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JOCK OF THE BUSHVELD

JOCK OF THE BUSHVELD

By SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK

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"JOCK"

JOCK OF THE BUSHVELD

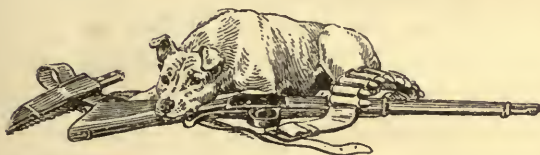
BY

SIR PERCY. FITZPATRICK

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ILLUSTRATED BY

E. CALDWELL



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Dedication

It was the youngest of the High Authorities
who gravely informed the Inquiring
Stranger that

“Jock belongs to the Likkle People ”

That being so, it is clearly the duty, no
less than the privilege, of the
Mere Narrator to

Dedicate

The Story of Jock
to

Those Keenest and Kindest of Critics, Best
of Friends, and Most Delightful
of Comrades

The Likkle People

PREFACE

“SONNY, you kin reckon it dead sure, thar’s something wrong ’bout a thing that don’t explain itself.”

That was Old Rocky’s advice, given three-and-twenty years ago—not forgotten yet, but, in this instance, respectfully ignored.

It happened some years ago, and this was the way of it : the Fox of Ballybothrem having served three generations—in his native Tipperary, in Kaffraria, and in the Transvaal—seemed entitled to a rest ; and when, in the half-hour before ‘lights out,’ which is the Little People’s particular own, the demand came from certain Autocrats of the Nightgown : “Now, tell us something else !” it occurred to the Puzzled One to tell of Jock’s fight with the table leg. And that is how the trouble began. Those with experience will know what followed ; and, for those less fortunate, the modest demand of one, comfortably tucked up tailorwise, and emphasising his points by excited hand-shakes with his toes, will convey the idea : “It must be *all true !* and don’t leave out *anything !*”

To such an audience a story may be told a hundred times, but it must be told, as Kipling says, "Just so!" that is, in the same way; because, even a romance (what a three-year-old once excused as "only a play tell") must be true—to itself!

Once Jock had taken the field it was not long before the narrator found himself helped or driven over the pauses by quick suggestions from the Gallery; but there were days of fag and worry when thoughts lagged or strayed, and when slips were made, and then a vigilant and pitiless memory swooped like the striking falcon on its prey. There came a night when the story was of the Old Crocodile, and one in the Gallery—one of more exuberant fancy—seeing the gate open ran into the flower-strewn field of romance and by suggestive questions and eager promptings helped to gather a little posy: "And he caught the Crocodile by the tail, didn't he?" "And he hung on and fought him, didn't he?" "And the Old Crocodile flung him high into the air? High!" and, turning to the two juniors, added "quite as high as the house!" And the narrator—accessory by reason of a mechanical nod and an absent-minded "Yes" passed on, thinking it could all be put right next time. But there is no escape from the 'tangled web' when the Little People sit in judgment. It was months later when retribution came. The critical point of the story was safely passed when—Oh; the irony and poetic justice of it—it was the innocent tempter himself who laid his hand in solemn protest on the narrator's shoulder and, looking him reproach-

fully in the eyes, said "Dad! You have left out the best part of all. Don't you remember how . . ."

And the description which followed only emphasises the present writer's unfitness for the task he has undertaken. In the text of the story and in the illustration by my friend Mr. Caldwell (who was himself subjected to the same influence) there is left a loophole for fancy: it is open to any one to believe that Jock is just beginning or just ending his aerial excursion. The Important People are not satisfied; but then the page is not big enough to exhibit Jock at the top of that flight—of fancy!

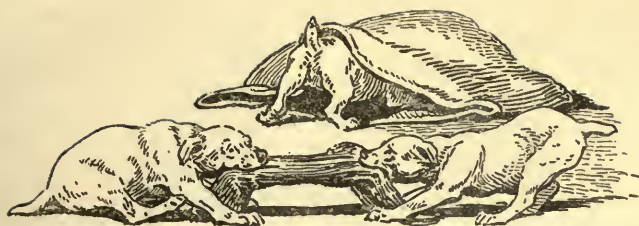
From the date of that lesson it was apparent that reputations would suffer if the story of Jock were not speedily embodied in some durable and authoritative form, and during a long spell of ill health many of the incidents were retold in the form of letters to the Little People. Other Less Important Persons—grown-ups—read them and sometimes heard them, and so it came about that the story of Jock was to be printed for private circulation, for the Little People and their friends. Then the story was read in manuscript and there came still more ambitious counsels, some urging the human story of the early days, others the wild animal life of South Africa. Conscious of many deficiencies the narrator has left two great fields practically untouched, adhering to the original idea—the story of Jock; and those who come into it, men and animals, come in because of him and the life in which he played so large a part. The attempt to adapt the original letters to the symmetry of a

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connected story involved, as one might have known, endless trouble and changes, necessitating complete re-writing of most parts ; and the responsibility and work became still greater when, after a casual and unforeseen meeting, my friend Mr. Caldwell accepted the suggestion to come out to South Africa and spend six months with us in order to study the game in its native bush and to know the conditions of the life and put that experience into the work of illustrating "Jock."

The writer is well aware that, from the above causes and one other, there are grave inequalities in style and system, and in plane of phrase and thought, in different parts of the book. For this feature the 'one other' cause is alone put forward as a defence. The story belongs to the Little People, and their requirements were defined—"It must be *all true* ! Don't leave out *anything* !" It has been necessary to leave out a great deal ; but the other condition has been fully and fairly complied with ; for it is a true story from beginning to end. It is not a diary : incidents have been grouped and moved to get over the difficulty of blank days and bad spells, but there is no incident of importance or of credit to Jock which is not absolutely true. The severest trial in this connection was in the last chapter, which is bound to recall perhaps the most famous and most cherished of all dog stories. Much, indeed, would have been sacrificed to avoid that ; but it was unthinkable that, for any reason, one should in the last words shatter the spell that holds Jock dear to those for whom his life is chronicled—the spell that lies in 'a true story.'

Little by little the book has grown until it has come perilously near the condition in which it might be thought to have Pretensions. It has none! It is what it was : a simple record, compiled for the interest and satisfaction of some Little People, and a small tribute of remembrance and affection offered at the shrine of the old life and those who made it—tendered in the hope that some one better equipped with opportunities and leisure may be inspired to do justice to it and to them for the sake of our native land.



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THE BACKGROUND.

OF the people who live lonely lives, on the veld or elsewhere, few do so of their own free choice. Some there are shut off from all their kind—souls sheathed in some film invisible, through which no thrill of sympathy may pass; some barred by their self-consciousness, heart hungry still, who never learned in childhood to make friends; some have a secret or a grief; some, thoughts too big or bad for comradeship. But most will charge to Fate the thoughtless choice, the chance, or hard necessity, that drew or drove them to the life apart; they know the lesson that was learned of old: "It is not good for man to be alone."

Go out among them, ever moving on, whose white bones mark the way for others' feet—who shun the cities, living in the wilds, and move in silence, self-contained. Who knows what they think, or dream, or hope, or suffer? Who can know? For speech among that hard-schooled lot is but a half-remembered art.

Yet something you may guess, since with the man there often goes—his dog; his silent tribute to The Book. Oh, it's little they know of life who cannot guess the secret springs of loneliness and love that prompt the keeping of a trifling pet; who do not know what

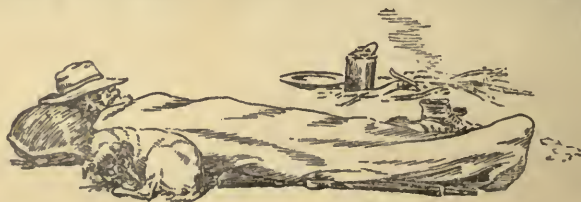


moves a man who daily takes his chance of life and death—man whose “breath is in his nostrils”—to lay his cheek against the muzzle of his comrade dog, and in the trackless miles of wilderness feel he has a friend. Something to hold to; something to protect.

There was old Blake—“mad, quite mad,” as everybody knew—of whom they vaguely said that horses, hounds, coaches, covers, and all that goes with old estates, were his—once. We knew him poor and middle-aged. How old to us! Cheery and unpractical, with two old pointers and a fowling-piece, and a heart as warm as toast. We did not ask each other’s business there; and, judging by the dogs and gun, we put him down as a ‘remittance man.’ But that, it seems, was wrong. They were his all.

He left no letters—a little pile of paper ash; no money and no food! That was his pride. He would not sell or give away his dogs! That was his love. When he could not keep them it seemed time to go! That was his madness. But before he went, remembering a friend in hospital, he borrowed two cartridges and brought him in a brace of birds. That was old mad Blake, who ‘moved on’ and took his dogs with him, because they had always been together, and he could not leave their fate to chance. So we buried him with one on either side, just as he would have liked it!

There was Turner, who shot the crocodile that seized his dog, and reckless of the others, swam in and brought the dog to land.



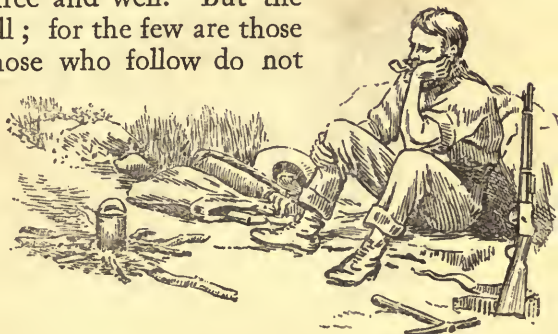
There was the dog that jumped in when his master slipped from the rock, and, swimming beside him, was snapped down in his stead ! And there was the boy who tried a rescue in the dark—when a rustle, yelp and growl told that the lions had his dog—and was never seen again.

So it goes, and so it went, from year to year : a little showing now and then, like the iceberg's tip, from which to guess the bulk below.



There was a Boy who went to seek his fortune. Call him boy or man : the years proved nothing either way ! Some will be boyish always ; others were never young : a few—most richly dowered few—are man and boy together. He went to seek his fortune, as boys will and should ; no pressure on him from about ; no promise from beyond. For life was easy there, and all was pleasant, as it may be—in a cage. ‘To-day’ is sure and happy ; and there is no ‘to-morrow’—in a cage.

There were friends enough—all kind and true—and in their wisdom they said : “ Here it is safe : yonder all is chance, where many indeed are called, but few—so few—are chosen. Many have gone forth ; some to return, beaten, hopeless, and despised ; some to fall in sight outside ; others are lost, we know not where ; and ah ! so few are free and well. But the fate of numbers is unheeded still ; for the few are those who count, and lead ; and those who follow do not





think 'How few,' but cry 'How strong! How free!' Be wise and do not venture. Here it is safe: there is no fortune there!"

But there was something stronger than the things he knew, around, without, beyond—the thing that strove within him: that grew and grew, and beat and fought for freedom: that bade him go and walk alone and tell his secret on the mountain slopes to one who would not laugh—a little red retriever; that made him climb and feel his strength, and find an outlet for what drove within. And thus the end was sure; for of all the voices none so strong as this! And only those others reached him that would chime with it; the gentle ones which said: "We too believe," and one, a stronger, saying: "Fifty years ago I did it. I would do it now again!"

So the Boy set out to seek his fortune, and did not find it; for there was none in the place where he sought. Those who warned him were—in the little—right: yet was he—in the greater—right too! It was not given to him as yet to know that fortune is not in time or place or things; but, good or bad, in the man's own self for him alone to find and prove.

Time and place and things had failed him; still was effort right; and, when the first was clear beyond all question, it was instinct and not knowledge. bade him still go on, saying: "Not back to the cage. Anything but that!"

When many days had passed, it was again a friend who met him, saying: "Common sense is not



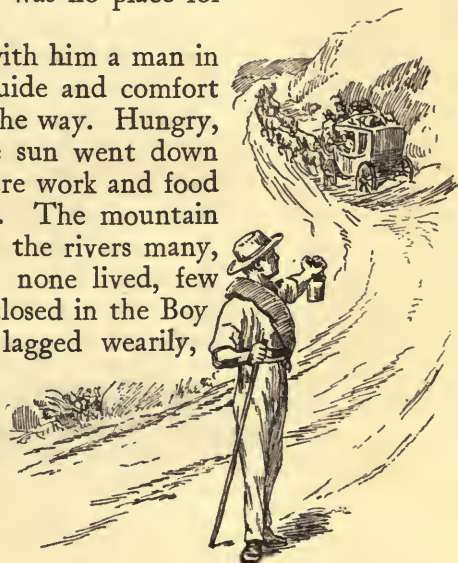
cowardice. You have made a mistake: repair it while you may. I have seen and know: there is nothing here. Come back with me, and all will be made easy." And answer, in reason, there was none; for the little truth was all too plain, and the greater not yet seen. But that which had swelled to bursting and had fought within for freedom called out: "Failure is the worst of all!" And the blind and struggling instinct rose against all knowledge and all reason. "Not back to the cage! Not that!"



And the heart that had once been young spoke up for Auld Lang Syne: the old eyes softened and dropped: "God speed you, Boy—Good-bye!" And as the mail-coach rumbled off the Boy put up his head—to try again.

The days passed, and still there was no work to do. For, those who were there already—hardened men and strong, pioneers who had roughed it—were themselves in straitened case, and it was no place for boys.

So the Boy moved on again, and with him a man in equal plight, but, being a man, a guide and comfort to the Boy, and one to lead him on the way. Hungry, they walked all day; yet when the sun went down and light began to fail the place where work and food and sleep should be was still far off. The mountain tracks were rough and all unknown; the rivers many, cold and swift: the country wild; none lived, few ever passed, that way. When night closed in the Boy walked on in front, and the man lagged wearily,





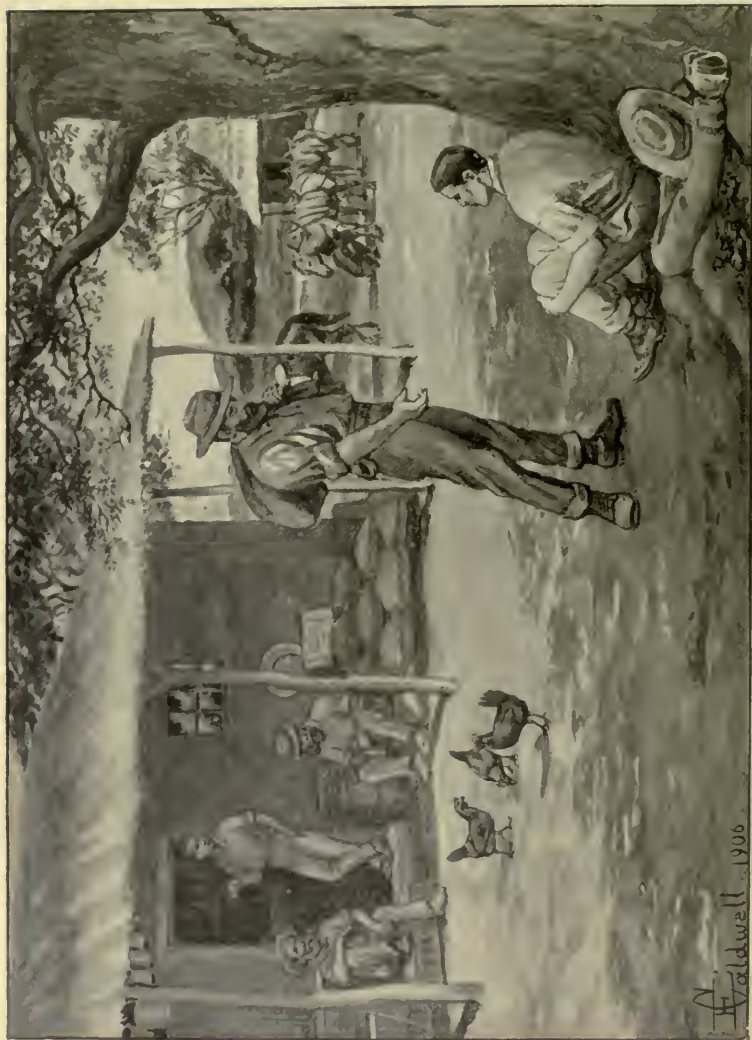
grumbling at their luck. In the valley at the mountain foot they came at midnight upon water, black and still, between them and the cabin's lights beyond ; and there the man lay down. Then the Boy, turning in his anger, bade him come on ; and, dragging him out upon the further bank, had found—unknowing—some little of the fortune he had come to seek.

Still, morning brought no change ; still, was there no work to do. So the man gave up, and sagging back, was lost. And the Boy went on alone.

Rough and straight-spoken, but kindly men and true, were those he came among. What they could they did : what they had they gave. They made him free of board and bed ; and, kinder still, now and then made work for him to do, knowing his spirit was as theirs and that his heart cried out : “ Not charity, but work ! Give me work ! ” But that they could not do, for there was no work they could not do themselves.

Thus the days and weeks went by. Willing, but unused to fend for himself—unfit by training for the wild rough life, heart and energy all to waste, the little he did know of no value there—the struggle with the ebbing tide went on ; it was the wearing hopeless fight against that which one cannot grapple, and cannot even see. There was no work to be done. A few days here and there ; a little passing job ; a helping hand disguised ; and then the quest again. They were all friendly—but, with the kindly habit of the place : it told the tale of hopelessness too well. They did not even ask his name ; it made no difference.





"COME ALONG O' ME"

A. Caldwell 1906

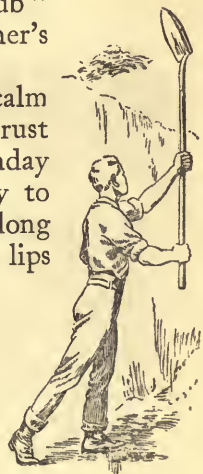
Then came a day when there was nowhere else to try. Among the lounging diggers at their week-end deals he stood apart—too shy, too proud to tell the truth; too conscious of it to trust his voice; too hungry to smile as if he did not care! And then a man in muddy moleskins, with grave face, brown beard, and soft blue eyes, came over to him, saying straight: "Boy, you come along o' me!" And he went.



It was work—hard work. But the joy of it! Shovelling in the icy water, in mud and gravel, and among the boulders, from early dawn to dark. What matter? It was work. It was not for hire, but just to help one who had helped him; to 'earn his grub' and feel he was a man, doing the work of his friend's partner, 'who was away.'

For three full weeks the Boy worked on; grateful for the toil; grateful for the knowledge gained; most grateful that he could by work repay a kindness. And then the truth came out! The kindly fiction fell away as they sat and rested on the day of rest. "The claim could not stand two white men's grub" had fallen from the man, accounting for his partner's absence.

It was the simple and unstudied truth and calm unconsciousness of where it struck that gave the thrust its force; and in the clear still air of the Sunday morning the Boy turned hot and cold and dizzy to think of his folly, and of the kindness he had so long imposed upon. It was a little spell before his lips





would smile, and eyes and voice were firm enough to lie. Then he said gently : If he could be spared—he had not liked to ask before, but now the floods were over and the river turned perhaps it could be managed—he would like to go, as there were letters waiting, and he expected news.

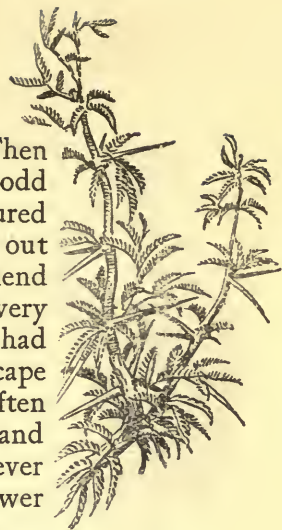
Up the winding pathway over rocky ledge and grassy slope, climbing for an hour to the pass, the toil and effort kept the hot thoughts under. At the top the Boy sat down to rest. The green rock-crested mountains stood like resting giants all around : the rivers, silvered by the sun, threaded their ways between : the air was clear, and cool, and still. The world was very beautiful from there.

Far, far below—a brownish speck beside the silver streak—stood the cabin he had left. And, without warning, all came back on him. What he had mastered rose beyond control. The little child that lies hidden in us all reached out—as in the dark—for a hand to hold ; and there was none. His arms went up to hide the mocking glory of the day, and, face buried in the grass, he sobbed : “ Not worth my food ! ”

Science tells that Nature will recoup herself by ways as well defined as those that rule mechanics. The blood flows upward—and the brain's awlirl ; the ebb-tide sets—and there is rest. Whatever impulse sways the guiding hand, we know that often when we need it most there comes relief ; gently, unbidden, unobserved.



The Boy slept, and there was peace awhile. Then came faint echoes of the waking thoughts—odd words shot out, of hope and resolution; murmured names of those at home. Once his hand went out and gently touched the turf, reaching for the friend and comrade of the past—one who knew his every mood, had heard his wildest dreams described, had seen him, hot-eyed, breathless, struggling to escape the cage; one to whom the boyish soul was often bared in foolish confidence; one who could see and hear and feel, yet never tell—a little red retriever left at home; and the boy stirred and sighed, for answer to the soft brown eyes.



No! It is not good for man to be alone.

A wisp of drifting cloud came by, a breath of cooler air, and the fickle spirit of the mountain changed the day as with a wand. The Boy woke up shivering, dazed, bewildered: the mountain of his dreams had vanished; and his dog was not there! The cold driving mist had blotted out the world. Stronger and stronger grew the wind, driving the damp cold through and through; for on the bleak plateau of the mountain nothing broke its force.

Pale and shaken, and a little stiff, he looked about; then slowly faced the storm. It had not struck him to turn back.

The gusts blew stronger, and through the mist came rain, in single stinging drops—portents of the greater storm. Slowly, as he bent to breast it, the chilled blood warmed, and when the first thunderclap split





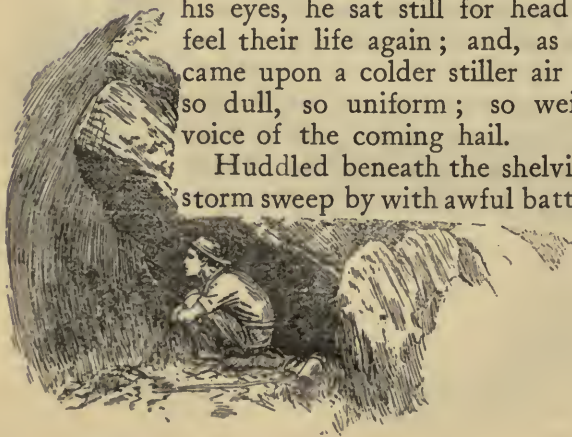
overhead, and lost itself in endless roars and rumblings in the kloofs and hills around, there came a warmth about his heart and a light into his eye—mute thanksgiving that here was something he could battle with and be a man again.

On the top of the world the storms work all their fury. Only there come mist and wind and rain, thunder and lightning and hail together—the pitiless terrible hail: there, where the hare hiding in the grass may know it is the highest thing in all God's world, and nearest to the storm—the one clear mark to draw the lightning—and, knowing, scurries to the sheltered slopes.

But the Boy pressed on—the little path a racing stream to guide him. Then in the one group of ghostly, mist-blurred rocks he stopped to drink; and, as he bent—for all the blackness of the storm—his face leaped out at him, reflected for one instant in the shallow pool; the blue-white flame of lightning, blinding his aching eyes, hissed down; the sickening smell of brimstone spread about; and crashing thunder close above his head left him dazed and breathless.

Heedless of the rain, blinking the blackness from his eyes, he sat still for head to clear, and limbs to feel their life again; and, as he waited, slowly there came upon a colder stiller air that other roar, so far, so dull, so uniform; so weird and terrifying—the voice of the coming hail.

Huddled beneath the shelving rock he watched the storm sweep by with awful battering din that swamped



and silenced every other sound—the tearing, smashing hail that seemed to strip the mountain to its very bone.

Oh! the wanton fury of the hail; the wild, destructive charge of hordes of savage cavalry; the stamping, smashing sweep along the narrow strip where all the fury concentrates; the long black trail of death and desolation! The birds and beasts, the things that creep and fly, all know the portents, and all flee before it, or aside. But in the darkness—in the night or mist—the slow, the weak, the helpless, and the mothers with their young—for them is little hope.

The dense packed column swept along, ruthless, raging, and unheeding, overwhelming all. . . . A sudden failing of its strength, a little straggling tail, and then—the silence!

The sun came out; the wind died down; light veils of mist came slowly by—bits of floating gossamer—and melted in the clear, pure air.

