaim, “We are saved!” he was bewildered all the more.

“But the snake!” he cried out. “Where is the snake?”

As he put these questions, he kept examining Trüey from head to foot, as if expecting to see a reptile twined around some part of her body.

“The snake, Jan! Did you not see it? It was just there, at our feet; but now—see! yonder it is. The secretary has got it. See! They are fighting! Good bird! I hope it will punish the villain for trying to rob my pretty weavers. That’s it, good bird! Give it to him! See, Jan! What a fight!”

“Oh, ah!” said Jan, now comprehending the situation. “Oh, ah! Sure yonder is a snake, and a whopper, too. Ne’er fear, Trüey! Trust my secretary. He’ll give the rascal a taste of his claws. There’s a lick well put in! Another touch like that, and there won’t be much life left in the scaly villain. There again,—wop!”

With these and similar exclamations the two children stood watching the fierce conflict that raged between the bird and the reptile.

Now this bird was a very peculiar one—so much so, that in all the world there is no other of the same kind. In form it resembled a crane, having very long legs, and being about the height and size of a crane. Its head and beak, however, were more like those of an eagle or vulture. It had well-developed wings, armed with spurs, and a very long tail, with the two middle feathers longer than the rest. Its general colour was bluish grey, with a white throat and breast, and a reddish tinge upon the wing-feathers. But, perhaps, the most remarkable thing about the bird was its “crest.” This consisted of a number of long, blackish plumes growing out of its occiput, and extending down the back of its neck nearly to the shoulders. These gave the bird a very peculiar appearance; and the fancied resemblance to a secretary of the olden time with his long quill behind his ear—before steel pens came into fashion—is the reason why the bird has received the very inappropriate name of the “Secretary-bird.”

It is more properly named the “serpent-eater,” and naturalists have given it the title *Gypogernus*, or “crane-vulture.” It is sometimes also called “the messenger,” from the staid solemn manner of its walk, as it stalks over the plain.

Of all its names that of “serpent-eater” is the best adapted to the character of the bird. It is true there are other birds that kill and eat serpents,—as the “guaco” bird of South America, and many hawks and kites,—but the secretary is the only winged creature that makes reptiles of this class exclusively its prey, and carries on a constant war against them. It is not strictly correct to say that it feeds exclusively upon snakes. It will also eat lizards, tortoises, and even locusts; but snakes are certainly its favourite food, and to obtain these it risks its life in many a deadly encounter with those of a very large kind. The serpent-eater is an African bird, and is not peculiar to South Africa alone, as it is found in the Gambia country. It is also a native of the Philippine Isles. There is some doubt whether the species of the Philippine Isles is identical with that of Africa. A difference is noted in the plumage, though very slight. The disposition of the crest-plumes differs in the two, and the tail-feathers are differently arranged. In the African species the two middle ones are the longest, while in the serpent-eater of the Philippines it is the two outside feathers that project—giving the bird the appearance of having a “fork” or “swallow” tail. Some points of distinction have also been observed between the South African bird and that of the Gambia.

The serpent-eater is, however, a very unique bird; and naturalists, failing to class it with either hawks, eagles, vultures, gallinae, or cranes, have elevated it, so as to form a distinct tribe, family, genus, and species, of itself.

In South Africa it frequents the great plains and dry karoos, stalking about in search of its prey. It is not gregarious, but lives solitary or in pairs, making its nest in trees,—usually those of a thick thorny species,—which renders the nest most difficult of approach. The whole edifice is about three feet in diameter, and resembles the nests of the tree-building eagles. It is usually lined with feathers and down, and two or three eggs are the number deposited for a single hatching.

The serpent-eater is an excellent runner, and spends more time on foot than on the wing. It is a shy wary bird, yet, notwithstanding, it is most easily domesticated; and it is not uncommon to see them about the houses of the Cape farmers, where they are kept as pets, on account of their usefulness in destroying snakes, lizards, and other vermin. They have been long ago introduced into the French West India Islands, and naturalised there—in order that they should make war upon the dangerous “yellow serpent” (*Trigonocephalus lanceolatus*), the plague of the plantations in those parts.