The Boy stepped out once more. Miles away the black column of the falling hail sped its appointed course. Under his feet, where all had been so green and beautiful, was battered turf, for the time transformed into a mass of dazzling brilliants, where jagged ice-stones caught the sunlight on their countless facets, and threw it back in one fierce flashing glare, blinding in its brilliance.

On the glittering surface many things stood out.

In the narrow pathway near the spring a snake lay on its back, crushed and broken; beyond it, a tortoise, not yet dead, but bruised and battered





through its shell ; then a partridge—poor unprotected thing—the wet feathers lying all around, stripped as though a hawk had stricken it, and close behind it all the little brood ; and further afield lay something reddish-brown—a buck—the large eyes glazed, an ooze of blood upon its lips and nose. He stooped to touch it, but drew back : the dainty little thing was pulp.

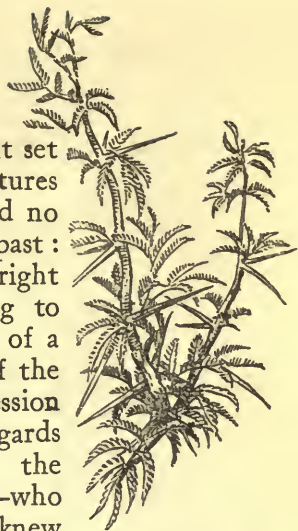
All striving for the sheltering rocks ; all caught and stricken by the ruthless storm ; and he, going on to face it, while others fled before—he, blindly fighting on—was spared. Was it luck ? Or was there something subtle, more ? He held to this, that more than chance had swayed the guiding hand of fate—that fortune holds some gifts in store for those who try ; and faith resurgent moved him to a mute *Te Deum*, of which no more reached the conscious brain than : “It is good to be alive ! But . . . better *so* than in the cage.”

Once more, a little of the fortune that he had come to seek !

At sunset, passing down the long rough gorge, he came upon one battling with the flood to save his all—the white man struggling with the frightened beasts ; the kaffir swept from off his feet ; the mad bewildered oxen yielding to the stream and heading downwards towards the falls—and in their utmost need the Boy swam in and helped !

And there the long slow ebb was stayed : the Boy was worth his food.


But how recall the life when those who made it set so little store by all that passed, and took its ventures for their daily lot; when those who knew it had no gift or thought to fix the colours of the fading past: the fire of youth; the hopes; the toil; the bright illusions gone! And now, the Story of a Dog to conjure up a face, a name, a voice, or the grip of a friendly hand! And the half-dreamed sound of the tramping feet is all that is left of the live procession long since passed: the young recruits; the laggards and the faint; the few who saw it through; the older men—grave-eyed, thoughtful, unafraid—who judged the future by the battered past, and who knew none more nor less than man—unconscious equals of the best and least; the grey-hued years; the thinning ranks; the summons answered, as they had lived—alone. The tale untold; and, of all who knew it, none left to picture now the life, none left to play a grateful comrade's part, and place their record on a country's scroll—the kindly, constant, nameless Pioneers!





INTO THE BUSHVELD


"Distant hills are always green," and the best gold further on. That is a law of nature—human nature—which is quite superior to facts; and thus the world moves on.



So from the Lydenburg Goldfields prospectors 'humping their swags' or driving their small pack-donkeys spread afield, and transport-riders with their long spans and rumbling waggons followed, cutting a wider track where traders with winding strings of carriers had already ventured on. But the hunters had gone first. There were great hunters whose names are known; and others as great who missed the accident of fame; and after them hunters who traded, and traders who hunted. And so too with prospectors, diggers, transport-riders and all.

Between the goldfields and the nearest port lay the Bushveld, and game enough for all to live on.

Thus, all were hunters of a sort, but the great hunters—the hunters of big game—were apart; we were the smaller fry, there to admire and to imitate.

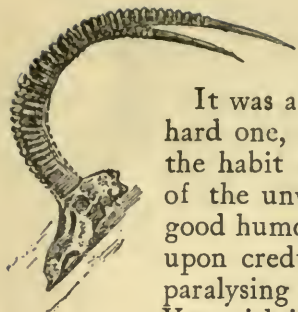


Trophies, carried back with pride or by force of habit, lay scattered

about, neglected and forgotten, round the outspans, the tents of lone prospectors, the cabins of the diggers, and the grass wayside shanties of the traders. How many a 'record' head must have gone then, when none had thought of time or means to save them! Horns and skins lay in jumbled heaps in the yards or sheds of the big trading stores. The splendid horns of the Koodoo and Sable, and a score of others only less beautiful, could be seen nailed up in crude adornment of the roughest walls; nailed up, and then unnoticed and forgotten! And yet not quite! For although to the older hands they were of no further interest, to the newcomer they spoke of something yet to see, and something to be done; and the sight set him dreaming of the time when he too would go a-hunting and bring his trophies home.

Perched on the edge of the Berg, we overlooked the wonder-world of the Bushveld, where the big game roamed in thousands and the "wildest tales were true." Living on the fringe of a hunter's paradise, most of us were drawn into it from time to time, for shorter or longer spells, as opportunity and our circumstances allowed; and little by little one got to know the names, appearances, and habits of the many kinds of game below. Long talks in the quiet nights up there under waggons, in grass shelters in the woods, or in the wattle-and-daub shanties of the diggers, where men passed to and fro and swapped lies, as the polite phrase went, were our 'night's entertainments,' when younger hands might learn much that was useful and true, and more that was neither.



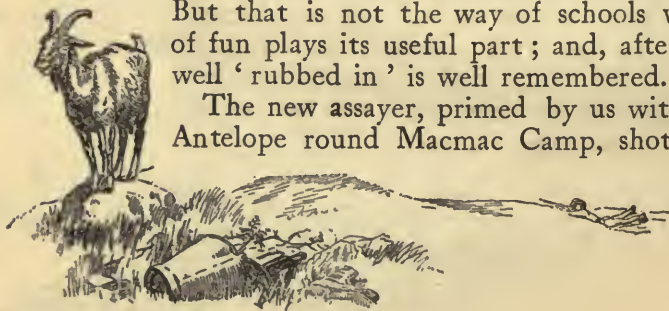


It was a school of grown-up schoolboys; no doubt a hard one, but it had its playground side, and it was the habit of the school to 'drop on to' any breach of the unwritten laws, to 'rub in' with remorseless good humour the mistakes that were made, and to play upon credulity with a shamelessness and nerve quite paralysing to the judgment of the inexperienced. Yet, with it all, there was a kindliness and quick instinct of 'fair doos' which tempered the wind and, in the main, gave no one more than was good for him.

There the new boy had to run the gauntlet, and, if without a watchful instinct or a friendly hint, there was nothing to warn him of it. When Faulkner—dragged to the piano—protested that he remembered nothing but a mere 'morceau,' he was not conscious of transgression, but a delighted audience caught up the word, and thenceforth he was known only as 'Ankore'—Harry the Sailor having explained that 'more so' was a recognised variant.

"Johnny-come-lately's got to learn" was held to be adequate reason for letting many a beginner buy his experience, while those who had been through it all watched him stumble into the well-known pitfalls. It would no doubt have been a much more comfortable arrangement all round had there been a polite ignoring of each other's blunders and absurdities. But that is not the way of schools where the spirit of fun plays its useful part; and, after all, the lesson well 'rubbed in' is well remembered.

The new assayer, primed by us with tales of Sable Antelope round Macmac Camp, shot old Jim Hill's



only goat, and had to leave the carcase with a note of explanation—Jim being out when he called. What he heard from us when he returned, all prickly with remorse and shame, was a liberal education ; but what he remembers best is Jim's note addressed that evening to our camp :

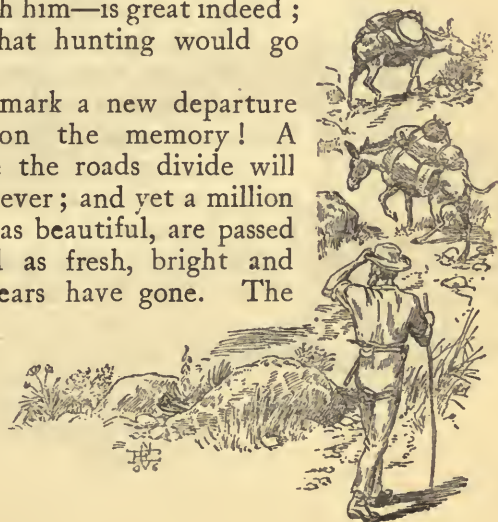
“ Boys ! Jim Hill requests your company to dinner to-morrow, Sunday ! ”

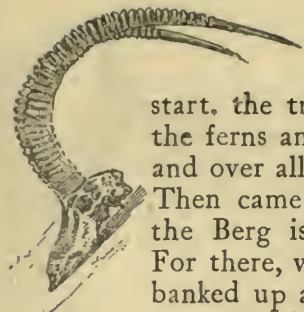
“ Mutton ! ”

As the summer spent itself, and whispers spread around of new strikes further on, a spirit of restlessness—a touch of trek fever—came upon us, and each cast about which way to try his luck. Our camp was the summer headquarters of two transport-riders, and when many months of hard work, timber-cutting on the Berg, contracting for the Companies, pole-slipping in the bush, and other things, gave us at last a ‘ rise,’ it seemed the natural thing to put it all into waggons and oxen, and go transport-riding too.

The charm of a life of freedom and complete independence—a life in which a man goes as and where he lists, and carries his home with him—is great indeed ; but great too was the fact that hunting would go with it.

How the little things that mark a new departure stamp themselves indelibly on the memory ! A flower in the hedgerow where the roads divide will mark the spot in one's mind for ever ; and yet a million more, before and after, and all as beautiful, are passed unseen. In memory, it is all as fresh, bright and glorious as ever : only the years have gone. The



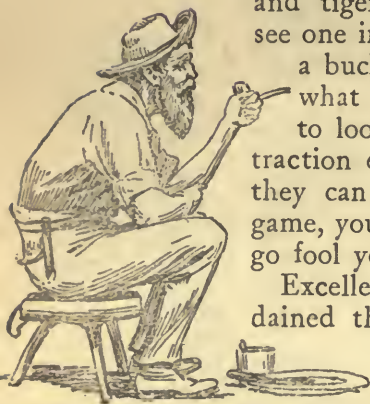


start. the trek along the plateau, the crystal streams, the ferns and trees, the cool pure air ; and, through and over all, the quite intoxicating sense of freedom ! Then came the long slow climb to Spitzkop where the Berg is highest and where our descent began. For there, with Africa's contrariness, the highest parts banked up and buttressed by gigantic spurs are most accessible from below, while the lower edges of the plateau are cut off sheer like the walls of some great fortress. There, near Spitzkop, we looked down upon the promised land ; there, stood upon the outmost edge, as a diver on his board, and paused and looked and breathed before we took the plunge.

It is well to pitch one's expectations low, and so stave off disappointments. But counsels of perfection are wasted on the young, and when accident combines with the hopefulness of youth to lay the colours on in all their gorgeousness, what chance has Wisdom ?

" See here, young feller ! " said Wisdom, " don't go fill yourself up with tomfool notions 'bout lions and tigers waitin' behind every bush. You won't see one in a twelvemonth ! Most like you won't see a buck for a week ! You don't know what to do, what to wear, how to walk, how to look, or what to look for ; and you'll make as much noise as a traction engine. This ain't open country : it's bush ; they can see and hear, and you can't. An' as for big game, you won't see any for a long while yet, so don't go fool yourself ! "

Excellent ! But fortune in a sportive mood ordained that the very first thing we saw as we out-



spanned at Saunderson's on the very first day in the Bushveld, was the fresh skin of a lion stretched out to dry. What would the counsels of Solomon himself have weighed against that wet skin?

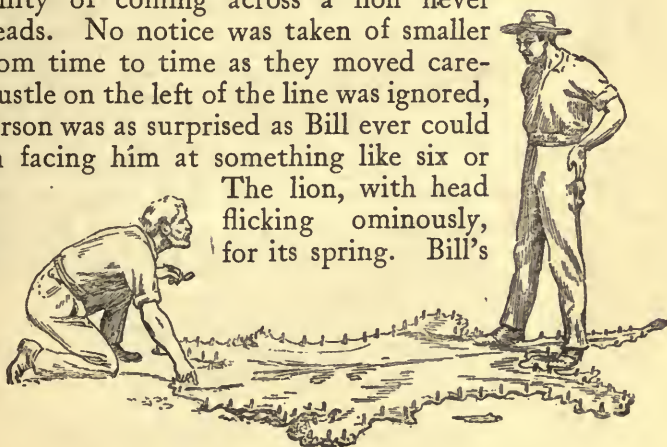
Wisdom scratched its head and stared: "Well, I am com—pletely sugared!"

Of course it was a fluke. No lions had been seen in the locality for several years; but the beginner, filled with all the wildest expectations, took no heed of that. If the wish be father to the thought, then surely fact may well beget conviction. It was so in this case, at any rate, and thus not all the cold assurances of Wisdom could banish visions of big game as plentiful as partridges.

A party had set out upon a tiger hunt to clear out one of those marauders who used to haunt the kloofs of the Berg and make descents upon the Kaffir herds of goats and sheep; but there was a special interest in this particular tiger, for he had killed one of the white hunters in the last attempt to get at him a few weeks before. Starting from the store, the party of men and boys worked their way towards the kloof, and the possibility of coming across a lion never entered their heads. No notice was taken of smaller game put up from time to time as they moved carelessly along; a rustle on the left of the line was ignored, and Bill Saunderson was as surprised as Bill ever could be to see a lion facing him at something like six or seven yards.

laid level and tail
half crouched

The lion, with head
flicking ominously,
for its spring. Bill's





bullet glanced along the skull, peeling off the skin. "It was a bad shot," he said afterwards, in answer to the beginner's breathless questions. "He wasn't hurt: just sank a little like a pointer when you check him; but before he steadied up again I took for the nose and got him. You see," he added thoughtfully, "a lion's got no forehead: it is all hair."

That was about all he had to say; but, little store as he may have set on it, the tip was never forgotten and proved of much value to at least one of our party years afterwards. To this day the picture of a lion brings up that scene—the crouching beast, faced by a man with a long brown beard, solemn face, and clear unfaltering eyes; the swift yet quiet action of reloading; and the second shot an inch or so lower, because "a lion's got no forehead: it's all hair."

The shooting of a lion, fair and square, and face to face, was the Blue Riband of the Bush, and no detail would have seemed superfluous; but Bill, whose eye nothing could escape, had, like many great hunters, a laggard tongue. Only now and then a look of grave amusement lighted up his face to show he recognised the hungry enthusiasm and his own inability to satisfy it. The skin with the grazed stripe along the nose, and the broken skull, were handled and looked at many times, and the story was pumped from every Kaffir—all voluble and eager, but none eye-witnesses. Bob, the sociable and more communicative, who had been nearest his brother, was asked a hundred questions, but all he had to say was that the grass was too long for him to see what

happened: he reckoned that it was "a pretty near thing after the first shot; but Bill's all right!"

To me it was an absurd and tiresome affectation to show interest in any other topic, and when, during that evening, conversation strayed to other subjects, it seemed waste of time and priceless opportunity. Bob responded good-naturedly to many crude attempts to head them back to the entrancing theme, but the professional interest in rates, loads, rivers, roads, disease, drought, and 'fly,' was strong in the older transport-riders, as it should have been, but, for the time at least, was not, in me. If diplomacy failed, however, luck was not all out; for when all the pet subjects of the road had been thrashed out, and it was about time to turn in, a stray question brought the reward of patience.

"Have you heard if Jim reached Durban all right?"

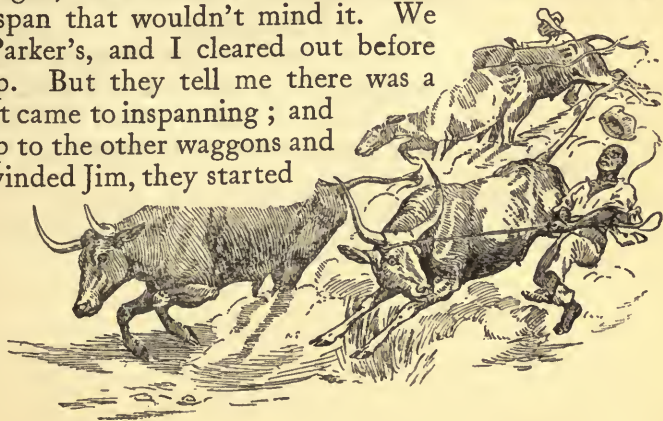
"Yes! Safely shipped."

"You got some one to take him right through?"

"No! A Dutchman took him to Lydenburg, and I got Tom Hardy, going back empty, to take him along from there."

"What about feeding?"

"I sent some goats," said Bob, smiling for a moment at some passing thought, and then went on: "Tom said he had an old span that wouldn't mind it. We loaded him up at Parker's, and I cleared out before he got the cattle up. But they tell me there was a gay jamboree when it came to inspanning; and as soon as they got up to the other waggons and the young bullocks winded Jim, they started





off with their tails up—a regular stampede, voorloopers and drivers yelling like mad, all the loose things shaking out of the waggons, and Tom nearly in a fit from running, shouting and swearing.”

Judging by the laughter, there was only one person present who did not understand the joke, and I had to ask—with some misgiving—who was this Jim who needed so much care and feeding, and caused such a scare.

There was another burst of laughter as they guessed my thoughts, and it was Bob who answered me : “ Only a lion, lad—not a wild man or a lunatic ! Only a young lion ! Sold him to the Zoo, and had to deliver him in Durban.”

“ Well, you fairly took me in with the name ! ”

“ Oh ! Jim ? Well that’s his pet name. His real name is Dabulamanzi. Jim, my hunting boy, caught him, so we call him Jim out of compliment,” he added with a grin. “ But Jim called him Dabulamanzi, also out of compliment, and I think that was pretty good for a nigger.”

“ You see,” said Bob, for the benefit of those who were not up in local history, “ Dabulamanzi, the big fighting General in the Zulu War, was Jim’s own chief and leader ; and the name means ‘ The one who conquers the waters.’ ”

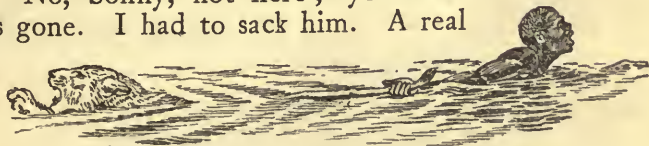
Then one of the others exclaimed : “ Oh ! Of course, that’s how you got him, isn’t it : caught him in a river ? Tell us what did happen, Bob. What’s the truth of it ? It seemed a bit steep as I heard it.”

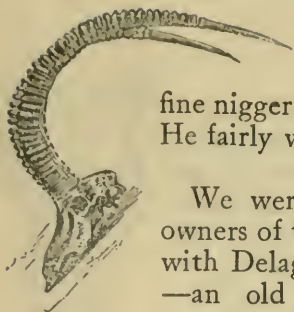
“Well, it’s really simple enough. We came right on to the lioness waiting for us, and I got her; and then there were shouts from the boys, and I saw a couple of cubs, pretty well grown, making off in the grass. This boy Jim legged it after one of them, a cub about as big as a Newfoundland dog—not so high, but longer. I followed as fast as I could, but he was a big Zulu and went like a buck, yelling like mad all the time. We were in the bend of one of the long pools down near the Komati, and when I got through the reeds the cub was at the water’s edge facing Jim, and Jim was dancing around heading it off with only one light stick. As soon as it saw us coming on, the cub took to the water, and Jim after it. It was as good as a play. Jim swam up behind, and putting his hand on its head ducked it right under: the cub turned as it came up and struck out at him viciously, but he was back out of reach: when it turned again to go Jim ducked it again, and it went on like that six or eight times, till the thing was half drowned and had no more fight in it. Then Jim got hold of it by the tail and swam back to us, still shouting and quite mad with excitement.



“Of course,” added Bob with a wag of his head, “you can say it was only a cub; but it takes a good man to go up naked and tackle a thing like that, with teeth and claws to cut you into ribbons.”

“Was Jim here to-day?” I asked, as soon as there was an opening. Bob shook his head with a kindly regretful smile. “No, Sonny, not here; you’d ‘a’ heard him. Jim’s gone. I had to sack him. A real

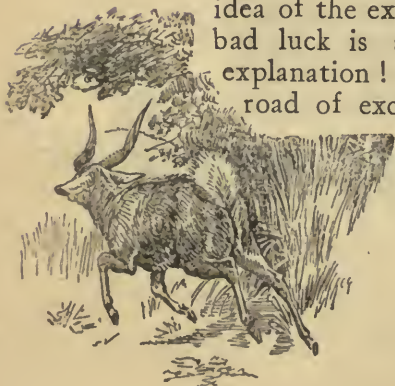




fine nigger, but a terror to drink, and always in trouble. He fairly wore me right out."

We were generally a party of half a dozen—the owners of the four waggons, a couple of friends trading with Delagoa, a man from Swaziland, and—just then—an old Yankee hunter-pro prospector. It was our holiday time, before the hard work with loads would commence, and we dawdled along feeding up the cattle and taking it easy ourselves.

It was too early for loads in the Bay, so we moved slowly and hunted on the way, sometimes camping for several days in places where grass and water were good ; and that lion skin was the cause of many disappointments to me. Never a bush or ant-heap, never a donga or a patch of reeds, did I pass for many days after that without the conviction that something was lurking there. Game there was in plenty, no doubt, but it did not come my way. Days went by with, once or twice, the sight of some small buck just as it disappeared, and many times, the noise of something in the bush or the sound of galloping feet. Others brought their contributions to the pot daily, and there seemed to be no reason in the world why I alone should fail—no reason except sheer bad luck ! It is difficult to believe you have made mistakes when you do not know enough to recognise them, and have no idea of the extent of your own ignorance ; and then bad luck is such an easy and such a flattering explanation ! If I did not go so far on the easy road of excuse-making as to put all the failures



down to bad luck, perhaps some one else deserves the credit.

One evening as we were lounging round the camp fire, Robbie, failing to find a soft spot for his head on a thorn log, got up reluctantly to fetch his blankets, exclaiming with a mock tragic air :

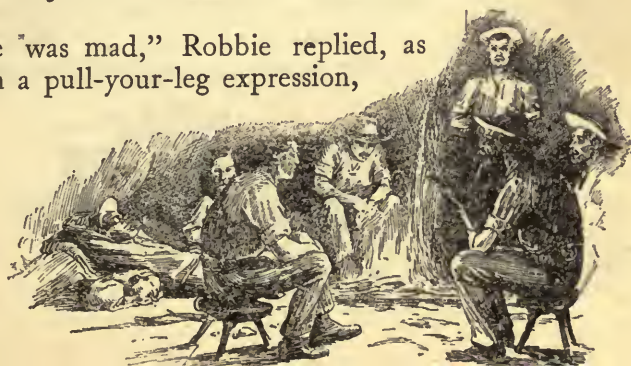
“The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.”

We knew Robbie's way. There were times when he would spout heroics, suggested by some passing trifle, his own face a marvel of solemnity the whole time, and only the amused expression in his spectacled grey eyes to show he was poking fun at himself. An indulgent smile, a chuckle, and the genial comment “Silly ass!” came from different quarters; for Robbie was a favourite. Only old Rocky maintained his usual gravity.

As Robbie settled down again in comfort, the old man remarked in level thoughtful tones: “I reckon the feller as said that was a waster, he chucked it!” There was a short pause in which I, in my ignorance, began to wonder if it was possible that Rocky did not know the source; or did he take the quotation seriously? Then Robbie answered in mild protest: “It was a gentleman of the name of Hamlet who said it.”

“Well, you can bet he was no good, anyhow,” Rocky drawled out. “‘Jus’ my luck!’ is the waster’s motto!”

“They do say he was mad,” Robbie replied, as his face twitched with a pull-your-leg expression,





"but he got off a lot of first-class things all the same—some of the best things ever said."

"I da' say; they mostly can. But a man as sets down and blames his luck is no good anyhow. He's got no sand, and got no sense, and got no honesty! It ain't the time's wrong: it's the man! It ain't the job's too big: it's the man's too little!"

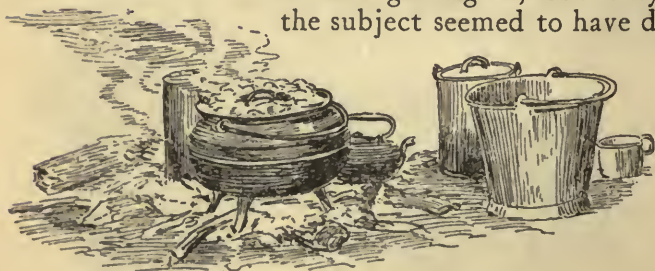
"You don't believe in luck at all, Rocky?" I ventured to put in.

"I don't say thar's no such thing as luck—good and bad; but it ain't the explanation o' success an' failure—not by a long way. No, sirree, luck's just the thing any man'd like ter believe is the reason for his failure and another feller's success. But it ain't so. When another man pulls off what you don't, the first thing you got ter believe is it's your own fault; and the last, it's his luck. And you jus' got ter wade in an' find out whar you went wrong, an' put it right, 'thout any excuses an' explanations."

"But, Rocky, explanations aren't always excuses, and sometimes you really have to give them!"

"Sonny, you kin reckon it dead sure thar's something wrong 'bout a thing that don't explain itself; an' one explanation's as bad as two mistakes—it don't fool anybody worth speaking of, 'cept yerself. You find the remedy; you can leave other folks put up the excuses."

I was beaten. It was no use going on, for I knew he was right. I suppose the other fellows also knew whom he was getting at, but they said nothing; and the subject seemed to have dropped, when Rocky,

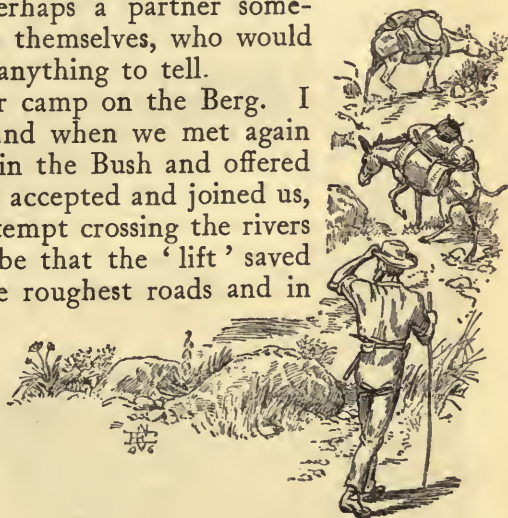


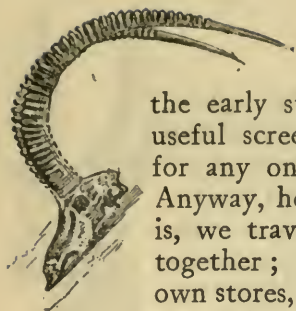
harking back to Robbie's quotation, said, with a ghost of a smile: "I reckon ef that sharp o' your'n hed ter keep the camp in meat we'd go pretty nigh hungry."

But it seemed a good deal to give up all at once—the bad luck, the excuses and explanations, and the comfort they afforded; and I could not help thinking of that wretched wrong-headed stembuck that had actually allowed me to pass it, and then cantered away behind me.

Rocky, known, liked and respected by all, yet intimate with none, was 'going North'—even to the Zambesi, it was whispered—but no one knew where or why. He was going off alone, with two pack-donkeys and not even a boy for company, on a trip of many hundreds of miles and indefinite duration. No doubt he had an idea to work out; perhaps a report of some trader or hunter or even native was his polestar: most certainly he had a plan, but what it was no living soul would know. That was the way of his kind. With them there was no limit in time or distance, no hint of purpose or direction, no home, no address, no 'people'; perhaps a partner somewhere or a chum, as silent as themselves, who would hear some day—if there was anything to tell.

Rocky had worked near our camp on the Berg. I had known him to nod to, and when we met again at one of the early outspans in the Bush and offered a lift for him and his packs he accepted and joined us, it being still a bit early to attempt crossing the rivers with pack-donkeys. It may be that the 'lift' saved his donkeys something on the roughest roads and in





the early stages; or it may be that we served as a useful screen for his movements, making it difficult for any one else to follow his line and watch him. Anyway, he joined us in the way of those days: that is, we travelled together and as a rule we grubbed together; yet each cooked for himself and used his own stores, and in principle we maintained our separate establishments. The bag alone was common; each man brought what game he got and threw it into the common stock.

The secret of agreement in the veld is—complete independence! Points of contact are points of friction—nowhere more so; and the safest plan is, each man his own outfit and each free to feed or sleep or trek as and when he chooses. I have known partners and friends who would from time to time move a trek apart, or a day apart, and always camp apart when they rejoined; and so remain friends.

Rocky—in full, Rocky Mountain Jack—had another name, but it was known to few besides the Mining Commissioner's clerk who registered his licences from time to time. "In the Rockies whar I was raised" is about the only remark having deliberate reference to his personal history which he was known to have made; but it was enough on which to found the name by which we knew him.

What struck me first about him was the long Colt's revolver, carried on his hip; and for two days this 'gun,' as he called it, conjured up visions of Poker Flat and Roaring Camp, Jack Hamlin and Yuba



Bill of cherished memory; and then the inevitable question got itself asked:

"Did you ever shoot a man, Rocky?"

"No, Sonny," he drawled gently, "never hed ter use it yet!"

"It looks very old. Have you had it long?"

"Jus' 'bout thirty years, I reckon!"

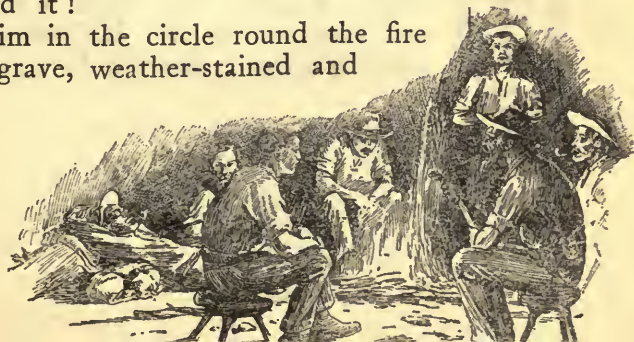
"Oh! Seems a long time to carry a thing without using it!"

"Waal," he answered half absently, "thet's so. It's a thing you don't want orfen—but when you do, you want it derned bad!"

Rocky seemed to me to have stepped into our life out of the pages of Bret Harte. For me the glamour of romance was cast by the Master's spell over all that world, and no doubt helped to make old Rocky something of a hero in the eyes of youth; but such help was of small account, for the cardinal fact was Rocky himself. He was a man.

There did not seem to be any known region of the earth where prospectors roam that he had not sampled, and yet whilst gleaning something from every land, his native flavour clung to him unchanged. He was silent by habit and impossible to draw; not helpful to those who looked for short cuts, yet kindly and patient with those who meant to try; he was not to be exploited, and had an illuminating instinct for what was not genuine. He had 'no use for short weight'—and showed it!

I used to watch him in the circle round the fire at nights, his face grave, weather-stained and





wrinkled, with clear grey eyes and long brown beard, slightly grizzled then—watch and wonder why Rocky, experienced, wise and steadfast, should—at sixty—be seeking still. Were the prizes so few in the prospector's life? or was there something wanting in him too? Why had he not achieved success?

It was not so clear then that ideals differ. Rocky's ideal was the life—not the escape from it. There was something—sentiment, imagination, poetry, call it what you will—that could make common success seem to him common indeed and cheap! To follow in a new rush, to reap where another had sown, had no charm for him. It may be that an inborn pride disliked it; but it seems more likely that it simply did not attract him. And if—as in the end I thought—Rocky had taken the world as it is and backed himself against it—living up to his ideal, playing a 'lone hand' and playing it fair in all conditions, treading the unbeaten tracks, finding his triumph in his work, always moving on and contented so to end: the crown, "He was a man!"—then surely Rocky's had achieved success!

That is Rocky, as remembered now! A bit idealised? Perhaps so: but who can say! In truth he had his sides and the defects of his qualities, like every one else; and it was not every one who made a hero of him. Many left him respectfully alone; and something of their feeling came to me the first time I was with him, when a stupid chatterer talked and asked too much. He was not surly or taciturn, but I felt frozen through by a calm deadly unrespon-



siveness which anything with blood and brain should have shrunk under. The dull monotone, the ominous drawl, the steady something in his clear calm eyes which I cannot define, gave an almost corrosive effect to innocent words and a voice of lazy gentleness.

"What's the best thing to do following up a wounded buffalo?" was the question. The questions sprung briskly, as only a 'yapper' puts them; and the answers came like reluctant drops from a filter.

"Git out!"

"Yes, but if there isn't time?"

"Say yer prayers!"

"No—seriously—what is the best way of tackling one?"

"Ef yer wawnt to know, thar's only one way: Keep cool and shoot straight!"

"Oh! of course—*if you can?*"

"An' ef you can't," he added in fool-killer tones, "best stay right home!"

Rocky had no fancy notions: he hunted for meat and got it as soon as possible; he was seldom out long, and rarely indeed came back empty-handed. I had already learnt not to be too ready with questions. It was better, so Rocky put it, "to keep yer eyes open and yer mouth shut"; but the results at first hardly seemed to justify the process. At the end of a week of failures and disappointments all I knew was that I knew nothing—a very notable advance it is true, but one quite difficult to appreciate! Thus it came to me in the light of a distinction when one evening, after a rueful confession of blundering made to the





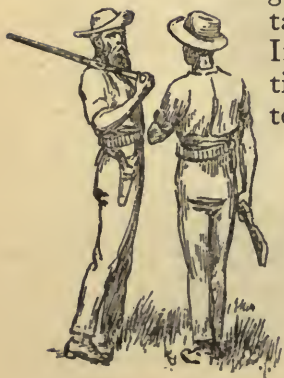
party in general, Rocky passed a brief but not unfriendly glance over me and said, "On'y the born fools stays fools. You'll git ter learn bymbye; you ain't always yappin'!"

It was not an extravagant compliment; but failure and helplessness act on conceit like water on a starched collar: mine was limp by that time, and I was grateful for little things—most grateful when next morning, as we were discussing our several ways, he turned to me and asked gently, "Comin' along, Boy?"

Surprise and gratitude must have produced a touch of effusiveness which jarred on him; for, to the eager exclamation and thanks, he made no answer—just moved on, leaving me to follow. In his scheme of life there was 'no call to slop over.'

There was a quiet unhesitating sureness and a definiteness of purpose about old Rocky's movements which immediately inspired confidence. We had not been gone many minutes before I began to have visions of exciting chases and glorious endings, and as we walked silently along they took possession of me so completely that I failed to notice the difference between his methods and mine. Presently, brimful of excitement and hope, I asked cheerily what he thought we would get. The old man stopped and with a gentle graveness of look and a voice from which all trace of tartness or sarcasm was banished, said, "See, Sonny! If you been useter goin' round like a dawg with a tin it ain't any wonder you seen nothin'. You got ter walk soft an' keep yer head shut!"

In reply to my apology he said that there was "no



bell an' curtain in this yere play ; you got ter be thar waitin'."

Rocky knew better than I did the extent of his good nature ; he knew that in all probability it meant a wasted day ; for, with the best will in the world, the beginner is almost certain to spoil sport. It looks so simple and easy when you have only read about it or heard others talk ; but there are pitfalls at every step. When, in what seemed to me perfectly still air, Rocky took a pinch of dust and let it drop, and afterwards wet one finger and held it up to feel which side cooled, it was not difficult to know that he was trying the wind ; but when he changed direction suddenly for no apparent reason, or when he stopped and, after a glance at the ground, slackened his frame, lost all interest in sport, wind and surroundings, and addressed a remark to me in ordinary tones, I was hopelessly at sea. His manner showed that some possibility was disposed of and some idea abandoned. Once he said "Rietbuck ! Heard us I reckon," and then turned off at a right-angle ; but a little later on he pointed to other spoor and, indifferently dropping the one word 'Koodoo,' continued straight on. To me the two spoors seemed equally fresh ; he saw hours'—perhaps a whole day's—difference between them. That the rietbuck, scared by us, had gone ahead and was keenly on the watch for us and therefore not worth following, and that the koodoo was on the move and had simply struck across our line and was therefore not to be overtaken, were conclusions he drew without hesitation. I only saw





spoor and began to palpitate with thoughts of bagging a koodoo bull.

We had been out perhaps an hour, and by unceasing watchfulness I had learnt many things : they were about as well learnt and as useful as a sentence in a foreign tongue got off by heart ; but to me they seemed the essentials and the fundamentals of hunting. I was feeling very pleased with myself and confident of the result ; the stumbling over stones and stumps had ceased ; and there was no more catching in thorns, crunching on bare gritty places, clinking on rocks, or crackling of dry twigs ; and as we moved on in silence the visions of koodoo and other big game became very real. There was nothing to hinder them : to do as Rocky did had become mechanically easy ; a glance in his direction every now and then was enough ; there was time and temptation to look about and still perhaps to be the first to spot the game.



It was after taking one such casual glance around that I suddenly missed Rocky : a moment later I saw him moving forward, fast but silently, under cover of an ant-heap—stooping low and signing to me with one hand behind his back. With a horrible feeling of having failed him I made a hurried step sideways to get into line behind him and the ant-heap, and I stepped right on to a pile of dry crackly sticks. Rocky stood up quietly and waited, while I wished the earth would open and swallow me. When I got up abreast he half turned and looked me over with eyes slightly narrowed and a faint but ominous smile on one side of his mouth, and drawled out gently :

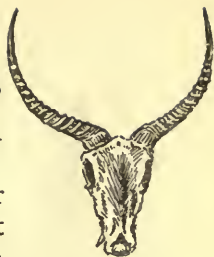
"You'd oughter brought some fire crackers!" If only he had sworn at me it would have been endurable.

We moved on again and this time I had eyes for nothing but Rocky's back, and where to put my foot next. It was not very long before he checked in midstride and I stood rigid as a pointer. Peering intently over his shoulder in the direction in which he looked I could see nothing. The bush was very open, and yet, even with his raised rifle to guide me, I could not for the life of me see what he was aiming at. Then the shot rang out, and a duiker toppled over kicking in the grass not a hundred yards away.

The remembrance of certain things still makes me feel uncomfortable; the yell of delight I let out as the buck fell; the wild dash forward, which died away to a dead stop as I realised that Rocky himself had not moved; the sight of him, as I looked back, calmly reloading; and the silence. To me it was an event: to him, his work. But these things were forgotten then—lost behind the everlasting puzzle, How was it possible I had not seen the buck until it fell? Rocky must have known what was worrying me, for, after we had picked up the buck, he remarked without any preliminary, "It ain't easy in this bush ter pick up what don't move; an' it ain't hardly possible ter find what ye don't know!"

"Game you mean?" I asked, somewhat puzzled.

"This one was feeding," he answered, after a nod in reply. "I saw his head go up ter listen; but when they don't move, an' you don't jus' know what





they look like, you kin 'most walk atop o' them. You got ter kind o' shape 'em in yer eye, an' when you got that fixed you kin pick 'em up 'most anywhere!"

It cost Rocky an effort to volunteer anything. There were others always ready to talk and advise; but they were no help. It was Rocky himself who once said that "the man who's allus offerin' his advice fer nothin' 's askin' 'bout 's much 's it's worth." He seemed to run dry of words—like an overdrawn well. For several days he took no further notice of me, apparently having forgotten my existence or repented his good nature. Once, when in reply to a question, I was owning up to the hopes and chances and failures of the day, I caught his attentive look turned on me and was conscious of it—and a little apprehensive—for the rest of the evening; but nothing happened.

The following evening however it came out. I had felt that that look meant something, and that sooner or later I would catch it. It was characteristic of him that he could always wait, and I never felt quite safe with him—never comfortably sure that something was not being saved up for me for some mistake perhaps days old. He was not to be hurried, nor was he to be put off, and nobody ever interrupted him or headed him off. His quiet voice was never raised, and the lazy gentleness never disturbed; he seemed to know exactly what he wanted to say, and to have opening and attention waiting for him. I suppose it was partly because he spoke so seldom: but there was something else too—the something that

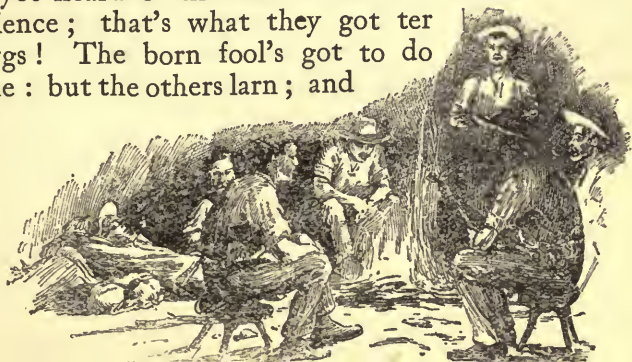


was just Rocky himself. Although the talk appeared the result of accident, an instinct told me from the start that it was not really so: it was Rocky's slow and considered way.

The only dog with us was licking a cut on her shoulder—the result of an unauthorised rush at a wounded buck—and after an examination of her wound we had wandered over the account of how she had got it, and so on to discussing the dog herself. Rocky sat in silence, smoking and looking into the fire, and the little discussion was closed by some one saying, “She’s no good for a hunting dog—too plucky!” It was then I saw Rocky’s eyes turned slowly on the last speaker: he looked at him thoughtfully for a good minute, and then remarked quietly:

“Thar ain’t no sich thing as too plucky!” And with that he stopped, almost as if inviting contradiction. Whether he wanted a reply or not one cannot say; anyway, he got none. No one took Rocky on unnecessarily; and at his leisure he resumed:

“Thar’s brave men; an’ thar’s fools; an’ you kin get some that’s both. But thar’s a whole heap that ain’t! An’ it’s jus’ the same with dawgs. She’s no fool, but she ain’t been taught: that’s what’s the matter with her. Men ha’ got ter larn: dawgs too! Men ain’t born equal: no more’s dawgs! One’s born better ’n another—more brains, more heart; but I ain’t yet heard o’ the man born with knowledge or experience; that’s what they got ter learn—men an’ dawgs! The born fool’s got to do fool’s work all the time: but the others larn; and

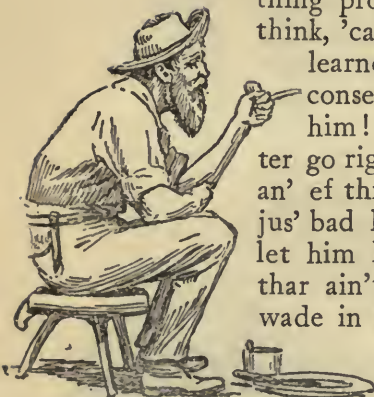




the brave man with brains 's got a big pull. He don't get shook up—jus' keeps on thinkin' out his job right along, while the other feller's worryin' about his hide! An' dawgs is the same."

Rocky's eyes—for ever grave and thoughtful—rested on the fire; and the remarks that came from the other men passed unnoticed, but they served to keep the subject alive. Presently he went on again—opening with an observation that caused me to move uneasily before there was time to think why!

"Boys is like pups—you got ter help 'em some; but not too much, an' not too soon. They got ter larn themselves. I reckon ef a man's never made a mistake he's never had a good lesson. Ef you don't pay for a thing you don't know what it's worth; and mistakes is part o' the price o' knowledge—the other part is work! But mistakes is the part you don't like payin': that's why you remember it. You save a boy from makin' mistakes and ef he's got good stuff in him, most like you spoil it. He don't know anything properly, 'cause he don't think; and he don't think, 'cause you saved him the trouble an' he never learned how! He don't know the meanin' o' consequences and risks, 'cause you kep' 'em off him! An' bymbye he gets ter believe it's born in him ter go right, an' knows everything, an' can't go wrong; an' ef things don't pan out in the end he reckon it's jus' bad luck! No! Sirree! Ef he's got ter swim you let him know right there that the water's deep an' thar ain't no one to hol' him up, an' ef he don't wade in an' larn, it's goin' ter be his funeral!"



My eyes were all for Rocky, but he was not looking my way, and when the next remark came, and my heart jumped and my hands and feet moved of their own accord, his face was turned quite away from me towards the man on his left.



"An' it's jus' the same 'ith huntin'! It looks so blamed easy he reckons it don't need any teachin'. Well, let him try! Leave him run on his own till his boots is walked off an' he's like to set down and cry, ef he wasn't 'shamed to; let him know every pur-tickler sort o' blamed fool he can make of himself; an' then he's fit ter teach, 'cause he'll listen, an' watch, an' learn—*an'* say thank ye fer it! Mostly you got ter make a fool o' yourself once or twice ter know what it feels like an' how t' avoid it: best do it young—it teaches a boy; but it kind o' breaks a man up!"

I kept my eyes on Rocky, avoiding the others, fearing that a look or word might tempt some one to rub it in; and it was a relief when the old man naturally and easily picked up his original point and, turning another look on Jess, said:

"You got ter begin on the pup. It ain't her fault; it's yours. She's full up o' the right stuff, but she got no show to larn! Dawgs is all different, good an' bad—just like men: some larns quick; some'll never larn. But thar ain't any too plucky!"

He tossed a chip of green wood into the heart of the fire and watched it spurtle and smoke, and after quite a long pause, added:





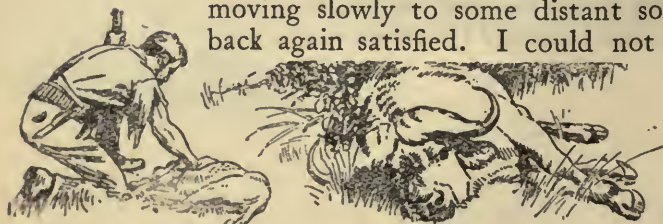
“Thar’s times when a dawg’s got to see it through an’ be killed. It’s his dooty—same as a man’s. I seen it done !”

The last words were added with a narrowing of his eyes and a curious softening of voice—as of personal affection or regret. Others noticed it too ; and in reply to a question as to how it had happened Rocky explained in a few words that a wounded buffalo had waylaid and tossed the man over its back, and as it turned again to gore him the dog rushed in between, fighting it off for a time and eventually fastening on to the nose when the buffalo still pushed on. The check enabled the man to reach his gun and shoot the buffalo ; but the dog was trampled to death.

“Were you . . . ?” some one began—and then at the look in Rocky’s face, hesitated. Rocky, staring into the fire, answered :

“It was my dawg !”

Long after the other men were asleep I lay in my blankets watching the tricks of light and shadow played by the fire, as fitfully it flamed or died away. It showed the long prostrate figures of the others as they slept full stretch on their backs, wrapped in dark blankets ; the waggons, touched with unwonted colours by the flames, and softened to ghostly shadows when they died ; the oxen, sleeping contentedly at their yokes ; Rocky’s two donkeys, black and grey, tethered under a thorn-tree—now and then a long ear moving slowly to some distant sound and dropping back again satisfied. I could not sleep ; but Rocky





"IT WAS MY DAWG"

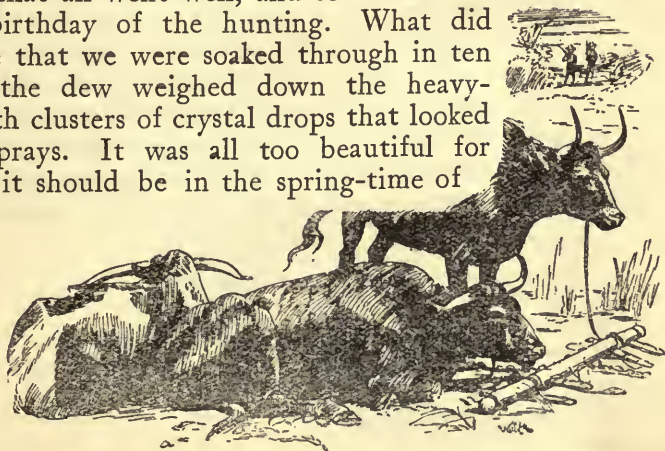
was sleeping like a babe. He, gaunt and spare—6 ft. 2 he must have stood—weather-beaten and old, with the long solitary trip before him and sixty odd years of life behind, he slept when he laid his head down, and was wide awake and rested when he raised it. He, who had been through it all, slept; but I, who had only listened, was haunted, bewitched, possessed, by racing thoughts; and all on account of four words, and the way he said them, “It was my dawg.”



It was still dark, with a faint promise of saffron in the East, when I felt a hand on my shoulder and heard Rocky's voice saying, “Comin' along, Sonny?”