Now the bird which had so opportunely appeared between Jan and Trüey, and had no doubt saved one or the other, or both, from the deadly bite of the spuugh-slang, was a serpent-eater,—one that had been tamed, and that made its home among the branches of the great nwana-tree. The hunters had found it upon the plain, wounded by some animal,—perhaps a very large

snake,—and had brought it home as a curiosity. In time it quite recovered from its wounds; but the kindness it had received, during the period when it was an invalid, was not thrown away upon it. When it recovered the use of its wings, it refused to leave the society of its protectors, but remained habitually in the camp—although it made frequent excursions into the surrounding plains in search of its favourite food. It always, however, returned at night, and roosted among the branches of the great nwana-tree. Of course it was Jan's pet, and Jan was very good to it; but it now repaid all his kindness in saving him from the fangs of the deadly cobra.

The children, having recovered from their alarm, stood watching the singular conflict between serpent and serpent-eater.

On first seizing the reptile the bird had caught it by the neck in its beak. It might not have accomplished this so readily, had not the attention of the snake been occupied by the children, thus throwing it off its guard.

Having succeeded in seizing the reptile, the bird rose nearly in a vertical direction to a height of many yards, and then opening his beak permitted the serpent to fall to the ground. His object was to stun the latter by the fall; and the more effectually to do this, he would have carried the cobra still higher, had not the latter prevented it by attempting to coil itself around his wings.

Upon letting fall his prey the serpent-eater did not remain in the air. On the contrary, he darted after the falling reptile, and the moment the latter touched the ground, and before it could put itself in an attitude of defence, the bird “pounced” upon it with spread foot, striking it a violent blow near the neck. The snake was still but slightly damaged, and throwing itself into a coil stood upon its defence. Its mouth was opened to its widest extent, its tongue protruded, its fangs were erect, and its eyes flashing with rage and poison. A terrible antagonist it appeared, and for a moment the secretary seemed to think so, as he stood on the ground confronting it.

But the bird soon began to advance upon it for a renewal of the attack, though this advance was made in a cautious manner. With the pinions of one of his strong wings spread broadly out for a shield, he approached the reptile sideways, and, when near enough, suddenly wheeled, turning upon his leg as on a pivot, and struck sharply out with his other wing. The blow was delivered with good effect. It reached the head of the snake, and seemed to stun it. Its neck drooped, and the coils became loosened. Before it could recover itself it was once more in the beak of the serpent-eater, and trailing through the air.

This time the bird rose to a much greater height than before—as he was not hampered by the writhing of the serpent—and as before suffered the reptile to fall, and then darted suddenly after.

When the snake came to the ground a second time it lay for a moment

stretched at full length, as if stunned or dead. It was not dead, however, and would once more have coiled itself; but, before it could do so, the bird had repeatedly “pounced” upon its neck with his spread and horny feet; and at length, watching his opportunity when the head of the serpent lay flat, he struck a blow with his sharp beak so violent, that it split the skull of the reptile in twain! Life was now extinct, and the hideous form, extended to its full length, lay lithe and motionless upon the grass.

Jan and Trüey clapped their hands, and uttered exclamations of joy.

The serpent-eater took no heed of their demonstrations, but, approaching the dead cobra, bent over it, and coolly set about making his dinner.

Chapter Forty Six.

Totty and the Chacmas.

Von Bloom and his family had now been months without bread. They were not without a substitute, however, as various roots and nuts supplied them with a change of food. Of the latter, they had the ground or pig-nut (*Arachis hypogea*), which grows in all parts of Southern Africa, and which forms a staple food of the native inhabitants. For vegetables they had the bulbs of many species of *Ixias* and *Mesembryanthemums*, among others the “Hottentot fig” (*Mesembryanthemum edule*). They had the “Caffir bread”—the inside pith of the stems of a species of *Zamia*; and the “Caffir chestnut,” the fruit of the *Brabeium stellatum*; and last, not least, the enormous roots of the “elephant’s foot” (*Testudinaria elephantipes*). They had wild onions and garlic too; and in the white flower-tops of a beautiful floating plant (*Aponogeton distachys*), they found a substitute for asparagus.

All these roots and fruits were to be obtained in the neighbourhood, and no man knew better how to find them, and “crow” them up when found, than did Swartboy the Bushman. Well might he, for in Swartboy’s early days he had often been compelled to subsist for weeks, and even months, on roots alone!

But although they could procure a constant supply of these natural productions, they considered them but a poor substitute for bread; and all of them longed to eat once more what is usually termed the “staff of life”—though in South Africa, where so many people live exclusively upon the flesh of animals, bread is hardly entitled to that appellation.

Bread they were likely to have, and soon. When trekking from the old kraal, they had brought with them a small bag of maize. It was the last of their previous year’s stock; and there was not in all over a bushel of it. But that was enough for seed, and would produce many bushels if properly planted, and

carefully tended.

This had been done shortly after their arrival at their present home. A fertile spot of ground had been selected, only a few hundred yards from the nwana-tree. It had been turned up with the spade, for want of a plough, and the seeds planted at proper distances.

Many an hour had been given to the weeding and hoeing of it, and around every plant a little hill of soft mould had been raised, to nourish the roots, and protect them from the heat of the sun. The plants were even watered now and then.

Partly on account of this attention, and partly from the richness of the virgin soil, a splendid growth was the result; and the stalks stood full twelve feet high, with ears nearly a foot long. They had almost ripened; and the field-cornet intended in about a week or ten days to gather in the crop.

Both he and all his people were anticipating pleasant feasts of maize-bread, and “hominy,” with “mash and milk” and various other dishes, that with Totty’s skill could be manufactured out of the Indian corn.

About this time an incident occurred that nearly deprived them, not only of their whole plot of maize-plants, but also of their valuable housekeeper, Totty. It was as follows.

Totty was on the platform in the great nwana-tree, which commanded a view of the corn-patch, and also of the plain beyond, as far as the bottom of the cliffs. She was busied about “house” affairs, when her attention was called off, by some singular noises that came from that direction. She parted the branches and looked through. A singular scene was before her eyes—a spectacle of no common kind.

A body of odd-looking animals, to the number of two hundred or more, was coming from the direction of the cliffs. They were creatures of ungainly forms—in make and size not unlike large ill-shaped dogs—and of a greenish brown colour. Their faces and ears only were black, and these were naked, while their bodies were covered with harsh coarse hair. They had long tails, which some of them carried high in the air, and flourished about in a very eccentric manner.

Totty was by no means alarmed. She knew what sort of animals they were. She knew they were baboons. They were of the species known as the “pig-faced” baboon or “chacma” (*Cynocephalus porcarius*), which is found in nearly every part of South Africa where there are high cliffs with caves and crevices—the favourite dwelling-places of the baboon.

Of all the monkey tribe the baboons, or dog-headed monkeys (*cynocephali*), are the most disgusting in form and features. Who does not feel disgust when

regarding the hideous mandrill—the drill—the hamadryas—or even the chacma? And all these are baboons.

The baboons are peculiar to Africa, and there are six well-known species of them:—the common baboon of North Africa, the “papion” of the south and western coast, the “hamadryas” or “tartarin” of Abyssinia, the “mandrill” and “drill” of Guinea, and the “chacma” of the Cape colony.

The habits of these animals are as disgusting as their appearance. They may be tamed, and made “pets” of; but dangerous pets they are, as they will, upon the slightest provocation, bite the hand that feeds them.

Their great strength of body and jaw, and their long canine teeth, give them a dangerous power which they often make use of. No dog is a match for one, and the hyena and leopard often come off second-best in an encounter with a baboon.

They are not carnivorous, however, and only tear their enemy to pieces without eating it. Their food consists of fruits and bulbous roots, which they well understand to dig out of the ground with the sharp nails of their hands.

Although they will not attack man if left alone, they become dangerous assailants when hunted and brought to bay.

Many odd stories are told of the chacma baboon among the settlers of Southern Africa, such as their robbing the traveller of his food, and then going off to some distance, and mocking him, while they devour it. The natives also say that they sometimes use a stick in walking, “crowing” for roots, and in self-defence. Also, when a young one has succeeded in finding a choice root, and is observed by an older and stronger one, that the latter takes it away: but, should the young one have already swallowed it, then the bully picks him up, turns him head downward, and shakes him until he is forced to “disgorge!” Many such tales are current in the country of the boors, and they are not all without foundation, for these animals most certainly possess the power of reflection in a high degree.

Totty from her perch saw enough to convince her of this, had she been herself inclined to philosophise. But she was not. She was only a little curious about the manoeuvres of the animals, and she called Trüey and little Jan up into the tree, in order that they might share the spectacle with her. All the others were off hunting.

Jan was delighted, and ran up the ladder at once. So did Trüey, and all three stood watching the odd movements of the four-handed creatures.