One of the drivers raised his head to look at us as we passed, and then called to his voorlooper to turn the cattle loose to graze, and dropped back to sleep. We left them so and sallied out into the pure clear morning while all the world was still, while the air, cold and subtly stimulating, put a spring into the step and an extra beat or two into the pulse, fairly rinsing lungs and eyes and brain.

What is there to tell of that day? Why! nothing, really nothing, except that it was a happy day—a day of little things that all went well, and so it came to look like the birthday of the hunting. What did it matter to me that we were soaked through in ten minutes? for the dew weighed down the heavy-topped grass with clusters of crystal drops that looked like diamond sprays. It was all too beautiful for words: and so it should be in the spring-time of youth.





Rocky was different that day. He showed me things ; reading the open book of nature that I could not understand. He pointed out the spoors going to and from the drinking-place, and named the various animals ; showed me one more deeply indented than the rest and, murmuring "Scared I guess," pointed to where it had dashed off out of the regular track ; picked out the big splayed pad of the hyena sneaking round under cover ; stopped quietly in his stride to point where a hare was sitting up cleaning itself, not ten yards off ; stopped again at the sound of a clear, almost metallic, 'clink' and pointed to a little sandy gully in front of us down which presently came thirty or forty guinea-fowl in single file, moving swiftly, running and walking, and all in absolute silence except for that one 'clink.' How did he know they were there, and which way they would go, and know it all so promptly ? were questions I asked myself.

We walked with the sun—that is towards the West—so that the light would show up the game and be in their eyes, making it more difficult for them to see us. We watched a little red stembuck get up from his form, shake the dew from his coat, stretch himself, and then pick his way daintily through the wet grass, nibbling here and there as he went. Rocky did not fire ; he wanted something better.

After the sun had risen, flooding the whole country with golden light, and, while the dew lasted, making it glisten like a bespangled transformation scene, we came on a patch of old long grass and, parted by some twenty yards, walked through it abreast. There was a



wild rush from under my feet, a yellowish body dashed through the grass, and I got out in time to see a rietbuck ram cantering away. Then Rocky, beside me, gave a shrill whistle; the buck stopped, side on, looked back at us, and Rocky dropped it where it stood. Instantly following the shot there was another rush on our left, and before the second rietbuck had gone thirty yards Rocky toppled it over in its tracks. From the whistle to the second shot it was all done in about ten seconds. To me it looked like magic. I could only gasp.



We cleaned the bucks, and hid them in a bush. There was meat enough for the camp then, and I thought we would return at once for boys to carry it; but Rocky, after a moment's glance round, shouldered his rifle and moved on again. I followed, asking no questions. We had been gone only a few minutes when to my great astonishment he stopped and pointing straight in front asked:

"What 'ud you put up for that stump?"

I looked hard, and answered confidently, "Two hundred!"

"Step it!" was his reply. I paced the distance; it was eighty-two yards.

It was very bewildering; but he helped me out a bit with "Bush telescopes, Sonny!"

"You mean it magnifies them?" I asked in surprise.

"No! Magnifies the distance, like lookin' down an avenue! Gun barr'l looks a mile long when you put yer eye to it! Open flats brings 'em closer; and 'cross water or a gully seems like you kin put yer hand on 'em!"





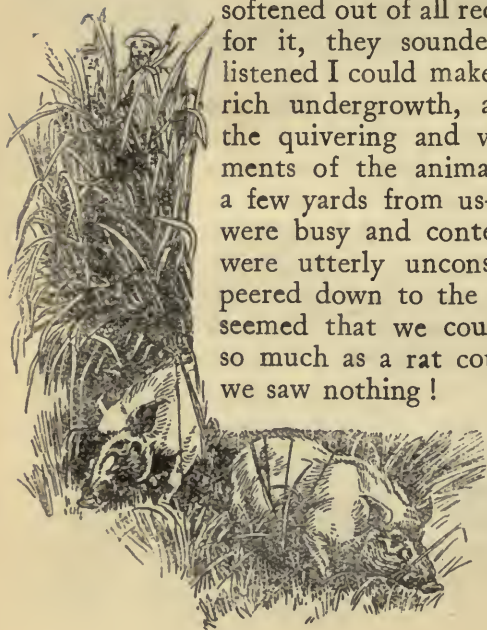
"I would have missed—by feet—that time Rocky!"

"You kin take it fer a start, Halve the distance and aim low!"

"Aim low, as well?"

"Thar's allus somethin' low: legs, an' ground to show what you done! But thar's no 'outers' marked on the sky!"

Once, as we walked along, he paused to look at some freshly overturned ground, and dropped the one word, 'Pig.' We turned then to the right and presently came upon some vlei ground densely covered with tall green reeds. He slowed down as we approached; I tip-toed in sympathy; and when only a few yards off he stopped and beckoned me on, and as I came abreast he raised his hand in warning and pointed into the reeds. There was a curious subdued sort of murmur of many deep voices. It conveys no idea of the fact to say they were grunts. They were softened out of all recognition: there is only one word for it, they sounded 'confidential.' Then as we listened I could make out the soft silky rustling of the rich undergrowth, and presently, could follow, by the quivering and waving of odd reeds, the movements of the animals themselves. They were only a few yards from us—the nearest four or five; they were busy and contented; and it was obvious they were utterly unconscious of our presence. As we peered down to the reeds from our greater height it seemed that we could see the ground and that not so much as a rat could have passed unnoticed. Yet we saw nothing!



And then, without the slightest sign, cause or warning that I could detect, in one instant every sound ceased. I watched the reeds like a cat on the pounce : never a stir or sign or sound : they had vanished. I turned to Rocky : he was standing at ease, and there was the faintest look of amusement in his eyes.

"They must be there ; they can't have got away ?" It was a sort of indignant protest against his evident 'chucking it' ; but it was full of doubt all the same.

"Try !" he said, and I jumped into the reeds straight away. The under-foliage, it is true, was thicker and deeper than it had looked ; but for all that it was like a conjuring trick—they were not there ! I waded through a hundred yards or more of the narrow belt—it was not more than twenty yards wide anywhere—but the place was deserted. It struck me then that if they could dodge us at five to ten yards while we were watching from the bank and they did not know it—Well, I 'chucked it' too. Rocky was standing in the same place with the same faint look of friendly amusement when I got back, wet and muddy.

"Pigs is like that," he said, "same as elephants—jus' disappears !"

We went on again, and a quarter of an hour later, it may be, Rocky stopped, subsided to a sitting position, beckoned to me, and pointed with his levelled rifle in front. It was a couple of minutes before he could get me to see the stembuck standing in the shade of a thorn tree. I would never have seen it but for his





whisper to look for something moving : that gave it to me ; I saw the movement of the head as it croppped.

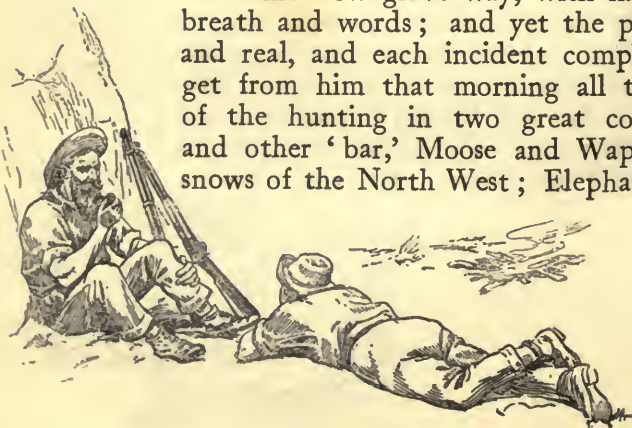
"High : right !" was Rocky's comment, as the bullet ripped the bark off a tree and the startled stembuck raced away. In the excitement I had forgotten his advice already !

But there was no time to feel sick and disgusted ; the buck, puzzled by the report on one side and the smash on the tree on the other, half circled us and stopped to look back. Rocky laid his hand on my shoulder :

"Take your time, Sonny !" he said, "Aim low ; an' *don't pull ! Squeeze !*" And at last I got it.

We had our breakfast there—the liver roasted on the coals, and a couple of 'dough-boys,' with the unexpected addition of a bottle of cold tea, weak and unsweetened, produced from Rocky's knapsack ! We stayed there a couple of hours, and that is the only time he really opened out. I understood then—at last—that of his deliberate kindness he had come out that morning meaning to make a happy day of it for a youngster ; and he did it.

He had the knack of getting at the heart of things, and putting it all in the fewest words. He spoke in the same slow grave way, with habitual economy of breath and words ; and yet the pictures were living and real, and each incident complete. I seemed to get from him that morning all there was to know of the hunting in two great continents—Grizzlies and other 'bar,' Moose and Wapiti, hunted in the snows of the North West ; Elephant, Buffalo, Rhino,



Lions, and scores more, in the sweltering heat of Africa !

That was a happy day !

When I woke up next morning Rocky was fitting the packs on his donkeys. I was a little puzzled, wondering at first if he was testing the saddles, for he had said nothing about moving on ; but when he joined us at breakfast the donkeys stood packed ready to start. Then Robbie asked :



“ Going to make a move, Rocky ? ”

“ Yes ! Reckon I’ll git ! ” he answered quietly.

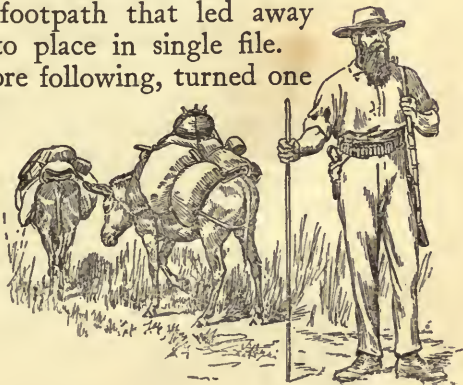
I ate in silence, thinking of what he was to face : many hundreds of miles—perhaps a thousand or two ; many, many months—may be a year or two ; wild country, wild tribes, and wild beasts ; floods and fever ; accident, hunger, and disease ; and alone !

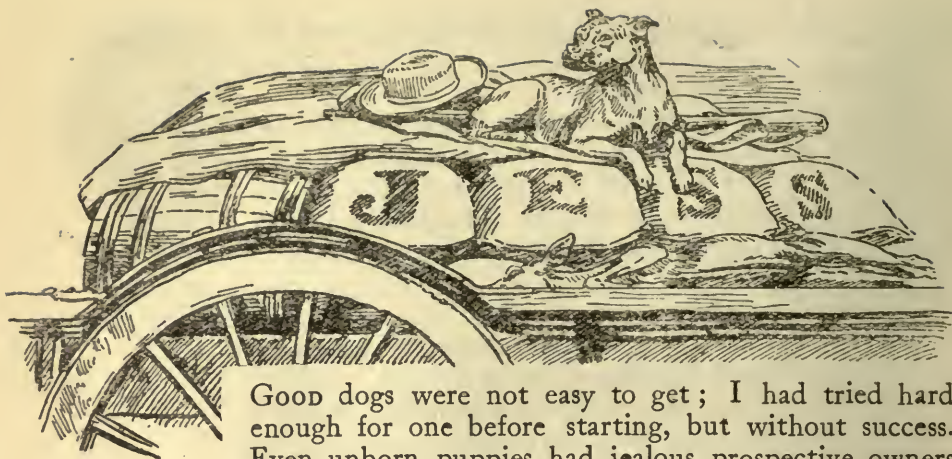
When we had finished breakfast he rinsed out his beaker and hung it on one of the packs, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and picking up his long assegai-wood walking-stick tapped the donkeys lightly to turn them into the Kaffir footpath that led away North. They jogged on into place in single file.

Rocky paused a second before following, turned one brief grave glance on us, and said :

“ Well. So long ! ”

He never came back !





Good dogs were not easy to get ; I had tried hard enough for one before starting, but without success. Even unborn puppies had jealous prospective owners waiting to claim them.

There is always plenty of room at the top of the tree, and good hunting dogs were as rare as good men, good horses, and good front-oxen. A lot of qualities are needed in the make-up of a good hunting dog : size, strength, quickness, scent, sense and speed—and plenty of courage. They are very very difficult to get ; but even small dogs are useful, and many a fine feat stands to the credit of little terriers in guarding camps at night and in standing off wounded animals that meant mischief.

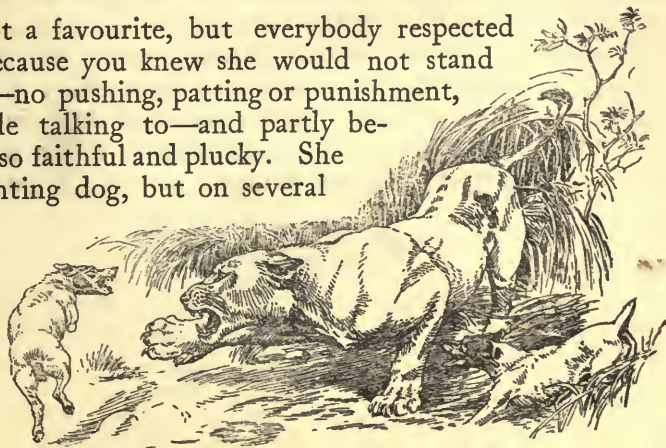
Dennison was saved from a wounded lioness by his two fox terriers. He had gone out to shoot bush-pheasants, and came unexpectedly on a lioness playing with her cubs : the cubs hid in the grass, but she stood up at bay to protect them, and he, forgetting that he

had taken the big 'looper' cartridges from his gun and reloaded with No. 6, fired. The shot only maddened her, and she charged; but the two dogs dashed at her, one at each side, barking, snapping and yelling, rushing in and jumping back so fast and furiously that they flustered her. Leaving the man for the moment, she turned on them, dabbing viciously with her huge paws, first at one, then at the other; quick as lightning she struck right and left as a kitten will at a twirled string; but they kept out of reach. It only lasted seconds, but that was long enough for the man to reload and shoot the lioness through the heart.



There was only the one dog in our camp; and she was not an attractive one. She was a bull terrier with a dull brindled coat—black and grey in shadowy stripes. She had small cross-looking eyes and uncertain always-moving ears; she was bad tempered and most unsociable; but she was as faithful and as brave a dog as ever lived. She never barked; never howled when beaten for biting strangers or kaffirs or going for the cattle; she was very silent, very savage, and very quick. She belonged to my friend Ted, and never left his side day or night. Her name was Jess.

Jess was not a favourite, but everybody respected her, partly because you knew she would not stand any nonsense—no pushing, patting or punishment, and very little talking to—and partly because she was so faithful and plucky. She was not a hunting dog, but on several





occasions had helped to pull down wounded game; she had no knowledge or skill, and was only fierce and brave, and there was always the risk that she would be killed. She would listen to Ted, but to no one else; one of us might have shouted his lungs out, but it would not have stopped her from giving chase the moment she saw anything and keeping on till she was too dead beat to move any further.

The first time I saw Jess we were having dinner, and I gave her a bone—putting it down close to her and saying, “Here! good dog!” As she did not even look at it, I moved it right under her nose. She gave a low growl, and her little eyes turned on me for just one look as she got up and walked away.

There was a snigger of laughter from some of the others, but nobody said anything, and it seemed wiser to ask no questions just then. Afterwards, when we were alone, one of them told me Ted had trained her not to feed from any one else, adding, “You must not feed another man’s dog; a dog has only one master!”

We respected Jess greatly; but no one knew quite how much we respected her until the memorable day near Ship Mountain.

We had rested through the heat of the day under a big tree on the bank of a little stream; it was the tree under which Soltké prayed and died. About sundown, just before we were ready to start, some other waggons passed, and Ted, knowing the owner, went on with him intending to rejoin us at the next outspan. As he jumped on to the passing waggon



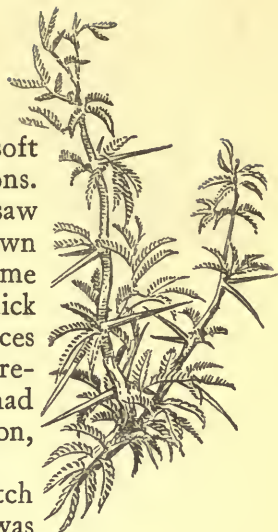
he called to Jess, and she ran out of a patch of soft grass under one of the big trees behind our waggons. She answered his call instantly, but when she saw him moving off on the other waggon she sat down in the road and watched him anxiously for some seconds, then ran on a few steps in her curious quick silent way and again stopped, giving swift glances alternately towards Ted and towards us. Ted remarked laughingly that she evidently thought he had made a mistake by getting on to the wrong waggon, and that she would follow presently.

After he had disappeared she ran back to her patch of grass and lay down, but in a few minutes she was back again squatting in the road looking with that same anxious worried expression after her master. Thus she went to and fro for the quarter of an hour it took us to inspan, and each time she passed we could hear a faint anxious little whine.

The oxen were inspanned and the last odd things were being put up when one of the boys came to say that he could not get the guns and water-barrel because Jess would not let him near them. There was something the matter with the dog, he said; he thought she was mad.

Knowing how Jess hated kaffirs we laughed at the notion, and went for the things ourselves. As we came within five yards of the tree where we had left the guns there was a rustle in the grass, and Jess came out with her swift silent run, appearing as unexpectedly as a snake does, and with some odd suggestion of a snake in her look and attitude. Her head, body and

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tail were in a dead line, and she was crouching slightly as for a spring ; her ears were laid flat back, her lips twitching constantly, showing the strong white teeth, and her cross wicked eyes had such a look of remorseless cruelty in them that we stopped as if we had been turned to stone. She never moved a muscle or made a sound, but kept those eyes steadily fixed on us. We moved back a pace or two and began to coax and wheedle her ; but it was no good ; she never moved or made a sound, and the unblinking look remained. For a minute we stood our ground, and then the hair on her back and shoulders began very slowly to stand up. That was enough : we cleared off. It was a mighty uncanny appearance.

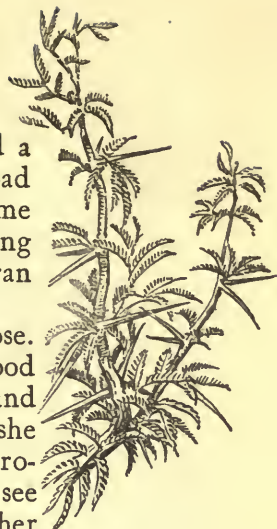
Then another tried his hand ; but it was just the same. No one could do anything with her ; no one could get near the guns or the water-barrel ; as soon as we returned for a fresh attempt she reappeared in the same place and in the same way.

The position was too ridiculous, and we were at our wits' end ; for Jess held the camp. The kaffirs declared the dog was mad, and we began to have very uncomfortable suspicions that they were right ; but we decided to make a last attempt, and surrounding the place approached from all sides. But the suddenness with which she appeared before we got into position so demoralised the kaffirs that they bolted, and we gave it up, owning ourselves beaten. We turned to watch her as she ran back for the last time, and as she disappeared in the grass we heard distinctly the cry of a very young puppy. Then the secret of Jess's madness was out.

We had to send for Ted, and when he returned a couple of hours later Jess met him out on the road in the dark where she had been watching half the time ever since he left. She jumped up at his chest giving a long tremulous whimper of welcome, and then ran ahead straight to the nest in the grass.

He took a lantern and we followed, but not too close. When he knelt down to look at the puppies she stood over them and pushed herself in between him and them; when he put out a hand to touch them she pushed it away with her nose, whining softly in protest and trembling with excitement—you could see she would not bite, but she hated him to touch her puppies. Finally, when he picked one up she gave a low cry and caught his wrist gently, but held it.

That was Jess, the mother of Jock!

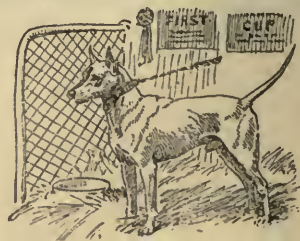




THE PICK OF THE PUPPIES

THERE were six puppies, and as the waggons were empty we fixed up a roomy nest in one of them for Jess and her family. There was no trouble with Jess; nobody interfered with her, and she interfered with nobody. The boys kept clear of her; but we used to take a look at her and the puppies as we walked along with the waggons; so by degrees she got to know that we would not harm them, and she no longer wanted to eat us alive if we went near and talked to her.

Five of the puppies were fat strong yellow little chaps with dark muzzles—just like their father, as Ted said; and their father was an imported dog, and was always spoken of as the best dog of the breed that had ever been in the country. I never saw him, so I do not really know what he was like—perhaps he was not a yellow dog at all; but, whatever he was, he had at that time a great reputation because he was ‘imported,’ and there were not half a dozen imported dogs in the whole of the Transvaal then. Many



people used to ask what breed the puppies were—I suppose it was because poor cross faithful old Jess was not much to look at, and because no one had a very high opinion of yellow dogs in general, and nobody seemed to remember any famous yellow bull-terriers. They used to smile in a queer way when they asked the question, as if they were going to get off a joke; but when we answered “Just like their father—Buchanan’s *imported* dog,” the smile disappeared, and they would give a whistle of surprise and say “By Jove!” and immediately begin to examine the five yellow puppies, remark upon their ears and noses and legs, and praise them up until we were all as proud as if they had belonged to us.

Jess looked after her puppies and knew nothing about the remarks that were made, so they did not worry her, but I often looked at the faithful old thing with her dark brindled face, cross-looking eyes and always-moving ears, and thought it jolly hard lines that nobody had a good word for her; it seemed rough on her that every one should be glad there was only one puppy at all like the mother—the sixth one, a poor miserable little rat of a thing about half the size of the others. He was not yellow like them, nor dark brindled like Jess, but a sort of dirty pale half-and-half colour with some dark faint wavy lines all over him, as if he had tried to be brindled and failed; and he had a dark sharp wizened little muzzle that looked shrivelled up with age.

Most of the fellows said it would be a good thing to drown the odd one because he spoilt the litter and made





them look as though they were not really thoroughbred, and because he was such a miserable little rat that he was not worth saving anyhow ; but in the end he was allowed to live. I believe no one fancied the job of taking one of Jess's puppies away from her ; moreover, as any dog was better than none, I had offered to take him rather than let him be drowned. Ted had old friends to whom he had already promised the pick of the puppies, so when I came along it was too late, and all he could promise me was that if there should be one over I might have it.

As they grew older and were able to crawl about they were taken off the waggons when we outspanned and put on the ground. Jess got to understand this at once, and she used to watch us quite quietly as we took them in our hands to put them down or lift them back again. When they were two or three weeks old a man came to the waggons who talked a great deal about dogs, and appeared to know what had to be done. He said that the puppies' tails ought to be docked, and that a bull-terrier would be no class at all with a long tail, but you should on no account clip his ears. I thought he was speaking of fox-terriers, and that with bull-terriers the position was the other way round, at that time ; but as he said it was 'the thing' in England, and nobody contradicted him, I shut up. We found out afterwards that he had made a mistake ; but it was too late then, and Jess's puppies started life as bull-terriers up to date, with long ears and short tails.

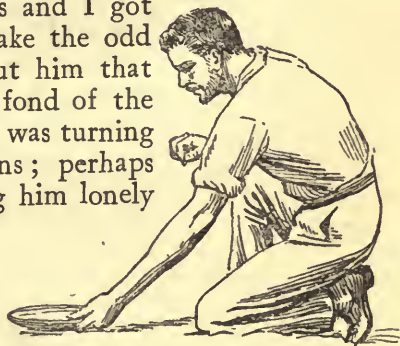
I felt sure from the beginning that all



the yellow puppies would be claimed and that I should have to take the odd one, or none at all ; so I began to look upon him as mine already, and to take an interest in him and look after him. A long time ago somebody wrote that "the sense of possession turns sand into gold," and it is one of the truest things ever said. Until it seemed that this queer-looking odd puppy was going to be mine I used to think and say very much what the others did—but with this difference, that I always felt sorry for him, and sorry for Jess too, because he was like her and not like the father. I used to think that perhaps if he were given a chance he might grow up like poor old Jess herself, ugly, cross and unpopular, but brave and faithful. I felt sorry for him, too, because he was small and weak, and the other five big puppies used to push him away from his food and trample on him ; and when they were old enough to play they used to pull him about by his ears and pack on to him—three or four to one—and bully him horribly. Many a time I rescued him, and many a time gave him a little preserved milk and water with bread soaked in it when the others had shouldered him out and eaten everything.