They perceived that the troop was actually marching in order; not in line, but with some understood arrangement. There were scouts upon the wings, and leaders in front. These were baboons of greater age and size than the others.

There were calls and signals, and the change of accent and tone would have convinced any one that a regular conversation was going on. The females and younger ones marched in the middle for better security. The mothers carried their infants upon their backs, or over their shoulders. Now a mother would stop to suckle her little offspring—dressing its hair at the same time—and then gallop forward to make up for the loss. Now one would be seen beating her child, that had in some way given offence. Now two young females would quarrel, from jealousy or some other cause, and then a terrible chattering would ensue, to be silenced by the loud threatening bark of one of the chiefs!

Thus proceeded they across the plain, chattering, and screaming, and barking, as only monkeys can.

What were they after?

That question was answered very soon. Trüey, and Jan, and Totty, saw, to their dismay, that the baboons were not out upon an idle errand. They were after the maize-plants!

In a few minutes most of the troop had entered the corn-field, and were hidden from view by the tall stems and broad leaves of the plants. A few only could be seen,—large old fellows, that stationed themselves outside as sentinels, and were keeping up a constant interchange of signals. The main body was already stripping the plants of their precious fruit.

But a singular appearance presented itself beyond the corn-field, where a line of baboons, stationed at equal distance from one another, extended away to the very bottom of the cliff. These had been left by a regular manoeuvre,—a deployment—as the troop traversed the plain in coming to the field. For what purpose?

That was soon apparent. In less than two minutes after the crowd disappeared under the shelter of the maize-plants, the long heads in their husks were seen showering out towards the line, as if flung by the hand of man! Those placed at the near end of the line immediately took them up, pitched them to the next, and these to the next, and so on, until, in a very short while from the time a head was plucked from the stalk, it was delivered to the storehouse of the baboons far off among the cliffs!

Had this work gone on much longer the field-cornet would have had but a poor gathering in harvest-time. The baboons thought the corn ripe enough, and would soon have made a crop of it, but at this moment their operations were interrupted.

Totty knew but little of the danger she underwent, when she ran forth with nothing but that long broom-handle to drive off a troop of chacmas. She only thought of the loss her kind master was sustaining; and down the ladder she hurried, and ran straight out to the corn-field.

Several sentinels met her by its edge, grinned, chattered, screamed, barked, and showed their long canine teeth; but they only received a blow over their ugly snouts from the broom-handle. Their cries summoned the others; and in a few moments the poor Hottentot was standing in the midst of an angry circle of chacmas, that were only prevented from springing in upon her by the expert manner in which she continued to ply the broomstick.

But this slight weapon would not have served much longer, and Totty's fate—that of being torn to pieces—would soon have been sealed, had not four horsemen, or rather “quagga-men,” at that moment galloped up to her rescue.

These were the hunters returning from the chase; and a volley from their guns at once scattered the ugly chacmas, and sent them howling back to their caves.

After that the field-cornet looked well to his maize, until it was ready for gathering; when it was all brought home, and deposited in safety out of the reach of either birds, reptiles, quadrupeds or quadrumuna.

Chapter Forty Seven.

The wild hounds and the Hartebeest.

Since the taming of the quaggas the hunting had been attended with tolerable success. Not a week passed without adding a pair of tusks—sometimes two or three pairs—to the collection, which now began to assume the form of a little pyramid of ivory standing near the bottom of the nwana.

Von Bloom, however, was not quite satisfied with his progress. He thought they might do far better if they only had a few dogs.

Though the quaggas were of great service to them, and with these they were often able to overtake the elephant, yet they as often lost their great game, and it is more easy to do so than most persons imagine.

But with dogs to join in the hunt, the result would be quite different. It is true these animals cannot pull down an elephant, nor do him the slightest injury; but they can follow him whithersoever he may go, and by their barking bring him to a stand.

Another valuable service which the dogs perform, is in drawing the attention of the elephant away from the hunters. The huge quadruped when enraged is, as we have already seen, exceedingly dangerous. On such occasions he will charge upon the noisy dogs, mistaking them for his real assailants. This, of course, gives the hunter a good opportunity of delivering his fire, and avoiding the deadly encounter of the elephant.

Now in several elephant-hunts which they had lately made, our hunters had

run some very narrow risks. Their quaggas were neither so manageable nor so quick in their movements as horses would have been, and this rendered the hazard still greater. Some of them might one day fall a victim. So feared Von Bloom; and he would gladly have given for a number of dogs an elephant's tusk a-piece—even though they were the most worthless of curs. Indeed, their quality is but of slight importance. Any dogs that can trace the elephant and pester him with their barring would do.

Von Bloom even thought of taming some hyenas, and training them to the hunt. This idea was by no means quixotic. The hyena is often used for such a purpose, and performs even better than many kinds of dogs.

One day Von Bloom was pondering over this subject. He was seated on a little platform that had been constructed very high up—near the top of the nwanatree—from which a view could be had of the whole country around. It was a favourite resort of the field-cornet—his smoking-room, in fact—where he went every evening to enjoy a quiet pull out of his great meerschaum. His face was turned upon the plain that stretched from the border of the bosch as far as the eye could reach.

While quietly puffing away, his attention was attracted by some animals standing at a distance off upon the plain. The brilliant colour of their bodies had caught his eye.

They were of a lively sienna colour over the back and sides, and white underneath, with a list of black upon the outside of the legs, and some black stripes upon the face, as regularly defined as if laid on by the brush of a painter. They had horns of very irregular shape, roughly knotted—each curved into something of the shape of a reaping-hook, and rising directly from the top of one of the straightest and longest heads ever carried by an animal. These animals were far from being gracefully formed. They had drooping hind-quarters like the giraffe, though in a much less degree, shoulders greatly elevated, and long narrow heads. For the rest their forms were bony and angular. Each stood five feet high, from the fore-hoof to the shoulder, and full nine feet in length.

They were antelopes of course—that species known among Cape colonists as the “hartebeest” (*Acronotus caama*). There were in all about fifty of them in the herd.

When first observed by Von Bloom, they were quietly browsing upon the plain. The next moment, however, they were seen to run to and fro, as if suddenly alarmed by the approach of an enemy.

And an enemy there certainly was; for in a moment more the herd had taken to flight; and Von Bloom now saw that they were followed by a pack of hounds! I say a “pack of hounds,” for the creatures in the distance exactly resembled

hounds more than anything in the world. Nay, more than resembled, for it actually was a pack of hounds—of wild hounds!

Of course Von Bloom knew what they were. He knew they were the “wilde-honden,” very absurdly named by sapient naturalists “*Hyena venatica*,” or “*hunting hyena*,” and by others, with equal absurdity, the “*hunting dog*.” I pronounce these names “absurd,” first because the animal in question bears no more resemblance to a hyena than it does to a hedgehog; and, secondly, because “*hunting dog*” is a very ridiculous appellation, since any dog may merit a similar title.

Now I would ask, why could these naturalists not let the nomenclature of the boors alone? If a better name than “wilde-honden” (wild hounds) can be given to these animals, I should like to hear it. Why, it is the very perfection of a name, and exactly expresses the character of the animal to which they apply it—that character, which coming under their everyday observation, suggested the name.

It is quite a libel to call this beautiful creature a hyena. He has neither the ugly form, the harsh pelage, the dull colour, nor the filthy habits of one. Call him a “wolf,” or “wild dog,” if you please, but he is at the same time the handsomest wolf or wild dog in creation. But we shall name him, as the boors have done, a “wild hound.” That is his true title, let naturalists class him as they may.

His size, shape, his smooth clean coat, as well as his colour, approximate him more to the hound than to any other animal. In the last—which is a ground of “tan” blotched and mottled with large spots of black and grey—he bears a striking resemblance to the common hound; and the superior size of his ears would seem to assimilate him still more to this animal. The ears however, as in all the wild species of *Canis*, are of course not hanging, but erect.

His habits, however, crown the resemblance. In his natural state the wild hound never prowls alone; but boldly runs down his game, following it in large organised packs, just as hounds do; and in his hunting he exhibits as much skill as if he had Tom Moody riding at his heels, to guide with whip and horn.

It was the field-cornet’s good fortune to witness an exhibition of this skill.

The hounds had come unexpectedly upon the hartebeest herd; and almost at the first dash, one of the antelopes became separated from the rest, and ran in an opposite direction. This was just what the cunning dogs wanted; and the whole pack, instead of following the herd, turned after the single one, and ran “tail on end.”