After a little while, when my chance of getting one of the good puppies seemed hopeless and I got used to the idea that I would have to take the odd one, I began to notice little things about him that no one else noticed, and got to be quite fond of the little beggar—in a kind of way. Perhaps I was turning my sand into gold, and my geese into swans ; perhaps I grew fond of him simply because, finding him lonely

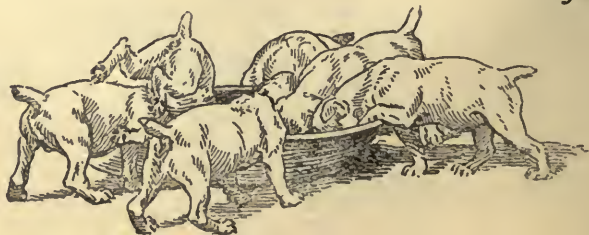




and with no one else to depend on, I befriended him ; and perhaps it was because he was always cheerful and plucky and it seemed as if there might be some good stuff in him after all. Those were the things I used to think of sometimes when feeding the little outcast. The other puppies would tumble him over and take his food from him ; they would bump into him when he was stooping over the dish of milk and porridge, and his head was so big and his legs so weak that he would tip up and go heels over head into the dish. We were always picking him out of the food and scraping it off him : half the time he was wet and sticky, and the other half covered with porridge and sand baked hard by the sun.

One day just after the waggon's had started, as I took a final look round the outspan place to see if anything had been forgotten, I found the little chap—who was only about four inches high—struggling to walk through the long grass. He was not big enough or strong enough to push his way—even the stems of the down-trodden grass tripped him—and he stumbled and floundered at every step, but he got up again each time with his little tail standing straight up, his head erect, and his ears cocked. He looked such a ridiculous sight that his little tragedy of “lost in the veld” was forgotten—one could only laugh.

What he thought he was doing, goodness only knows ; he looked as proud and important as if he owned the whole world and knew that every one in it was watching him. The poor little chap could not see a yard in that grass ; and in any case he was not



old enough to see much, or understand anything, for his eyes still had that bluish blind look that all very young puppies have, but he was marching along as full of confidence as a general at the head of his army. How he fell out of the waggon no one knew; perhaps the big puppies tumbled him out, or he may have tried to follow Jess, or have climbed over the tail-board to see what was the other side, for he was always going off exploring by himself. His little world was small, it may be—only the bedplank of the waggon and the few square yards of the ground on which they were dumped at the outspans—but he took it as seriously as any explorer who ever tackled a continent.



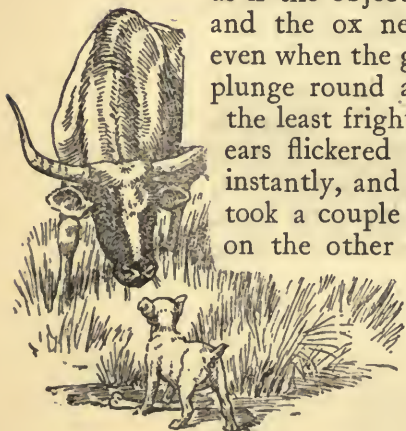
The others were a bit more softened towards the odd puppy when I caught up to the waggons and told them of his valiant struggle to follow; and the man who had docked the puppies' tails allowed, "I believe the rat's got pluck, whatever else is the matter with him, for he was the only one that didn't howl when I snipped them. The little cuss just gave a grunt and turned round as if he wanted to eat me. I think he'd 'a' been terrible angry if he hadn't been so s'prised. Pity he's such an awful-looking mongrel."

But no one else said a good word for him: he was really beneath notice, and if ever they had to speak about him they called him "The Rat." There is no doubt about it he was extremely ugly, and instead of improving as he grew older, he became worse; yet, I could not help liking him and looking after him, sometimes feeling sorry for him, sometimes being



tremendously amused, and sometimes—wonderful to relate—really admiring him. He was extraordinarily silent; while the others barked at nothing, howled when lonely, and yelled when frightened or hurt, the odd puppy did none of these things; in fact, he began to show many of Jess's peculiarities; he hardly ever barked, and when he did it was not a wild excited string of barks but little suppressed muffled noises, half bark and half growl, and just one or two at a time; and he did not appear to be afraid of anything, so one could not tell what he would do if he was.

One day we had an amusing instance of his nerve: one of the oxen, sniffing about the outspan, caught sight of him all alone, and filled with curiosity came up to examine him, as a hulking silly old tame ox will do. It moved towards him slowly and heavily with its ears spread wide and its head down, giving great big sniffs at this new object, trying to make out what it was. "The Rat" stood quite still with his stumpy tail cocked up and his head a little on one side, and when the huge ox's nose was about a foot from him he gave one of those funny abrupt little barks. It was as if the object had suddenly 'gone off' like a cracker, and the ox nearly tumbled over with fright; but even when the great mountain of a thing gave a clumsy plunge round and trotted off, "The Rat" was not the least frightened; he was startled, and his tail and ears flickered for a second, but stiffened up again instantly, and with another of those little barks he took a couple of steps forward and cocked his head on the other side. That was his way.

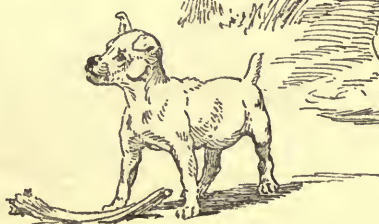


He was not a bit like the other puppies ; if any one fired off a gun or cracked one of the big whips the whole five would yell at the top of their voices and, wherever they were, would start running, scrambling and floundering as fast as they could towards the waggon without once looking back to see what they were running away from. The odd puppy would drop his bone with a start or would jump round ; his ears and tail would flicker up and down for a second ; then he would slowly bristle up all over, and with his head cocked first on one side and then on the other, stare hard with his half-blind bluish puppy eyes in the direction of the noise ; but he never ran away.



And so, little by little, I got to like him in spite of his awful ugliness. And it really was awful ! The other puppies grew big all over, but the odd one at that time seemed to grow only in one part—his tummy ! The poor little chap was born small and weak ; he had always been bullied and crowded out by the others, and the truth is he was half starved. The natural consequence of this was that as soon as he could walk about and pick up things for himself he made up for lost time, and filled up his middle piece to an alarming size before the other parts of his body had time to grow ; at that time he looked more like a big tock-tockie beetle than a dog.

Besides the balloon-like tummy he had stick-out bandy-legs, very like a beetle's too, and a neck so thin that it made the head look enormous, and you wondered how the neck ever held it up. But what made him so supremely ridiculous was that he evidently did not





know he was ugly ; he walked about as if he was always thinking of his dignity, and he had that puffed-out and stuck-up air of importance that you only see in small people and bantam cocks who are always trying to appear an inch taller than they really are.

When the puppies were about a month old, and could feed on porridge or bread soaked in soup or gravy, they got to be too much for Jess, and she used to leave them for hours at a time and hide in the grass so as to have a little peace and sleep. Puppies are always hungry, so they soon began to hunt about for themselves, and would find scraps of meat and porridge or old bones ; and if they could not get anything else, would try to eat the raw-hide nekstrops and reims. Then the fights began. As soon as one puppy saw another busy on anything, he would walk over towards him and, if strong enough, fight him for it. All day long it was nothing but wrangle, snarl, bark and yelp. Sometimes four or five would be at it in one scrum ; because as soon as one heard a row going on he would trot up hoping to steal the bone while the others were busy fighting.

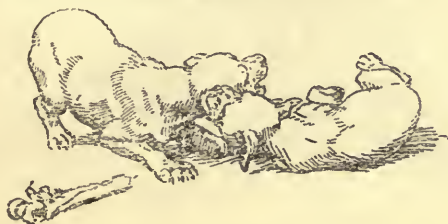
It was then that I noticed other things about the odd puppy : no matter how many packed on to him, or how they bit or pulled him, he never once let out a yelp ; with four or five on top of him you would see him on his back, snapping right and left with bare white teeth, gripping and worrying them when he got a good hold of anything, and all the time growling and snarling with a fierceness that was really comical.



It sounded as a lion fight might sound in a toy phonograph.

Before many days passed, it was clear that some of the other puppies were inclined to leave "The Rat" alone, and that only two of them—the two biggest—seemed anxious to fight him and could take his bones away. The reason soon became apparent: instead of wasting his breath in making a noise, or wasting strength in trying to tumble the others over, "The Rat" simply bit hard and hung on; noses, ears, lips, cheeks, feet and even tails—all came handy to him; anything he could get hold of and hang on to was good enough, and the result generally was that in about half a minute the other puppy would leave everything and clear off yelling, and probably holding up one paw or hanging its head on one side to ease a chewed ear.

When either of the big puppies tackled the little fellow the fight lasted much longer. Even if he were tumbled over at once—as generally happened—and the other one stood over him barking and growling, that did not end the fight: as soon as the other chap got off him he would struggle up and begin again; he would not give in. The other puppies seemed to think there was some sort of rule like the 'count out' in boxing, or that once you were tumbled over you ought to give up the bone; but the odd puppy apparently did not care about rules; as far as I could see, he had just one rule: "Stick to it," so it was not very long before even the two big fellows gave up interfering with him. The bites from his little white

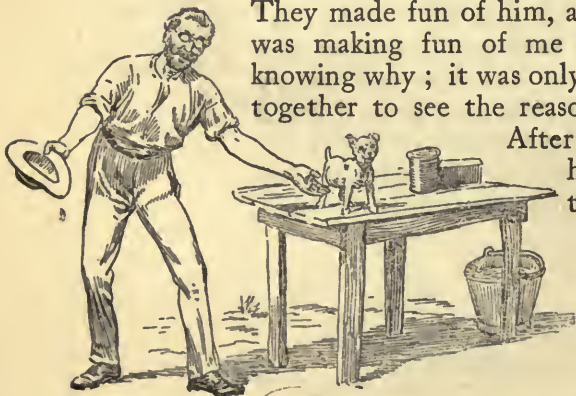




teeth—sharp as needles—which punctured noses and feet and tore ears, were most unpleasant. But apart from that, they found there was nothing to be gained by fighting him: they might roll him over time after time, but he came back again and worried them so persistently that it was quite impossible to enjoy the bone—they had to keep on fighting for it.

At first I drew attention to these things, but there was no encouragement from the others; they merely laughed at the attempt to make the best of a bad job. Sometimes owners of other puppies were nettled by having their beauties compared with "The Rat," or were annoyed because he had the cheek to fight for his own and beat them. Once, when I had described how well he had stood up to Billy's pup, Robbie caught up "The Rat," and placing him on the table, said: "Hats off to the Duke of Wellington on the field of Waterloo." That seemed to me the poorest sort of joke to send five grown men into fits of laughter. He stood there on the table with his head on one side, one ear standing up, and his stumpy tail twiggling—an absurd picture of friendliness, pride and confidence; yet he was so ugly and ridiculous that my heart sank, and I whisked him away. They made fun of him, and he did not mind; but it was making fun of me too, and I could not help knowing why; it was only necessary to put the puppies together to see the reason.

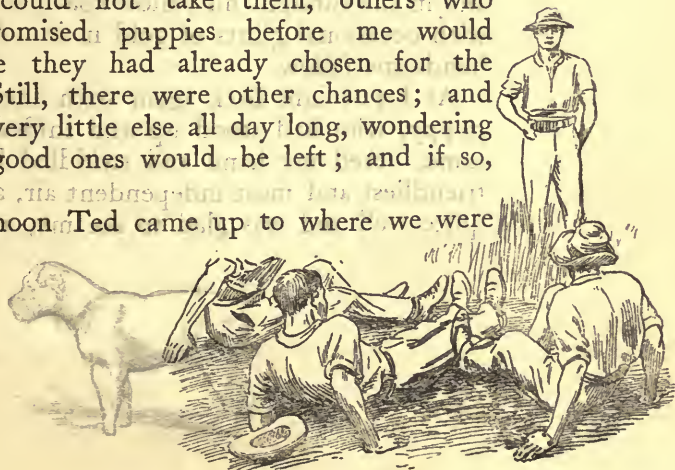
After that I stopped talking about him, and made the most of the good points he showed,



and tried to discover more. It was the only consolation for having to take the leavings of the litter.

Then there came a day when something happened which might easily have turned out very differently, and there would have been no stories and no Jock to tell about; and the best dog in the world would never have been my friend and companion. The puppies had been behaving very badly, and had stolen several neckties and chewed up parts of one or two big whips; the drivers were grumbling about all the damage done and the extra work it gave them; and Ted, exasperated by the worry of it all, announced that the puppies were quite old enough to be taken away, and that those who had picked puppies must take them at once and look after them, or let some one else have them. When I heard him say that my heart gave a little thump from excitement, for I knew the day had come when the great question would be settled once and for all. Here was a glorious and unexpected chance; perhaps one of the others would not or could not take his, and I might get one of the good ones. . . . Of course the two big ones would be snapped up: that was certain; for, even if the men who had picked them could not take them, others who had been promised puppies before me would exchange those they had already chosen for the better ones. Still, there were other chances; and I thought of very little else all day long, wondering if any of the good ones would be left; and if so, which?

In the afternoon Ted came up to where we were





all lying in the shade and startled us with the momentous announcement :

“ Billy Griffiths can’t take his pup ! ”

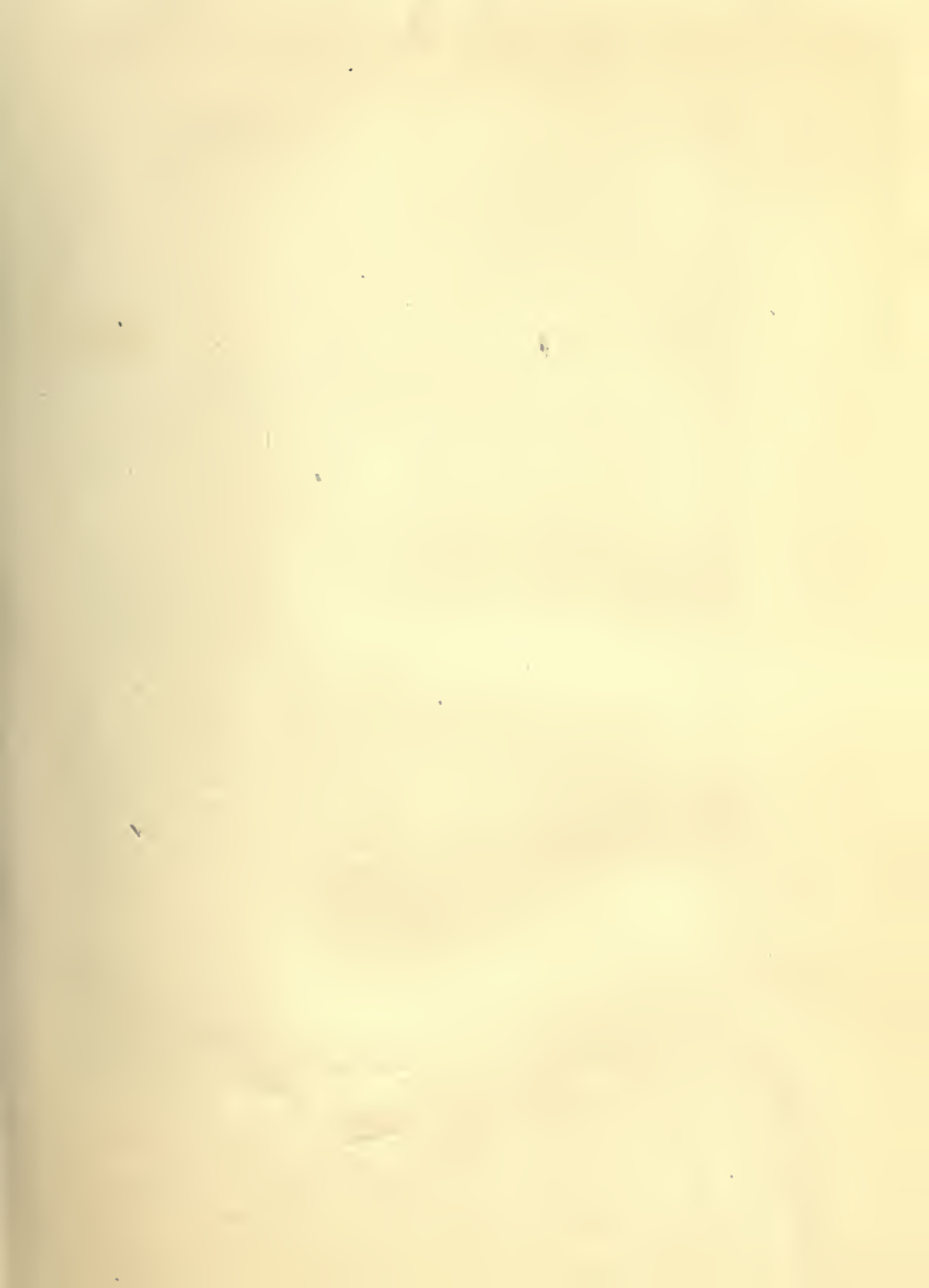
Every man of us sat up. Billy’s pup was the first pick, the champion of the litter, the biggest and strongest of the lot. Several of the others said at once that they would exchange theirs for this one ; but Ted smiled and shook his head.

“ No,” he said, “ you had a good pick in the beginning.” Then he turned to me, and added : “ You’ve only had leavings.” Some one said “ The Rat,” and there was a shout of laughter, but Ted went on ; “ You can have Billy’s pup.”

It seemed too good to be true ; not even in my wildest imaginings had I fancied myself getting the pick of the lot. I hardly waited to thank Ted before going off to look at my champion. I had seen and admired him times out of number, but it seemed as if he must look different now that he belonged to me. He was a fine big fellow, well built and strong, and looked as if he could beat all the rest put together. His legs were straight ; his neck sturdy ; his muzzle dark and shapely ; his ears equal and well carried ; and in the sunlight his yellow coat looked quite bright, with occasional glints of gold in it. He was indeed a handsome fellow.

As I put him back again with the others the odd puppy, who had stood up and sniffed at me when I came, licked my hand and twiddled his tail with the friendliest and most independent air, as if he knew me quite well and was glad to see me, and I patted the





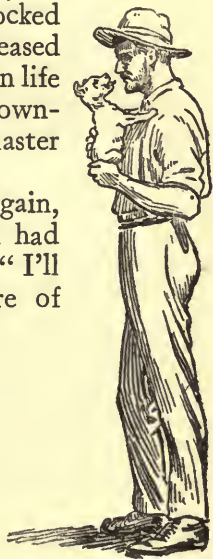


“AND THERE AT MY HEELS WAS THE ODD PUPPY”

poor little chap as he waddled up. I had forgotten him in the excitement of getting Billy's pup ; but the sight of him made me think of his funny ways, his pluck and independence, and of how he had not a friend in the world except Jess and me ; and I felt downright sorry for him. I picked him up and talked to him ; and when his wizened little face was close to mine, he opened his mouth as if laughing, and shooting out his red tongue dabbled me right on the tip of my nose in pure friendliness. The poor little fellow looked more ludicrous than ever : he had been feeding again and was as tight as a drum ; his skin was so tight one could not help thinking that if he walked over a mimosa thorn and got a scratch on the tummy he would burst like a toy balloon.

I put him back with the other puppies and returned to the tree where Ted and the rest were sitting. As I came up there was a shout of laughter, and—turning round to see what had provoked it—I found “The Rat” at my heels. He had followed me and was trotting and stumbling along, tripping every yard or so, but getting up again with head erect, ears cocked and his stumpy tail twiddling away just as pleased and proud as if he thought he had really started in life and was doing what only a ‘really and truly’ grown-up dog is supposed to do—that is, follow his master wherever he goes.

All the old chaff and jokes were fired off at me again, and I had no peace for quite a time. They all had something to say : “He won't swap you off !” “I'll back ‘The Rat’ !” “He is going to take care of



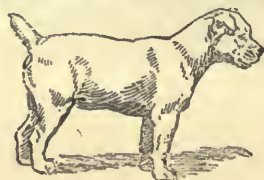


you!" "He is afraid you'll get lost!" and so on; and they were still chaffing about it when I grabbed "The Rat" and took him back again.



Billy's failure to take his puppy was so entirely unexpected and so important that the subject kept cropping up all the evening. It was very amusing then to see how each of those who had wanted to get him succeeded in finding good reasons for thinking that his own puppy was really better than Billy's. However they differed in their estimates of each other's dogs, they all agreed that the best judge in the world could not be certain of picking out the best dog in a good litter until the puppies were several months old; and they all gave instances in which the best looking puppy had turned out the worst dog, and others in which the one that no one would look at had grown up to be the champion. Goodness knows how long this would have gone on if Robbie had not mischievously suggested that "perhaps 'The Rat' was going to beat the whole lot." There was such a chorus of guffaws at this that no one told any more stories.

The poor little friendless Rat! It was unfortunate, but the truth is that he was uglier than before; and yet I could not help liking him. I fell asleep that night thinking of the two puppies—the best and the worst in the litter. No sooner had I gone over all the splendid points in Billy's pup and made up my mind that he was certainly the finest I had ever seen, than the friendly wizened little face, the half-cocked ears and head on one side, the cocky little stump of

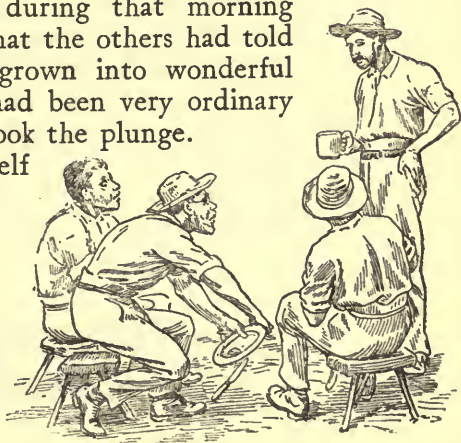


a tail, and the comical dignified plucky look of the odd puppy would all come back to me. The thought of how he had licked my hand and twiddled his tail at me, and how he dabbed me on the nose, and then the manful way in which he had struggled after me through the grass, all made my heart go soft towards him, and I fell asleep not knowing what to do.

When I woke up in the morning, my first thought was of the odd puppy—how he looked to me as his only friend, and what he would feel like if, after looking on me as really belonging to him and as the one person that he was going to take care of all his life, he knew he was to be left behind or given away to any one who would take him. It would never have entered his head that he required some one to look after him; from the way he had followed me the night before it was clear he was looking after me; and the other fellows thought the same thing. His whole manner had plainly said: "Never mind old man! Don't you worry: I am here."

We used to make our first trek at about three o'clock in the morning, so as to be outspanned by sunrise; and walking along during that morning trek I recalled all the stories that the others had told of miserable puppies having grown into wonderful dogs, and of great men who had been very ordinary children; and at breakfast I took the plunge.

"Ted," I said, bracing myself for the laughter, "if you don't mind, I'll stick to 'The Rat.'"





If I had fired off a gun under their noses they would have been much less startled. Robbie made a grab for his plate as it slipped from his knees.

"*Don't* do that sort of thing!" he protested indignantly. "My nerves won't stand it!"

The others stopped eating and drinking, held their beakers of steaming coffee well out of the way to get a better look at me, and when they saw it was seriously meant there was a chorus of:

"Well, I'm hanged."

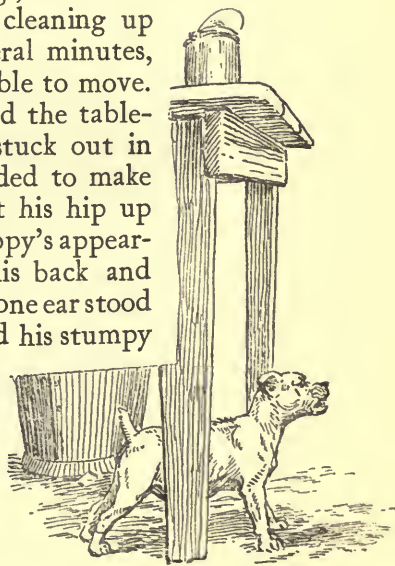
I took him in hand at once—for now he was really mine—and brought him over for his saucer of soaked bread and milk to where we sat at breakfast. Beside me there was a rough camp table—a luxury sometimes indulged in while camping or trekking with empty waggons—on which we put our tinned-milk, treacle and such things to keep them out of reach of the ants, grasshoppers, Hottentot-gods, beetles and dust. I put the puppy and his saucer in a safe place under the table out of the way of stray feet, and sank the saucer into the sand so that when he trod in it he would not spill the food; for puppies are quite stupid as they are greedy, and seem to think that they can eat faster by getting further into the dish. He appeared to be more ravenous than usual, and we were all amused by the way the little fellow craned his thin neck out further and further until he tipped up behind and his nose bumping into the saucer see-sawed him back again. He finished it all and looked round briskly at me, licking his lips and twiddling his stumpy tail.