Now this hartebeest, although an ill-shaped antelope, is one of the very swiftest of the tribe; and the wild hound does not capture it without a severe chase. In fact, he could not capture it at all, if speed were the only point

between the two animals. But it is not. The hartebeest has a weakness in its character, opposite to which the wild hound possesses a cunning.

The former when chased, although it runs in a straight line, does not keep long in a direct course. Now and then it diverges to one side or the other, led perhaps by the form of the ground, or some other circumstance. In this habit lies its weakness. The wild hound is well aware of it, and takes advantage of it by a manoeuvre, which certainly savours strongly of reflection on his part.

Our field-cornet had a proof of this as he watched the chase. His elevated position gave him a view of the whole ground, and he could note every movement both of pursuer and pursued.

On breaking off, the hartebeest ran in a right line, and the hounds followed straight after. They had not gone far, however, when Von Bloom perceived that one hound was forging ahead of the rest, and running much faster than any of them. He might have been a swifter dog than the others, but the hunter did not think it was that. He appeared rather to be running harder than they, as if sent forward to push the hartebeest, while the rest saved their wind.

This proved to be really the case; for the dog, by a desperate effort, having gained upon the antelope, caused the latter to turn slightly from its original course; and the pack, perceiving this, changed their direction at the same time, and held along a diagonal line, as if to head the game. By this means they avoided the *détour* which both the antelope and their companion had made.

The hartebeest was now running upon a new line; and as before, one of the hounds was soon seen to head the pack, and press forward at the top of his speed. The one that first led, as soon as the antelope turned from its original course, fell back, rejoined the pack, and was now lagging among the hindmost! His “turn” of duty was over.

Again the hartebeest verged from its course. Again the pack ran obliquely, and made a second “cut” upon him—again a fresh dog took the lead, and on swept the chase as before—the wild hounds uttering their yelping notes as they ran.

Several times was this manoeuvre executed by the cunning dogs—until the desired result was accomplished, and the antelope was completely “blown.”

Then, as if they felt that it was in their power, and that further strategy was not needed, the whole pack rushed forward simultaneously, and closed rapidly upon the game.

The hartebeest made one last despairing effort to escape, but, finding that speed would no longer avail, the creature wheeled suddenly round, and placed itself in an attitude of defiance—the foam falling from its lips, while its red eyes sparkled like coals of fire.

In another moment the dogs were around it.

“What a splendid pack!” exclaimed Von Bloom. “Oh! that I had such an one!

“Ha!” he continued, as a new thought struck him, “and why not, just such an one?—why not?”

Now the train of reflections that passed through the mind of the field-cornet was as follows:—

That the wild hounds might be tamed, and trained to hunting,—easiest of all, to the chase of the elephant. He knew that this could be done, for boor-hunters had often done it. True, the dogs must be taken young, but where were young ones to be obtained? It is not so easy to capture the pups of the wild hound. Until they are able to run well, their mothers do not permit them to stray far from the caves in which they are littered; and these are usually crevices among rocks quite inaccessible to man. How could he obtain a set of them? He had already formed such an intention. Where could be their breeding-place?

His reflections were interrupted at this point, by very singular behaviour on the part of the wild hounds, and which gave him a new idea of their intelligence that quite electrified him.

When the hartebeest stood to bay, and the hounds came up, Von Bloom very naturally expected to see the latter run in upon their game, and at once pull it to the ground. This he knew was their usual habit. What was his astonishment at seeing the whole pack standing off to one side, as if they intended to leave the antelope alone! Some of them even lay down to rest themselves, while the others stood with open jaws and lolling tongues, but without showing any signs that they intended further to molest the panting quarry!

The field-cornet could observe the situation well, for the antelope was on his side—that is, towards the cliffs—while the dogs were farther out upon the plain. Another circumstance that astonished him was, that the dogs, after running up and around the hartebeest, had actually drawn off to their present position!

What could it mean? Were they afraid of its ugly horns? Were they resting themselves before they should make their bloody onslaught?

The hunter kept his gaze intently fixed upon the interesting group.

After a while the antelope, having recovered its wind a little, and seeing the pack so distant, made a fresh start.

This time it ran in a side direction, apparently with the intention of gaining a hill that lay in that way, and up the sides of which it no doubt calculated upon gaining some advantage. But the creature had hardly stretched itself, when the hounds struck out after it; and in five hundred yards running, once more brought it to a stand. Again the pack took station at a distance, and the hartebeest stood upon the plain alone!

Once more it essayed to escape, and started off with all the speed that was left in its legs—the hounds as before trooping after.

This time the antelope headed in a new direction, making for a point in the cliffs; and as the chase now passed very near to the nwana-tree, everybody had a fine view of it.

The hartebeest seemed to be going faster than ever, or, at all events, the dogs did not now appear to gain upon it; and the field-cornet, as well as all the young people, were in hopes the poor creature would escape from its tireless pursuers.

They watched the chase, until they could just see the bright body of the hartebeest afar off, appearing like a yellow spot upon the face of the rocks, but the dogs were no longer visible. Then the yellow spot suddenly disappeared like the going out of a candle, and they could see it no more.

No doubt the antelope was pulled down!

A strange suspicion entered the mind of Von Bloom, and, calling upon them to saddle the quaggas, he, with Hans and Hendrik, rode off towards the place where the hartebeest had been last seen.

They approached the ground with caution; and under the shelter of some bushes were enabled to get within two hundred yards of the spot without being observed. A singular spectacle rewarded their pains.

Within a dozen yards of the cliff lay the body of the hartebeest, where it had been “pulled down” by the dogs. It was already half-eaten, not by the hounds that had hunted it, but by their puppies of all ages, that to the number of more than threescore were now standing around the carcass, tugging away at its flesh and snarling at one another! Some of the grown dogs that had taken part in the chase could be seen lying upon the ground, still panting after their hard run; but most of them had disappeared, no doubt into the numerous small caves and crevices that opened along the bottom of the cliffs.

There was no room left to doubt the singular fact—that the wild hounds had regularly driven the hartebeest up to their breeding-place to feed their young, and that they had abstained from killing it out upon the plain to save themselves the labour of dragging it from a distance!

Indeed these animals—unlike the Felida—have not the power of transporting a large mass to any considerable distance; hence the wonderful instinct which led them to guide the antelope to the very spot where its flesh was wanted!

That they were in the constant practice of this singular habit was attested, by the numerous bones and horns of large antelopes of different kinds, that lay strewn around the place.

Von Bloom had his eye upon the young puppies, and all three made a rush

towards them. But it was to no purpose. Cunning as their fathers and mothers, the little fellows forsook their meal at first sight of the intruders, and darted off into their caves!

But they were not cunning enough to escape the snares, which were laid for them every day for a week after; and, before the end of that time, more than a dozen of them were safely domiciled in a little kennel built especially for their use, under the shadow of the great nwana-tree.

In less than six months from that time, several of them were in the field, and trained to the chase of the elephant, which duty they performed with all the courage and skill that could have been shown by hounds of the purest breed!

Chapter Forty Eight.

Conclusion.

For several years Von Bloom led the life of an elephant-hunter. For several years the great nwana-tree was his home, and his only companions his children and domestics. But, perhaps, these were not the least happy years of his existence, since, during all the time both he and his family had enjoyed the most estimable of earthly blessings,—health.

He had not allowed his children to grow up without instruction. He had not permitted them to lapse into the character of mere “Bush-boys.” He had taught them many things from the book of nature,—many arts that can be acquired as well on the karoo as in the college. He had taught them to love God, and to love one another. He had planted in their minds the seeds of the virtuous principles,—honour and morality,—without which all education is worthless. He had imbued them with habits of industry and self-reliance, and had initiated them into many of the accomplishments of civilised life—so that upon their return to society they might be quite equal to its claims. Upon the whole, those years of the exile’s life, spent in his wilderness home, formed no blank in his existence. He might look back upon them with feelings of satisfaction and pleasure.

Man, however, is formed for society. The human heart, properly organised, seeks communion with the human heart; and the mind, especially when refined and polished by education, loves the intercourse of social life, and, when deprived of it, will always yearn to obtain it.

So was it with the field-cornet. He desired to return once more within the pale of civilised society. He desired once more to revisit the scenes where he had so long dwelt in peaceful happiness; he desired once more to establish himself among his friends and acquaintances of former days, in the picturesque district

of the Graaf Reinet. Indeed, to have remained any longer in his wilderness home could have served no purpose. It is true he had grown very much attached to his wild hunter-life, but it was no longer likely to be profitable. The elephants had completely forsaken the neighbourhood of the camp, and not one was to be found within twenty miles of the spot. They had become well acquainted with the report of the long roer, and knew the dangerous character of that weapon; they had learnt that of all their enemies man was the one to be especially dreaded and shunned; and they had grown so shy of his presence, that the hunters frequently passed whole weeks without setting their eyes upon a single elephant.