Well, I meant to make a dog of him, so I gave him another lot. He was just like a little child—he thought he was very hungry still and could eat any amount more ; but it was not possible. The lapping became slower and more laboured, with pauses every now and then to get breath or lick his lips and look about him, until at last he was fairly beaten : he could only look at it, blink and lick his chops ; and, knowing that he would keep on trying, I took the saucer away. He was too full to object or to run after it ; he was too full to move. He stood where he was, with his legs well spread and his little body blown out like a balloon, and finished licking the drops and crumbs off his face without moving a foot.



There was something so extraordinarily funny in the appearance and attitude of the puppy that we watched to see what he would do next. He had been standing very close to the leg of the table, but not quite touching it, when he finished feeding ; and even after he had done washing his face and cleaning up generally, he stood there stock still for several minutes, as though it was altogether too much trouble to move. One little bandy hind leg stuck out behind the table-leg, and the bulge of his little tummy stuck out in front of it ; so that when at last he decided to make a move the very first little lurch brought his hip up against the table-leg. In an instant the puppy's appearance changed completely : the hair on his back and shoulders bristled ; his head went up erect ; one ear stood up straight and the other at half cock ; and his stumpy tail quivered with rage. He evidently





thought that one of the other puppies had come up behind to interfere with him. He was too proud to turn round and appear to be nervous: with head erect he glared hard straight in front of him, and, with all the little breath that he had left after his big feed, he growled ferociously in comical little gasps. He stood like that, not moving an inch, with the front foot still ready to take that step forward; and then, as nothing more happened, the hair on his back gradually went flat again; the fierceness died out of his face; and the growling stopped.

After a minute's pause, he again very slowly and carefully began to step forward; of course exactly the same thing happened again, except that this time he shook all over with rage, and the growling was fiercer and more choky. One could not imagine anything so small being in so great a rage. He took longer to cool down, too, and much longer before he made the third attempt to start. But the third time it was all over in a second. He seemed to think that this was more than any dog could stand, and that he must put a stop to it. The instant his hip touched the leg, he whipped round with a ferocious snarl—his little white teeth bared and gleaming—and bumped his nose against the table-leg.

I cannot say whether it was because of the shout of laughter from us, or because he really understood what had happened, that he looked so foolish, but he just gave one crestfallen look at me and with a feeble wag of his tail waddled off as fast as he could.

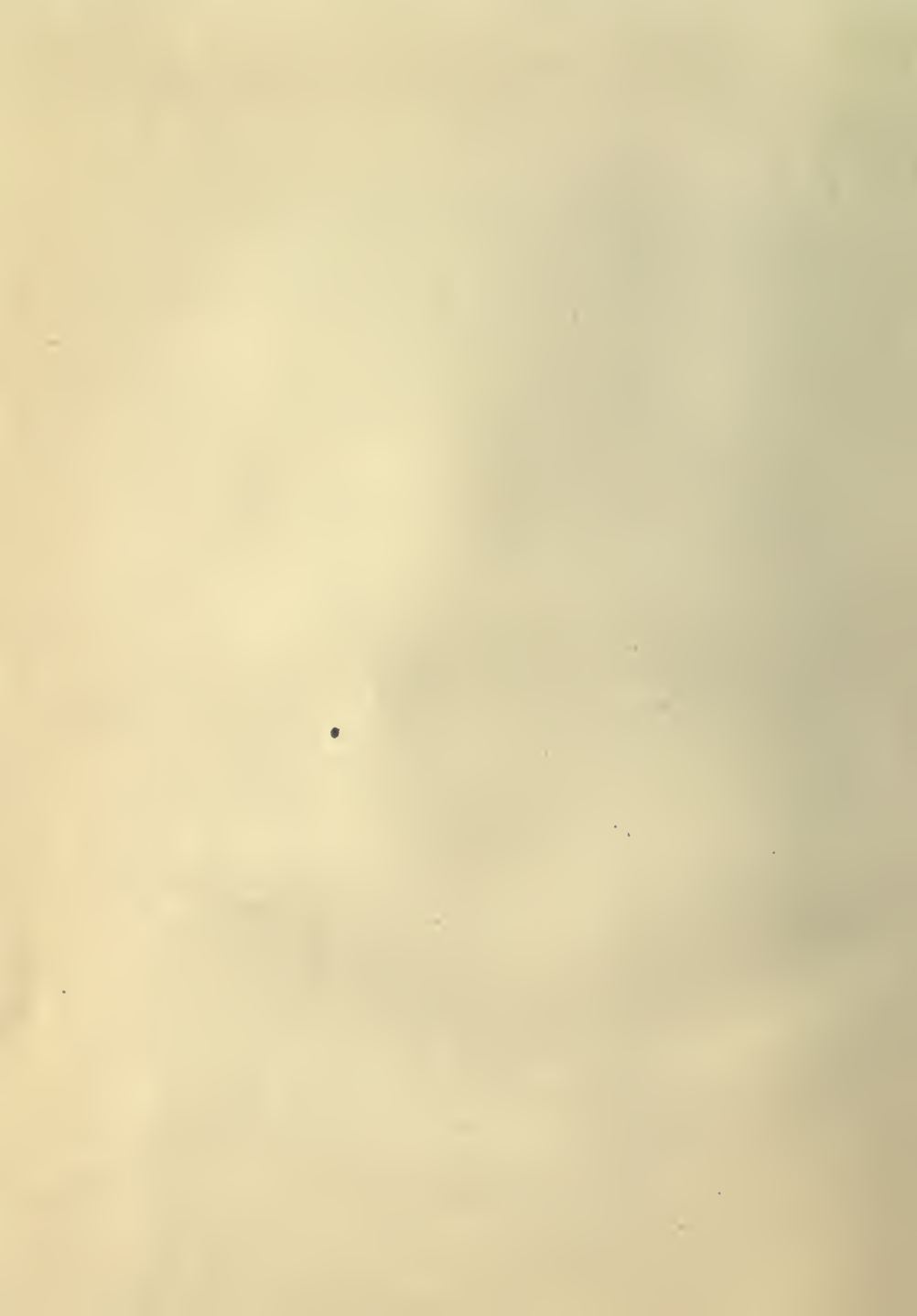
Then Ted nodded over at me, and said: "I believe you have got the champion after all!"

And I was too proud to speak.





"I BELIEVE YOU'VE GOT THE CHAMPION AFTER ALL."





JOCK'S SCHOOL DAYS

AFTER that day no one spoke of "The Rat" or "The Odd Puppy," or used any of the numberless nicknames that they had given him, such as "The Specimen," "The Object," "No. 6," "Bully Beef" (because he got his head stuck in a half-pound tin one day), "The Scrap"; and even "The Duke of Wellington" ceased to be a gibe. They still laughed at his ridiculous dignity; and they loved to tease him to see him stiffen with rage and hear his choky little growls; but they liked his independence and admired his tremendous pluck. So they respected his name when he got one.

And his name was "Jock."

No one bothered about the other puppies' names: they were known as "Billy's pup," "Jimmy's pup," "Old Joe's Darling," "Yellow Jack," and "Bandy-Legged Sue"; but they seemed to think that this little chap had earned his name, fighting his way without anybody's help and with everything against him; so they gave up all the nicknames and spoke of him as "Jock."

Jock got such a good advertisement by his fight with the table-leg that every one took notice of





him now and remarked about what he did; and as he was only a very young puppy, they teased him, fed him, petted him, and did their best to spoil him. He was so young that it did not seem to matter, but I think if he had not been a really good dog at heart he would have been quite spoilt.

He soon began to grow and fill out; and it was then that he taught the other puppies to leave him alone. If they had not interfered with him he might perhaps have left them alone, as it was not his nature to interfere with others; but the trouble was they had bullied him so much while he was weak and helpless that he got used to the idea of fighting for everything. It is probably the best thing that could have happened to Jock that as a puppy he was small and weak, but full of pluck; it compelled him to learn how to fight; it made him clever, cool, and careful, for he could not afford to make mistakes. When he fought he meant business; he went for a good spot, bit hard, and hung on for all he was worth; then, as the enemy began to slacken, he would start vigorously worrying and shaking. I often saw him shake himself off his feet, because the thing he was fighting was too heavy for him.

The day Jock fought the two big puppies—one after the other—for his bone, and beat them off, was the day of his independence; we all saw the tussle, and cheered the little chap. And then for one whole day he had peace; but it was like the pause at low water before the tide begins to flow the other way. He was so used to being interfered with that I suppose



he did not immediately understand they would never tackle him again.

It took a whole day for him to realise this ; but as soon as he did understand it he seemed to make up his mind that now his turn had come, and he went for the first puppy he saw with a bone. He walked up slowly and carefully, and began to make a circle round him. When he got about half-way round the puppy took up the bone and trotted off ; but Jock headed him off at once, and again began to walk towards him very slowly and stiffly. The other puppy stood quite still for a moment, and then Jock's fierce determined look was too much for him : he dropped the bone and bolted.

There was mighty little but smell on those bones, for we gave the puppies very little meat, so when Jock had taken what he could off this one, he started on another hunt. A few yards away Billy's pup was having a glorious time, struggling with a big bone and growling all the while as if he wanted to let the world know that it was as much as any one's life was worth to come near him. None of us thought Jock would tackle him, as Billy's pup was still a long way the biggest and strongest of the puppies, and always ready to bully the others.

Jock was about three or four yards away when he caught sight of Billy's pup, and for about a minute he stood still and quietly watched. At first he seemed surprised, and then interested, and then gradually he stiffened up all over in that funny way of his ; and when the hair on his shoulders was all on end and





his ears and tail were properly up, he moved forward very deliberately. In this fashion he made a circle round Billy's pup, keeping about two feet away from him, walking infinitely slowly and glaring steadily at the enemy out of the corners of his eyes; and while he was doing this, the other fellow was tearing away at his bone, growling furiously and glaring sideways at Jock. When the circle was finished they stood once more face to face; and then after a short pause Jock began to move in closer, but more slowly even than before.

Billy's pup did not like this: it was beginning to look serious. He could not keep on eating and at the same time watch Jock; moreover, there was such a very unpleasant wicked look about Jock, and he moved so steadily and silently forward, that any one would feel a bit creepy and nervous; so he put his paw on the bone and let out a string of snarly barks, with his ears flat on his neck and his tail rather low down. But Jock still came on—a little more carefully and slowly perhaps, but just as steadily as ever. When about a foot off the enemy's nose he changed his direction slightly, as if to walk past, and Billy's pup turned his head to watch him, keeping his nose pointed towards Jock's, but when they got side by side he again looked straight in front of him.

Perhaps he did this to make sure the bone was still there, or perhaps to show his contempt when he thought Jock was going off. Whatever the reason was, it was a mistake; for, as he turned his head away, Jock flew at him, got a good mouthful of ear, and in

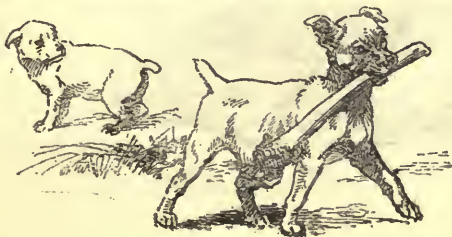


no time they were rolling and struggling in the dust—Jock's little grunts barely audible in the noise made by the other one. Billy's pup was big and strong, and he was not a coward; but Jock was worrying his ear vigorously, and he could not find anything to bite in return. In less than a minute he began to howl, and was making frantic efforts to get away. Then Jock let go the ear and tackled the bone.



After that he had no more puppy fights. As soon as any one of the others saw Jock begin to walk slowly and carefully towards him he seemed to suddenly get tired of his bone, and moved off.

Most dogs—like most people—when their hearts fail them will try to hide the truth from one another and make some sort of effort or pretence to keep their dignity or self-respect or the good opinion of others. You may see it all any day in the street, when dogs meet and stop to 'size' each other up. As a rule the perfectly shameless cowards are found in the two extreme classes—the outcasts, whose spirits are broken by all the world being against them; and the pampered darlings, who have never had to do anything for themselves. Many dogs who are clearly anxious to get out of fighting will make a pretence of bravery at the time, or at least cover up their cowardice, with a 'wait-till-I-catch-you-next-time' air, as soon as they are at a safe distance. Day after day at the out-spans the puppies went through every stage of the business, to our constant amusement and to my unconcealed pride; for Jock was thenceforth cock of the walk. If they saw him some distance off

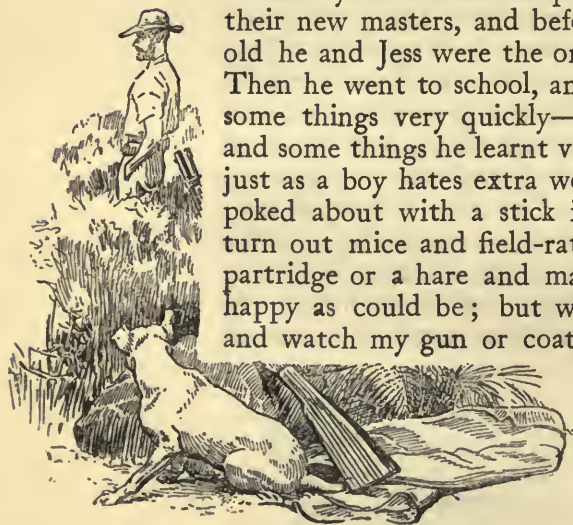




moving towards them or even staring hard and with his ears and tail up, the retreat would be made with a gloomy and dignified air, sometimes even with growls just loud enough to please themselves without provoking him; if he was fairly close up when spotted they wasted no time in putting on airs, but trotted off promptly; but sometimes they would be too busy to notice anything until a growl or a rustle in the grass close behind gave warning; and it was always followed by a jump and a shameless scuttle, very often accompanied by a strangled sort of yowling yelp, just as if he had already got them by the ear or throat.

Some of them became so nervous that we could not resist playing practical jokes on them—making sudden strange noises, imitating Jock's growls, tossing bits of bark at them or touching them from behind with a stick while they were completely occupied with their bones—for the fun of seeing the stampede and hearing the sudden howls of surprise and fright.

One by one the other puppies were taken away by their new masters, and before Jock was three months old he and Jess were the only dogs with the waggons. Then he went to school, and like all schoolboys learnt some things very quickly—the things that he liked; and some things he learnt very slowly, and hated them just as a boy hates extra work in play-time. When I poked about with a stick in the banks of dongas to turn out mice and field-rats for him, or when I hid a partridge or a hare and made him find it, he was as happy as could be; but when I made him lie down and watch my gun or coat while I pretended to go



off and leave him, he did not like it ; and as for his lessons in manners ! well, he simply hated them.

There are some things which a dog in that sort of life simply must learn or you cannot keep him ; and the first of these is, not to steal. Every puppy will help himself until he is taught not to ; and your dog lives with you and can get at everything. At the out-spans the grub-box is put on the ground, open for each man to help himself ; if you make a stew, or roast the leg of a buck, the big three-legged pot is put down handy and left there ; if you are lucky enough to have some tinned butter or condensed milk, the tins are opened and stood on the ground ; and if you have a dog thief in the camp, nothing is safe.

There was a dog with us once—a year or two later—who was the worst thief I ever knew. He was a one-eyed pointer with feet like a duck's, and his name was Snarleyow. He looked the most foolish and most innocent dog in the world, and was so timid that if you stumbled as you passed him he would instantly start howling and run for the horizon. The first bad experience I had of Snarley was on one of the little hunting trips which we sometimes made in those days, away from the waggons. We travelled light on those occasions, and, except for some tea and a very little flour and salt, took no food ; we lived on what we shot and of course kept 'hunter's pot.'

'Hunter's pot' is a perpetual stew ; you make one stew, and keep it going as long as necessary, maintaining a full pot
by adding
to it as fast as you take any out ;



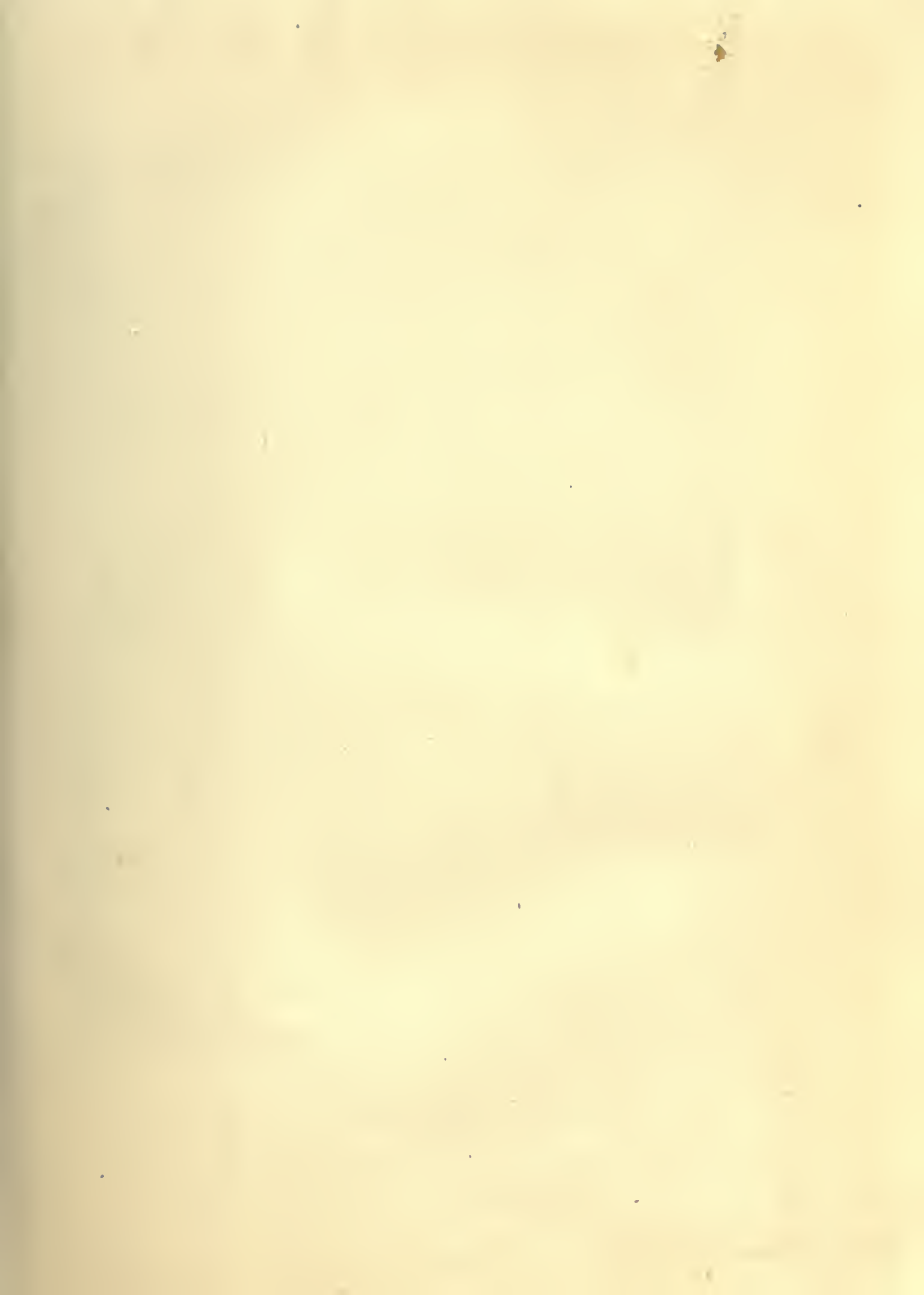


scraps of everything go in ; any kind of meat—buck, bird, pig, hare—and if you have such luxuries as onions or potatoes, so much the better ; then, to make the soup strong, the big bones are added—the old ones being fished out every day and replaced by a fresh lot. When allowed to cool it sets like brawn, and a hungry hunter wants nothing better.

We had had a good feed the first night of this trip and had then filled the pot up leaving it to simmer as long as the fire lasted, expecting to have cold pie set in jelly—but without the pie-crust—for early breakfast next morning before going off for the day ; but, to our amazement, in the morning the pot was empty. There were some strange kaffirs—camp followers—hanging on to our trail for what they could pick up, and we suspected them. There was a great row, but the boys denied having touched the pot, and we could prove nothing.

That night we made the fire close to our sleeping-place and moved the kaffirs further away, but next morning the pot was again empty—cleaned and polished as if it had been washed out. While we, speechless with astonishment and anger, were wondering who the thief was and what we should do with him, one of the hunting boys came up and pointed to the prints of a dog's feet in the soft white ashes of the dead fire. There was only one word : "Snarleyow." The thief was lying fast asleep comfortably curled up on his master's clothes. There could be no mistake about those big







"THE LAST WE SAW OF OUR BIRTHDAY TREAT"

splayed footprints, and in about two minutes Snarleyow was getting a first-class hammering, with his head tied inside the three-legged pot for a lesson.

After that he was kept tied up at night; but Snarleyow was past curing. We had practically nothing to eat but what we shot, and nothing to drink but bush tea—that is, tea made from a certain wild shrub with a very strong scent; it is not nice, but you drink it when you cannot get anything else. We could not afford luxuries then, but two days before Ted's birthday he sent a runner off to Komati Drift and bought a small tin of ground coffee and a tin of condensed milk for his birthday treat. It was to be a real feast that day, so he cut the top off the tin instead of punching two holes and blowing the milk out, as we usually did in order to economise and keep out the dust and insects. What we could not use in the coffee that day we were going to spread on our 'doughboys' instead of butter and jam. It was to be a real feast!

The five of us sat down in a circle and began on our hunter's pot, saving the good things for the last. While we were still busy on the stew, there came a pathetic heartbreaking yowl from Snarleyow, and we looked round just in time to see him, his tail tucked between his legs and his head high in the air, bolting off into the bush as hard as he could lay legs to the ground, with the milk tin stuck firmly on to his nose. The greedy thief in trying to get the last scrap out had dug his nose and top jaw too far in, and the jagged edges of the tin had gripped him; and the last we saw of





our birthday treat was the tin flashing in the sunlight on Snarley's nose as he tore away howling into the bush.

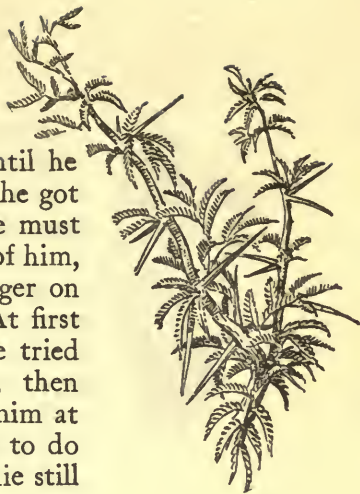
Snarleyow came to a bad end : his master shot him as he was running off with a ham. He was a full-grown dog when he came to our camp, and too old to learn principles and good manners.

Dogs are like people : what they learn when they are young, whether of good or of evil, is not readily forgotten. I began early with Jock, and—remembering what Rocky had said—tried to help him. It is little use punishing a dog for stealing if you take no trouble about feeding him. That is very rough on the dog ; he has to find out slowly and by himself what he may take, and what he may not. Sometimes he leaves what he was meant to take, and goes hungry ; and sometimes takes what was not intended for him, and gets a thrashing. That is not fair. You cannot expect to have a good dog, and one that will understand you, if you treat him in that way. Some men teach their dogs not to take food from any one but themselves. One day when we were talking about training dogs, Ted told one of the others to open Jess's mouth and put a piece of meat in it, he undertaking not to say a word and not even to look at her. The meat was put in her mouth and her jaws were shut tight on it ; but the instant she was free she dropped it, walked round to the other side of Ted and sat close up to him. He waited for a minute or so and, without so much as a glance at her, said quietly "All right." She was back again in a second and with one hungry bite bolted the lump of meat.