But this was no longer an object of solicitude with Von Bloom. Other considerations now occupied his mind, and he did not care much if he should never spoor another of these huge quadrupeds. To return to the Graaf Reinet, and settle there, was now the ultimatum of his wishes.

The time had at length arrived when he would be able to carry out that design; and nothing seemed any longer to stand in the way of its full and complete accomplishment.

The proscription against him had been long since taken off. A general amnesty had been passed by the government, and he had been pardoned among the rest.

It is true his property was not restored to him; but that mattered little now. He had created a new property, as was testified by the vast pyramid of ivory that stood under the shadow of the great nwana-tree!

Nothing remained but to transport this shining pile to a market, and a splendid fortune would be the result.

And Von Bloom's ingenuity found the means for bringing it to market.

About this time there was dug another huge pit-trap near the pass in the cliffs, in which many quaggas were trapped; and then there were stirring scenes, while these wild creatures were being broken to harness, and trained to "trek" in a wagon.

They were trained however, after a good deal of trouble—the old wheels, still in prime condition, serving as the "break;" and then the body of the wagon was let down from the tree, and once more renewed its acquaintance with its old companions the wheels; and the cap-tent spread its protecting shadow over all; and the white and yellow crescents were stowed; and the quaggas were "inspanned;" and Swartboy, mounting the "voor-kist," once more cracked his long bamboo whip; and the wheels, well oiled with elephants' grease, again whirled gaily along!

How surprised were the good people of Graaf Reinet, when, one morning, a cap-tent wagon, drawn by twelve quaggas, and followed by four riders

mounted upon animals of the same kind, pulled up in the public square of their little town! How astonished they were on seeing that this wagon was “chuck” full of elephants’ teeth, all except a little corner occupied by a beautiful girl with cherry cheeks and fair flaxen hair; and how joyed were they, in fine, on learning that the owner of both the ivory and the beautiful girl was no other than their old friend, and much-esteemed fellow-citizen, the field-cornet Von Bloom!

A warm welcome met the elephant-hunter in the square of Graaf Reinet, and, what was also of some importance, a ready market for his ivory.

It chanced just at that time that ivory was selling at a very high rate. Some article—I do not remember what—the principal part of which required to be constructed of pure ivory, had come into fashion and general use in European countries, and the consequence was an increased demand for this valuable commodity. It was a fortunate circumstance for the returned hunter, who was at once enabled to dispose of his stock, not only for ready money, but at such a fine price as to yield him nearly twice the amount he had calculated on receiving!

He had not brought it all with him, as there was more than would have loaded any one wagon. A second load had remained, hidden near the nwana-tree, and this required a journey to be made for it.

It was made in due time, and the remainder arrived safely at Graaf Reinet, and was there delivered to the ivory-dealers, who had already purchased it.

The result was a splendid fortune in ready money. The field-cornet was once more a rich man! For the present we can follow his history no farther than to say, that the proceeds of his great hunt enabled him to buy back his old estate, and to stock it in splendid style, with the best breeds of horses, horned cattle, and sheep; that he rose rapidly in wealth and worldly esteem; that the government gave him its confidence; and, having first restored him to his old office of field-cornet, soon afterwards promoted him to that of “landdrost,” or chief magistrate of the district.

Hans returned to his college studies; while the dashing Hendrik was enabled to enter the profession for which he was most fit, and the very one that fitted him, by obtaining a cornetcy in the “Cape Mounted Rifles.”

Little Jan was packed off to school to study grammar and geography; while the beautiful Trüey remained at home to grace the mansion of her honoured father, and look after his household affairs.

Totty still ruled the kitchen; and, of course, Swartboy was the important man about the house, and for many a long year after cracked his great whip, and flourished his jambok among the long-horned oxen of the wealthy landdrost.

But enough for the present,—enough of adventure for one year. Let us hope, boy readers, that before you and I have circled once more around the sun, we shall make a fresh trip to the land of the boors, and again encounter the worthy Von Bloom, his Bushman, and—

“Bush-Boys.”

The End.



Liked This Book?

For More FREE e-Books visit Freeditorial.com