I taught Jock not to touch food in camp until he was told to 'take it.' The lesson began when he got his saucer of porridge in the morning; and he must have thought it cruel to have that put in front of him, and then to be held back or tapped with a finger on the nose each time he tried to dive into it. At first he struggled and fought to get at it; then he tried to back away and dodge round the other side; then he became dazed, and, thinking it was not for him at all, wanted to walk off and have nothing more to do with it. In a few days, however, I got him to lie still and take it only when I patted him and pushed him towards it; and in a very little time he got on so well that I could put his food down without saying anything and let him wait for permission. He would lie down with his head on his paws and his nose right up against the saucer, so as to lose no time when the order came; but he would not touch it until he heard 'Take it.' He never moved his head, but his little brown dark eyes, full of childlike eagerness, used to be turned up sideways and fixed on mine. I believe he watched my lips; he was so quick to obey the order when it came.

When he grew up and had learned his lessons there was no need for these exercises. He got to understand me so well that if I nodded or moved my hand in a way that meant 'all right,' he would go ahead: by that time too he was dignified and patient; and it was only in his puppyhood that he used to crouch up close to his food and tremble with impatience and excitement.





There was one lesson that he hated most of all. I used to balance a piece of meat on his nose and make him keep it there until the word to take it came. Time after time he would close his eyes as if the sight of the meat was more than he could bear, and his mouth would water so from the savoury smell that long streams of dribble would hang down on either side.

It seems unnecessary and even cruel to tantalise a dog in that way ; but it was not : it was education ; and it was true kindness. It taught him to understand his master, and to be obedient, patient, and observant ; it taught him not to steal ; it saved him from much sickness, and perhaps death, by teaching him not to feed on anything he could find ; it taught him manners and made it possible for him to live with his master and be treated like a friend.

Good feeding, good care, and plenty of exercise soon began to make a great change in Jock. He ceased to look like a beetle—grew bigger everywhere, not only in one part as he had done at first ; his neck grew thick and strong, and his legs straightened up and filled out with muscle. The others, seeing him every day, were slow to notice these things, but my sand had been changed into gold long ago, and they always said I could not see anything wrong in Jock.

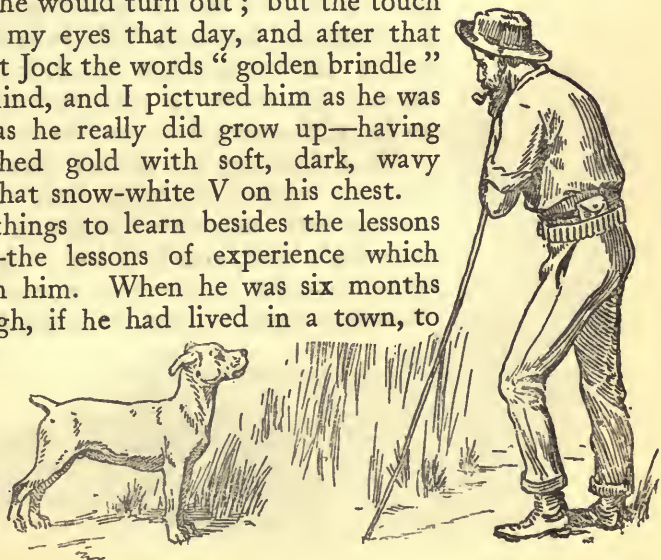
There was one other change which came more slowly and seemed to me much more wonderful. After his morning feed, if there was nothing to do, he used to go to sleep in some shady place, and I remember well one day watching him as he lay. His bit of shade



had moved away and left him in the bright sunshine ; and as he breathed and his ribs rose and fell, the tips of the hairs on his side and back caught the sunlight and shone like polished gold, and the wavy dark lines seemed more distinct and darker, but still very soft. In fact, I was astonished to see that in a certain light Jock looked quite handsome. That was the first time I noticed the change in colour ; and it made me remember two things. The first was what the other fellows had said the day Billy gave up his pup, " You can't tell how a puppy will turn out : even his colour changes " ; and the second was a remark made by an old hunter who had offered to buy Jock—the real meaning of which I did not understand at the time.

" The best dog I ever owned was a golden brindle," said the old man thoughtfully, after I had laughed at the idea of selling my dog. I had got so used to thinking that he was only a faded wishy-washy edition of Jess that the idea of his colour changing did not occur to me then, and I never suspected that the old man could see how he would turn out ; but the touch of sunlight opened my eyes that day, and after that whenever I looked at Jock the words " golden brindle " came back to my mind, and I pictured him as he was going to be—and as he really did grow up—having a coat like burnished gold with soft, dark, wavy brindles in it and that snow-white V on his chest.

Jock had many things to learn besides the lessons he got from me—the lessons of experience which nobody could teach him. When he was six months old—just old enough, if he had lived in a town, to





chase a cat and make a noise—he knew many things that respectable puppies of twice his age who stay at home never get a chance of learning.

On trek there were always new places to see, new roads to travel, and new things to examine, tackle or avoid. He learnt something fresh almost every day: he learnt, for instance, that, although it was shady and cool under the waggon, it was not good enough to lie in the wheel track, not even for the pleasure of feeling the cool iron tyre against your back or head as you slept; and he knew that, because one day he had done it and the wheel had gone over his foot; and it might just as easily have been his back or head. Fortunately the sand was soft and his foot was not crushed; but he was very lame for some days, and had to travel on the waggon.

He learned a good deal from Jess: among other things, that it was not necessary to poke his nose up against a snake in order to find out what it was. He knew that Jess would fight anything; and when one day he saw her back hair go up and watched her sheer off the footpath wide into the grass, he did the same; and then when we had shot the snake, both he and Jess came up very very cautiously and sniffed at it, with every hair on their bodies standing up.

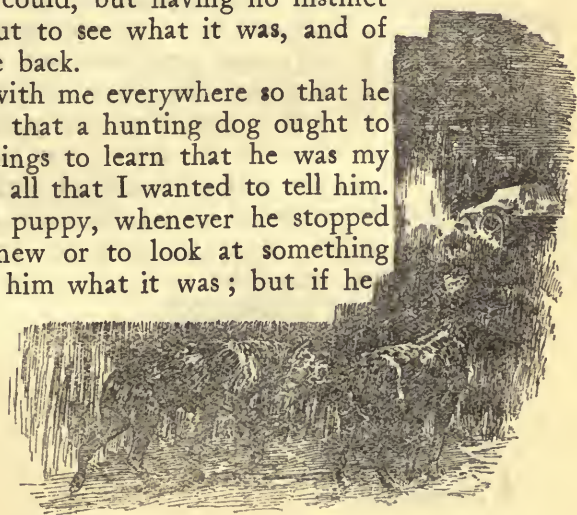
He found out for himself that it was not a good idea to turn a scorpion over with his paw. The vicious little tail with a thorn in it whipped over the scorpion's back, and Jock had such a foot that he must have thought a scorpion worse than two waggons. He was a very sick dog for some days; but after that,



whenever he saw a thing that he did not understand, he would watch it very carefully from a little way off and notice what it did and what it looked like, before trying experiments.

So, little by little, Jock got to understand plenty of things that no town dog would ever know, and he got to know—just as some people do—by what we call instinct, whether a thing was dangerous or safe, even though he had never seen anything like it before. That is how he knew that wolves or lions were about—and that they were dangerous—when he heard or scented them; although he had never seen, scented or heard one before to know what sort of animal it might be. You may well wonder how he could tell whether the scent or the cry belonged to a wolf which he must avoid, or to a buck which he might hunt, when he had never seen either a wolf or a buck at the time; but he did know; and he also knew that no dog could safely go outside the ring of the camp fires when wolf or lion was about. I have known many town-bred dogs that could scent them just as well as Jess or Jock could, but having no instinct of danger they went out to see what it was, and of course they never came back.

I used to take Jock with me everywhere so that he could learn everything that a hunting dog ought to know, and above all things to learn that he was my dog, and to understand all that I wanted to tell him. So while he was still a puppy, whenever he stopped to sniff at something new or to look at something strange, I would show him what it was; but if he

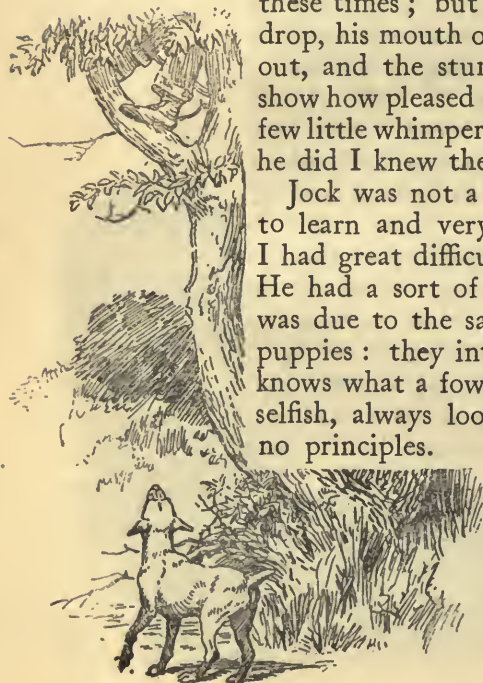




stayed behind to explore while I moved on, or if he fell asleep and did not hear me get up from where I had sat down to rest, or went off the track on his own account, I used to hide away from him on top of a rock or up a tree and let him hunt about until he found me.

At first he used to be quite excited when he missed me, but after a little time he got to know what to do and would sniff along the ground and canter away after me—always finding me quite easily. Even if I climbed a tree to hide from him he would follow my track to the foot of the tree, sniff up the trunk as far as he could reach standing up against it, and then peer up into the branches. If he could not see me from one place, he would try another—always with his head tilted a bit on one side. He never barked at these times ; but as soon as he saw me, his ears would drop, his mouth open wide with the red tongue lolling out, and the stump of a tail would twiggle away to show how pleased he was. Sometimes he would give a few little whimpery grunts: he hardly ever barked; when he did I knew there was something worth looking at.

Jock was not a quarrelsome dog, and he was quick to learn and very obedient, but in one connection I had great difficulty with him for quite a little time. He had a sort of private war with the fowls; and it was due to the same cause as his war with the other puppies: they interfered with him. Now, every one knows what a fowl is like: it is impudent, inquisitive, selfish, always looking for something to eat, and has no principles.



A friend of mine once told me a story about a dog of his and the trouble he had with fowls. Several of us had been discussing the characters of dogs, and the different emotions they feel and manage to express, and the kind of things they seem to think about. Every one knows that a dog can feel angry, frightened, pleased, and disappointed. Any one who knows dogs will tell you that they can also feel anxious, hopeful, nervous, inquisitive, surprised, ashamed, interested, sad, loving, jealous, and contented—just like human beings.



We had told many stories illustrating this, when my friend asked the question : "Have dogs a sense of humour?" Now I know that Jock looked very foolish the day he fought the table-leg—and a silly old hen made him look just as foolish another day—but that is not quite what my friend meant. On both occasions Jock clearly felt that he had made himself look ridiculous; but he was very far from looking amused. The question was : Is a dog capable of sufficient thinking to appreciate a simple joke, and is it possible for a dog to feel amused. If Jess had seen Jock bursting to fight the table-leg would she have seen the joke? Well, I certainly did not think so; but he said he was quite certain some dogs have a sense of humour; and he had had proof of it.

He told the story very gravely, but I really do not even now know whether he—Well, here it is: He had once owned a savage old watch-dog, whose box stood in the back-yard where he was kept chained up

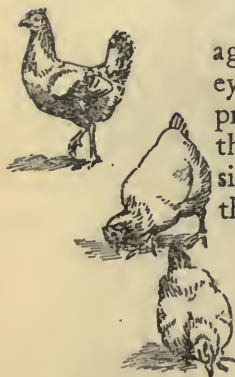




all day ; he used to be fed once a day—in the mornings—and the great plague of his life was the fowls. They ran loose in the yard and picked up food all day, besides getting a really good feed of grain morning and evening ; possibly the knowledge of this made the old dog particularly angry when they would come round by ones or twos or dozens trying to steal part of his one meal. Anyhow, he hated them, and whenever he got a chance killed them. The old fowls learned to keep out of his way and never ventured within his reach unless they were quite sure that he was asleep or lying in his kennel where he could not see them ; but there were always new fowls coming, or young ones growing up ; and so the war went on.

One Sunday morning my friend was enjoying a smoke on his back stoep when feeding time came round. The cook took the old dog's food to him in a high three-legged pot, and my friend, seeing the fowls begin to gather round and wishing to let the old dog have his meal in peace, told the cook to give the fowls a good feed in another part of the yard to draw them off. So the old fellow polished off his food and licked the pot clean, leaving not a drop or a speck behind.

But fowls are very greedy ; they were soon back again wandering about, with their active-looking eyes searching everything. The old dog, feeling pretty satisfied with life, picked out a sandy spot in the sunshine, threw himself down full stretch on his side, and promptly went to sleep—at peace with all the world. Immediately he did this, out stepped a

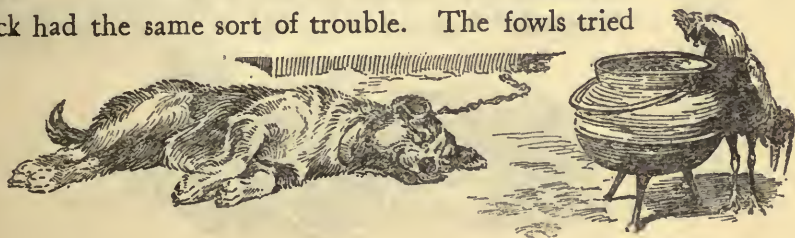


long-legged athletic-looking young cockerel and began to advance against the enemy. As he got nearer he slowed down, and looked first with one eye and then with the other so as to make sure that all was safe, and several times he paused with one foot poised high before deciding to take the next step. My friend was greatly amused to see all the trouble that the fowl was taking to get up to the empty pot, and, for the fun of giving the conceited young cockerel a fright, threw a pebble at him. He was so nervous that when the pebble dropped near him, he gave one great bound and tore off flapping and screaming down the yard as if he thought the old dog was after him. The old fellow himself was startled out of his sleep, and raised his head to see what the row was about ; but, as nothing more happened, he lay down again, and the cockerel, finding also that it was a false alarm, turned back not a bit ashamed for another try.



The cockerel had not seen the old dog lift his head ; my friend had, and when he looked again he saw that, although the underneath eye—half buried in the sand—was shut, the top eye was open and was steadily watching the cockerel as he came nearer and nearer to the pot. My friend sat dead still, expecting a rush and another fluttering scramble. At last the cockerel took the final step, craned his neck to its utmost and peered down into the empty pot. The old dog gave two gentle pats with his tail in the sand, and closing his eye went to sleep again.

Jock had the same sort of trouble. The fowls tried



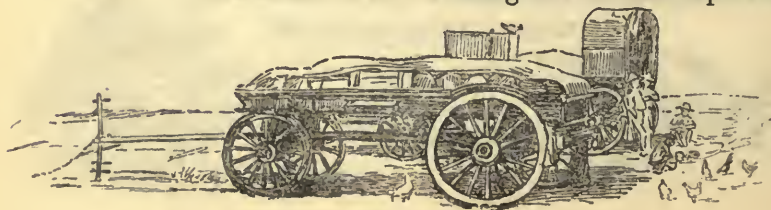


to steal his food ; and he would not stand it. His way of dealing with them was not good for their health : before I could teach him not to kill, and before the fowls would learn not to steal, he had finished half a dozen of them one after another with just one bite and a shake. He would growl very low as they came up and, without lifting his head from the plate, watch them with his little eyes turning from soft brown to shiny black ; and when they came too near and tried to snatch just one mouthful—well, one jump, one shake, and it was all over.

In the end he learned to tumble them over and scare their wits out without hurting them ; and they learned to give him a very wide berth.

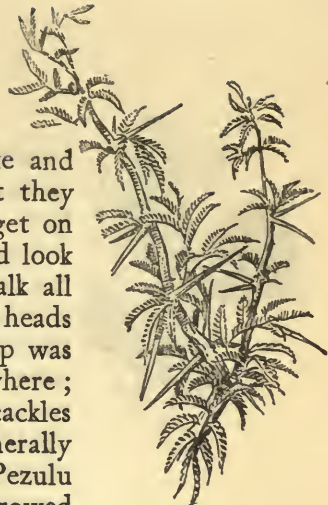
I used always to keep some fowls with the waggons, partly to have fresh meat if we ran out of game, but mainly to have fresh eggs, which were a very great treat ; and as a rule it was only when a hen turned obstinate and would not lay that we ate her. I used to have one old rooster, whose name was Pezulu, and six or eight hens. The hens changed from time to time—as we ate them—but Pezulu remained.

The fowl-coop was carried on top of everything else, and it was always left open so that the fowls could go in and out as they liked. In the very beginning of all, of course, the fowls were shut in and fed in the coop for a day or two to teach them where their home was ; but it is surprising how quickly a fowl will learn and how it observes things. For instance, the moving of the coop from one waggon to another is not a thing one would expect the fowls



to notice, all the waggons being so much alike and having no regular order at the outspans; but they did notice it, and at once. They would first get on to the waggon on which the coop had been, and look about in a puzzled lost kind of way; then walk all over the load apparently searching for it, with heads cocked this way and that, as if a great big coop was a thing that might have been mislaid somewhere; then one after another would jerk out short cackles of protest, indignation and astonishment, and generally make no end of a fuss. It was only when old Pezulu led the way and perched on the coop itself and crowed and called to them that they would get up on to the other waggon.

Pezulu got his name by accident—in fact, by a misunderstanding. It is a Zulu word meaning ‘up’ or ‘on top,’ and when the fowls first joined the waggons and were allowed to wander about at the outspan places, the boys would drive them up when it was time to trek again by cracking their big whips and shouting “Pezulu.” In a few days no driving or whip-cracking was necessary; one of the boys would shout “Pezulu” three or four times, and they would all come in and one by one fly and scramble up to the coop. One day, after we had got a new lot of hens, a stranger happened to witness the performance. Old Pezulu was the only one who knew what was meant, and being a terribly fussy nervous old gentleman, came tearing out of the bush making a lot of noise, and scrambled hastily on to the waggon. The stranger, hearing the boys call “Pezulu” and seeing





him hurry up so promptly, remarked : " How well he knows his name ! " So we called him Pezulu after that.

Whenever we got new fowls Pezulu became as distracted as a nervous man with a large family trying to find seats in an excursion train. As soon as he saw the oxen being brought up, and before any one had called for the fowls, he would begin fussing and fuming—trying all sorts of dodges to get the hens up to the waggons. He would crow and cluck-cluck or kip-kip ; he would go a few yards towards the waggons and scratch in the ground, pretending to have found something good, and invite them to come and share it ; he would get on the disselboom and crow and flap his wings loudly ; and finally he would mount on top of the coop and make all sorts of signals to the hens, who took not the least notice of him. As the inspanning went on he would get more and more excited ; down he would come again—not flying off, but hopping from ledge to ledge to show them the easy way ; and once more on the ground he would scrape and pick and cluck to attract them, and the whole game would be played over again and again. So even with new fowls we had very little trouble, as old Pezulu did most of the teaching.

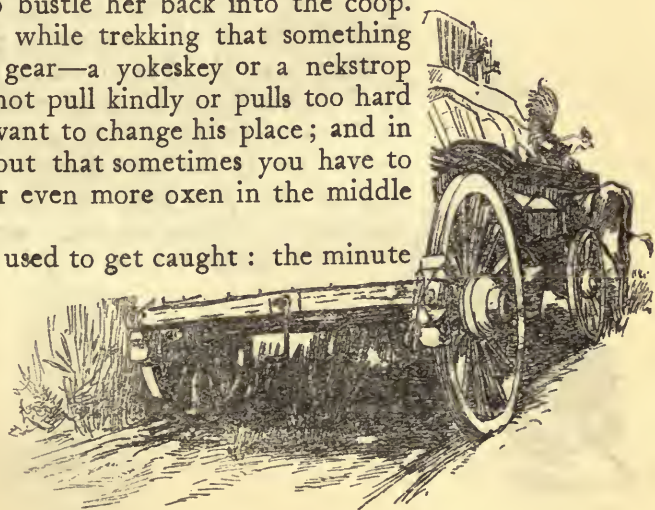
But sometimes Pezulu himself was caught napping—to the high delight of the boys. He was so nervous and so fussy that they thought it great fun to play tricks on him and pretend to go off and leave him behind. It was not easy to do this because, as I say, he did not wait to be called, but got ready the minute



he saw the oxen coming up. He was like those fussy people who drive every one else crazy and waste a lot of time by always being half an hour early, and then annoy you by boasting that they have never missed a train in their lives.

But there was one way in which Pezulu used to get caught. Just as he knew that inspanning meant starting, so, too, he knew that outspanning meant stopping; and whenever the waggons stopped—even for a few minutes—out would pop his head, just like the fussy red-faced father of the big family looking out to see if it was their station or an accident on the line. Right and left he would look, giving excited inquisitive clucks from time to time, and if they did not start in another minute or two, he would get right out and walk anxiously to the edge of the load and have another good look around—as the nervous old gentleman gets half out, and then right out, to look for the guard, but will not let go the handle of the door for fear of being left. Unless he saw the boys outspanning he would not get off, and if one of the hens ventured out he would rush back at her in a great state and try to bustle her back into the coop. But often it happens while trekking that something goes wrong with the gear—a yokeskey or a neckstrop breaks, or an ox will not pull kindly or pulls too hard where he is, and you want to change his place; and in that way it comes about that sometimes you have to outspan one or two or even more oxen in the middle of a trek.

That is how Pezulu used to get caught : the minute





he saw outspanning begin, he would nip off with all the hens following him and wander about looking for food, chasing locusts or grasshoppers, and making darts at beetles and all sorts of dainties—very much interested in his job and wandering further from the waggons at every step. The boys would watch him, and as soon as they were fixed up again, would start off without a word of warning to Pezulu. Then there was a scene. At the first sound of the waggon-wheels moving he would look up from where he was or walk briskly into the open or get on to an ant-heap to see what was up, and when to his horror he saw the waggon actually going without him, he simply screamed open-mouthed and tore along with wings outstretched—the old gentleman shouting “Stop the train, stop the train,” with his family straggling along behind him. It never took him long to catch up and scramble on, but even then he was not a bit less excited : he was perfectly hysterical, and his big red comb seemed to get quite purple as if he might be going to have apoplexy, and he twitched and jerked about so that it flapped first over one eye and then over the other. This was the boys’ practical joke which they played on him whenever they could.

That was old Pezulu—Pezulu the First. He was thick in the body, all chest and tail, short in the legs, and had enormous spurs ; and his big comb made him look so red in the face that one could not help thinking he was too fond of his dinner. In some old Christmas number we came across a coloured caricature of a militia colonel in full uniform, and for quite



a long time it remained tacked on to the coop with "Pezulu" written on it.

Pezulu the Great—who was Pezulu the Second—was not like that: he was a game cock, all muscle and no frills, with a very resolute manner and a real love of his profession; he was a bit like Jock in some things; and that is why I fancy perhaps Jock and he were friends in a kind of way. But Jock could not get on with the others: they were constantly changing; new ones who had to be taught manners were always coming; so he just lumped them together, and hated fowls. He taught them manners, but they taught him something too—at any rate, one of them did; and one of the biggest surprises and best lessons Jock ever had was given him by a hen while he was still a growing-up puppy.

He was beginning to fancy that he knew a good deal, and like most young dogs was very inquisitive and wanted to know everything and at once. At that time he was very keen on hunting mice, rats and bush squirrels, and had even fought and killed a meerkat after the plucky little rikkitikki had bitten him rather badly through the lip; and he was still much inclined to poke his nose in or rush on to things instead of sniffing round about first.

However, he learned to be careful, and an old hen helped to teach him. The hens usually laid their eggs in the coop because it was their home, but sometimes they would make nests in the bush at the outspan places. One of the hens had done this, and the bush she had chosen was very low and dense. No one saw





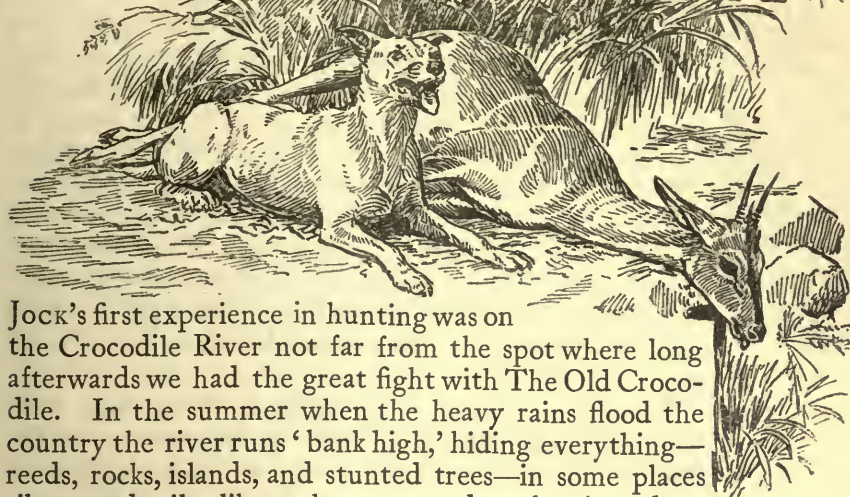
the hen make the nest and no one saw her sitting on it, for the sunshine was so bright everywhere else, and the shade of the bush so dark that it was impossible to see anything there; but while we were at breakfast Jock, who was bustling about everywhere as a puppy will, must have scented the hen or have seen this brown thing in the dark shady hole.

The hen was sitting with her head sunk right down into her chest, so that he could not see any head, eyes or beak—just a sort of brown lump. Suddenly we saw Jock stand stock-still, cock up one ear, put his head down and his nose out, hump up his shoulders a bit and begin to walk very slowly forward in a crouching attitude. He lifted his feet so slowly and so softly that you could count five between each step. We were all greatly amused and thought he was pointing a mouse or a locust, and we watched him.

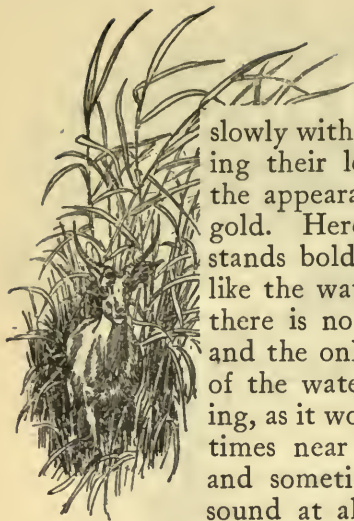
He crept up like a boy 'showing off' until he was only six inches from the object, giving occasional cautious glances back at us to attract attention. Just as he got to the hole the hen let out a vicious peck on the top of his nose and at the same time flapped over his head, screaming and cackling for dear life. It was all so sudden and so surprising that she was gone before he could think of making a grab at her; and when he heard our shouts of laughter he looked as foolish as if he understood all about it.



THE FIRST HUNT



Jock's first experience in hunting was on the Crocodile River not far from the spot where long afterwards we had the great fight with The Old Crocodile. In the summer when the heavy rains flood the country the river runs 'bank high,' hiding everything—reeds, rocks, islands, and stunted trees—in some places silent and oily like a huge gorged snake, in others foaming and turbulent as an angry monster. In the rainless winter when the water is low and clear the scene is not so grand, but is quiet, peaceful, and much more beautiful. There is an infinite variety in it then—the river sometimes winding along in one deep channel, but more often forking out into two or three streams in the broad bed. The loops and lacings of the divided water carve out islands and spaces of all shapes and sizes, banks of clean white sand or of firm damp mud swirled up by the floods, on which tall green reeds with yellow tasselled tops shoot up like crops of Kaffir corn. Looked down upon from the flood banks the silver streaks of water gleam brightly in the sun, and the graceful reeds, bowing and swaying



slowly with the gentlest breeze and alternately showing their leaf-sheathed stems and crested tops, give the appearance of an ever-changing sea of green and gold. Here and there a big rock, black and polished, stands boldly out, and the sea of reeds laps round it like the waters of a lake on a bright still day. When there is no breeze the rustle of the reeds is hushed, and the only constant sound is the ever-varying voice of the water, lapping, gurgling, chattering, murmuring, as it works its way along the rocky channels; sometimes near and loud, sometimes faint and distant; and sometimes, over long sandy reaches, there is no sound at all.

Get up on some vantage point upon the high bank and look down there one day in the winter of the tropics as the heat and hush of noon approach, and it will seem indeed a scene of peace and beauty—a place to rest and dream, where there is neither stir nor sound. Then, as you sit silently watching and thinking, where all the world is so infinitely still, you will notice that one reed down among all those countless thousands is moving. It bows slowly and gracefully a certain distance, and then with a quivering shuddering motion straightens itself still more slowly and with evident difficulty, until at last it stands upright again like the rest but still all a-quiver while they do not move a leaf. Just as you are beginning to wonder what the reason is, the reed bows slowly again, and again struggles back; and so it goes on as regularly as the swing of a pendulum. Then you know that, down at the roots where you cannot see it, the water is flowing silently, and that something

attached to this reed is dragging in the stream and pulling it over, and swinging back to do it again each time the reed lifts it free—a perpetual see-saw.

You are glad to find the reason, because it looked a little uncanny ; but the behaviour of that one reed has stopped your dreaming and made you look about more carefully. Then you find that, although the reeds appear as still as the rocks, there is hardly a spot where, if you watch for a few minutes, you will not see something moving. A tiny field-mouse climbing one reed will sway it over ; a river rat gnawing at the roots will make it shiver and rustle ; little birds hopping from one to another will puzzle you ; and a lagavaan turning in his sunbath will make half a dozen sway outwards.

All feeling that it is a home of peace, a place to rest and dream, leaves you ; you are wondering what goes on down below the green and gold where you can see nothing ; and when your eye catches a bigger, slower, continuous movement in another place, and for twenty yards from the bank to the stream you see the tops of the reeds silently and gently parting and closing again as something down below works its way along without the faintest sound, the place seems too quiet, too uncanny and mysterious, too silent, stealthy and treacherous for you to sit still in comfort : you must get up and do something.

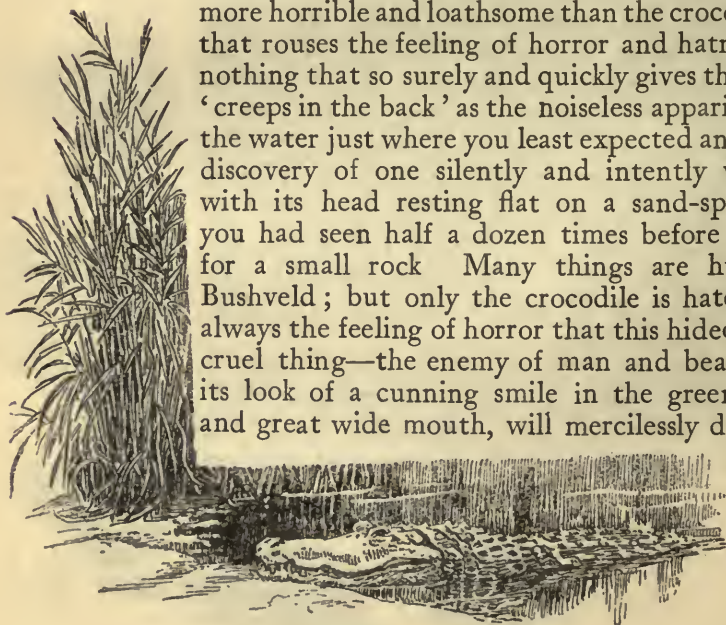
There is always good shooting along the rivers in a country where water is scarce. Partridges, bush-pheasants and stembuck were plentiful along the banks and among the thorns, but the reeds themselves





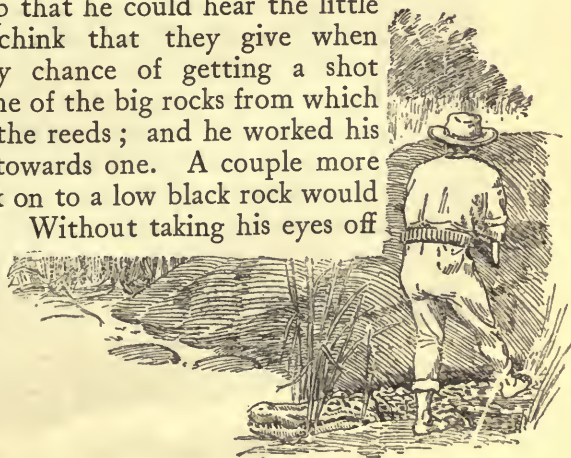
were the home of thousands of guinea-fowl, and you could also count on duiker and rietbuck as almost a certainty there. If this were all, it would be like shooting in a well-stocked cover, but it is not only man that is on the watch for game at the drinking-places. The beasts of prey—lions, tigers, hyenas, wild dogs and jackals, and lastly pythons and crocodiles—know that the game must come to water, and they lie in wait near the tracks or the drinking-places. That is what makes the mystery and charm of the reeds; you never know what you will put up. The lions and tigers had deserted the country near the main drifts and followed the big game into more peaceful parts; but the reeds were still the favourite shelter and resting-place of the crocodiles; and there were any number of them left.

There is nothing that one comes across in hunting more horrible and loathsome than the crocodile: nothing that rouses the feeling of horror and hatred as it does: nothing that so surely and quickly gives the sensation of 'creeps in the back' as the noiseless apparition of one in the water just where you least expected anything, or the discovery of one silently and intently watching you with its head resting flat on a sand-spit—the thing you had seen half a dozen times before and mistaken for a small rock. Many things are hunted in the Bushveld; but only the crocodile is hated. There is always the feeling of horror that this hideous, cowardly, cruel thing—the enemy of man and beast alike—with its look of a cunning smile in the greeny glassy eyes and great wide mouth, will mercilessly drag you down



—down—down to the bottom of some deep still pool, and hold you there till you drown. Utterly helpless yourself to escape or fight, you cannot even call, and if you could, no one could help you there. It is all done in silence : a few bubbles come up where a man went down ; and that is the end of it.

We all knew about the crocodiles and were prepared for them, but the sport was good, and when you are fresh at the game and get interested in a hunt it is not very easy to remember all the things you have been warned about and the precautions you were told to take. It was on the first day at the river that one of our party, who was not a very old hand at hunting, came in wet and muddy and told us how a crocodile had scared the wits out of him. He had gone out after guinea-fowl, he said, but as he had no dog to send in and flush them, the birds simply played with him : they would not rise but kept running in the reeds a little way in front of him, just out of sight. He could hear them quite distinctly, and thinking to steal a march on them took off his boots and got on to the rocks. Stepping bare-footed from rock to rock where the reeds were thin, he made no noise at all and got so close up that he could hear the little whispered chink-chink-chink that they give when near danger. The only chance of getting a shot at them was to mount one of the big rocks from which he could see down into the reeds ; and he worked his way along a mud-bank towards one. A couple more steps from the mud-bank on to a low black rock would take him to the big one. Without taking his eyes off

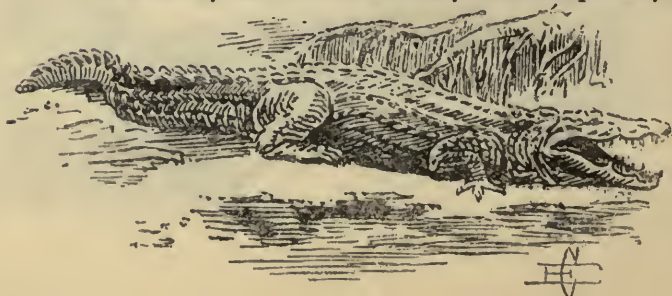




the reeds where the guinea-fowl were he stepped cautiously on to the low black rock, and in an instant was swept off his feet, tossed and tumbled over and over, into the mud and reeds, and there was a noise of furious rushing and crashing as if a troop of elephants were stampeding through the reeds. He had stepped on the back of a sleeping crocodile; no doubt it was every bit as frightened as he was. There was much laughter over this and the breathless earnestness with which he told the story; but there was also a good deal of chaff, for it seems to be generally accepted that you are not bound to believe all hunting stories; and Jim and his circus crocodile became the joke of the camp.

We were spending a couple of days on the river bank to make the most of the good water and grazing, and all through the day some one or other would be out pottering about among the reeds, gun in hand, to keep the pot full and have some fun, and although we laughed and chaffed about Jim's experience, I fancy we were all very much on the look-out for rocks that looked like crocs and crocs that looked like rocks.

One of the most difficult lessons that a beginner has to learn is to keep cool. The keener you are the more likely you are to get excited and the more bitterly you feel the disappointments; and once you lose your head, there is no mistake too stupid for you to make, and the result is another good chance spoilt. The great silent bush is so lonely; the strain of being on the look-out all the time is so great; the uncertainty as to what may start up—anything from





JIM'S CIRCUS CROCODILE

a partridge to a lion—is so trying that the beginner is wound up like an alarm clock and goes off at the first touch. He is not fit to hit a haystack at twenty yards; will fire without looking or aiming at all; jerk the rifle as he fires; forget to change the sight after the last shot; forget to cock his gun or move the safety catch; forget to load; forget to fire at all: nothing is impossible—nothing too silly.

On a later trip we had with us a man who was out for the first time, and when we came upon a troop of koodoo he started yelling, war-whooping and swearing at them, chasing them on foot and waving his rifle over his head. When we asked him why he, who was nearest to them, had not fired a shot, all he could say was that he never remembered his rifle or anything else until they were gone.

These experiences had been mine, some of them many times, in spite of Rocky's example and advice; and they were always followed by a fresh stock of good resolutions.

I had started out this day with the same old determination to keep cool, but, once into the reeds, Jim's account of how he had stepped on the crocodile put all other thoughts out of my mind, and most of my attention was given to examining suspicious-looking rocks as we stole silently and quietly along.

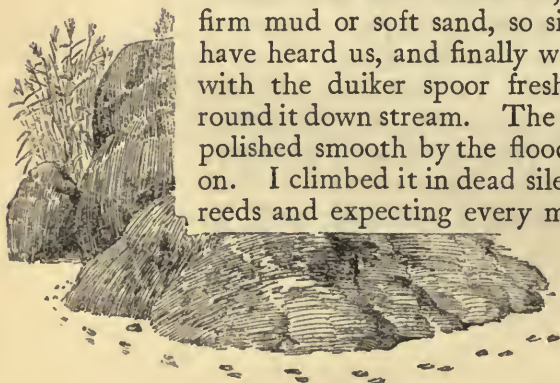
Jock was with me, as usual; I always took him out even then—not for hunting, because he was too young, but in order to train him. He was still only a puppy, about six months old, as well as I remember, and had never tackled or even followed a wounded buck, so





that it was impossible to say what he would do ; he had seen me shoot a couple and had wanted to worry them as they fell ; but that was all. He was quite obedient and kept his place behind me ; and, although he trembled with excitement when he saw or heard anything, he never rushed in or moved ahead of me without permission. The guinea-fowl tormented him that day ; he could scent and hear them, and was constantly making little runs forward, half crouching and with his nose back and tail dead level and his one ear full-cocked and the other half-up.

For about half an hour we went on in this way. There was plenty of fresh duiker spoor to show us that we were in a likely place, one spoor in particular being so fresh in the mud that it seemed only a few minutes old. We were following this one very eagerly but very cautiously, and evidently Jock agreed with me that the duiker must be near, for he took no more notice of the guinea-fowl ; and I for my part forgot all about crocodiles and suspicious-looking rocks ; there was at that moment only one thing in the world for me, and that was the duiker. We crept along noiselessly in and out of the reeds, round rocks and mudholes, across small stretches of firm mud or soft sand, so silently that nothing could have heard us, and finally we came to a very big rock, with the duiker spoor fresher than ever going close round it down stream. The rock was a long sloping one, polished smooth by the floods and very slippery to walk on. I climbed it in dead silence, peering down into the reeds and expecting every moment to see the duiker.

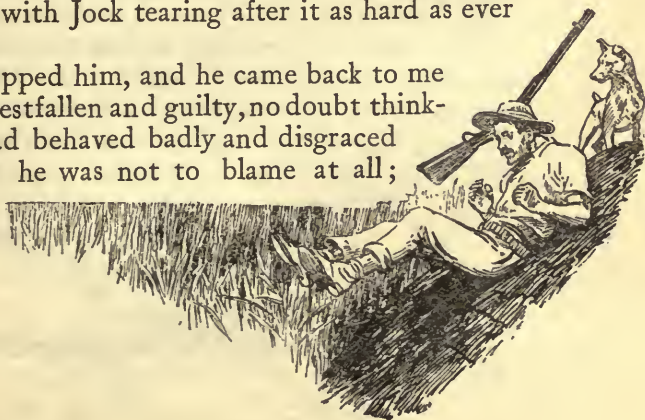


The slope up which we crept was long and easy, but that on the down-stream side was much steeper. I crawled up to the top on hands and knees, and raising myself slowly, looked carefully about, but no duiker could be seen; yet Jock was sniffing and trembling more than ever, and it was quite clear that he thought we were very close up. Seeing nothing in front or on either side, I stood right up and turned to look back the way we had come and examine the reeds on that side. In doing so a few grains of grit crunched under my foot, and instantly there was a rush in the reeds behind me; I jumped round to face it, believing that the crocodile was grabbing at me from behind, and on the polished surface of the rock my feet slipped and shot from under me, both bare elbows bumped hard on the rock, jerking the rifle out of my hands; and I was launched like a torpedo right into the mass of swaying reeds.



When you think you are tumbling on to a crocodile there is only one thing you want to do—get out as soon as possible. How long it took to reach the top of the rock again, goodness only knows! It seemed like a life-time; but the fact is I was out of those reeds and up that rock in time to see the duiker as it broke out of the reeds, raced up the bank, and disappeared into the bush with Jock tearing after it as hard as ever he could go.

One call stopped him, and he came back to me looking very crestfallen and guilty, no doubt thinking that he had behaved badly and disgraced himself. But he was not to blame at all;





he had known all along that the duiker was there—having had no distracting fancies about crocodiles—and when he saw it dash off and his master instantly jump in after it, he must have thought that the hunt had at last begun and that he was expected to help.

After all that row and excitement there was not much use in trying for anything more in the reeds—and indeed I had had quite enough of them for one afternoon; so we wandered along the upper banks in the hope of finding something where there were no crocodiles, and it was not long before we were interested in something else and able to forget all about the duiker.

Before we had been walking many minutes, Jock raised his head and ears and then lowered himself into a half-crouching attitude and made a little run forward. I looked promptly in the direction he was pointing and about two hundred yards away saw a stembuck standing in the shade of a mimosa bush feeding briskly on the buffalo grass. It was so small and in such bad light that the shot was too difficult for me at that distance, and I crawled along behind bushes, ant-heaps and trees until we were close enough for anything. The ground was soft and sandy, and we could get along easily enough without making any noise; but all the time, whilst thinking how lucky it was to be on ground so soft for the hands and knees, and so easy to move on without being heard, something else was happening. With eyes fixed on the buck I did not notice that in crawling along on all-fours,



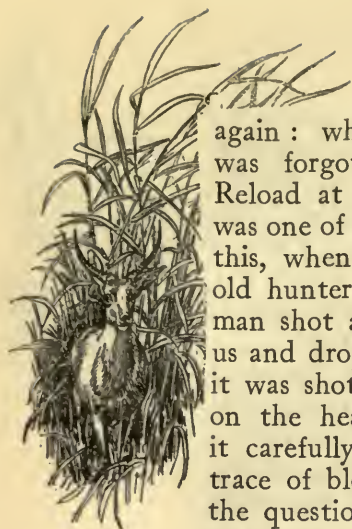
the muzzle of the rifle dipped regularly into the sand, picking up a little in the barrel each time. There was not enough to burst the rifle, but the effect was surprising. Following on a painfully careful aim, there was a deafening report that made my head reel and buzz; the kick of the rifle on the shoulder and cheek left me blue for days; and when my eyes were clear enough to see anything the stembuck had disappeared.

I was too disgusted to move, and sat in the sand rubbing my shoulder and thanking my stars that the rifle had not burst. There was plenty to think about, to be sure, and no hurry to do anything else, for the noise of the shot must have startled every living thing for a mile round.

It is not always easy to tell the direction from which a report comes when you are near a river or in broken country or patchy bush; and it is not an uncommon thing to find that a shot which has frightened one animal away from you has startled another and driven it towards you; and that is what happened in this case. As I sat in the shade of the thorns with the loaded rifle across my knees there was the faint sound of a buck cantering along in the sand; I looked up; and only about twenty yards from me a duiker came to a stop, half fronting me. There it stood looking back over its shoulder and listening intently, evidently thinking that the danger lay behind it. It was hardly possible to miss that; and as the duiker rolled over, I dropped my rifle and ran to make sure of it.

Of course, it was dead against the rules to leave the rifle behind; but it was simply a case of excitement





again : when the buck rolled over everything else was forgotten ! I knew the rule perfectly well—Reload at once and never part with your gun. It was one of Rocky's lessons, and only a few weeks before this, when out for an afternoon's shooting with an old hunter, the lesson had been repeated. The old man shot a rietbuck ram, and as it had been facing us and dropped without a kick we both thought that it was shot through the brain. There was no mark on the head, however, and although we examined it carefully, we failed to find the bullet-mark or a trace of blood ; so we put our rifles down to settle the question by skinning the buck. After sawing at the neck for half a minute, however, the old man found his knife too blunt to make an opening, and we both hunted about for a stone to sharpen it on, and while we were fossicking about in the grass there was a noise behind, and looking sharply round we saw the buck scramble to its feet and scamper off before we had time to move. The bullet must have touched one of its horns and stunned it. My companion was too old a hunter to get excited, and while I ran for the rifles and wanted to chase the buck on foot he stood quite still, gently rubbing the knife on the stone he had picked up. Looking at me under bushy eyebrows and smiling philosophically, he said :

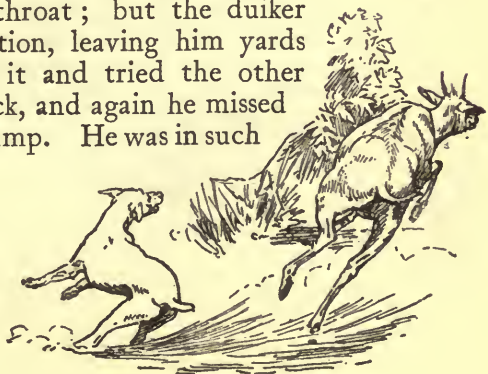
“That's something for you to remember, Boy. It's my belief if you lived for ever there'd always be something to learn at this game.”

Unfortunately I did not remember when it would have been useful. As I ran forward the duiker

tumbled, struggled and rolled over and over, then got up and made a dash, only to dive head foremost into the sand and somersault over; but in a second it was up again and racing off, again to trip and plunge forward on to its chest with its nose outstretched sliding along the soft ground. The bullet had struck it in the shoulder, and the broken leg was tripping it and bringing it down; but, in far less time than it takes to tell it, the little fellow found out what was wrong, and scrambling once more to its feet was off on three legs at a pace that left me far behind. Jock, remembering the mistake in the reeds, kept his place behind, and I in the excitement of the moment neither saw nor thought of him until the duiker, gaining at every jump, looked like vanishing for ever. Then I remembered and, with a frantic wave of my hand, shouted, "After him, Jock."

He was gone before my hand was down, and faster than I had ever seen him move, leaving me ploughing through the heavy sand far behind. Past the big bush I saw them again, and there the duiker did as wounded game so often do: taking advantage of cover it changed direction and turned away for some dense thorns. But that suited Jock exactly; he took the short cut across to head it off and was close up in a few more strides. He caught up to it, raced up beside it, and made a jump at its throat; but the duiker darted away in a fresh direction, leaving him yards behind. Again he was after it and tried the other side; but the buck was too quick, and again he missed and overshot the mark in his jump. He was in such

III





deadly earnest he seemed to turn in the air to get back again and once more was close up—so close that the flying heels of the buck seemed to pass each side of his ears ; then he made his spring from behind, catching the duiker high up on one hind leg, and the two rolled over together, kicking and struggling in a cloud of dust. Time after time the duiker got on its feet, trying to get at him with its horns or to break away again ; but Jock, although swung off his feet and rolled on, did not let go his grip. In grim silence he hung on while the duiker plunged, and, when it fell, tugged and worried as if to shake the life out of it.

What with the hot sun, the heavy sand, and the pace at which we had gone, I was so pumped that I finished the last hundred yards at a walk, and had plenty of time to see what was going on ; but even when I got up to them the struggle was so fierce and the movements so quick that for some time it was not possible to get hold of the duiker to finish it off. At last came one particularly bad fall, when the buck rolled over on its back, and then Jock let go his grip and made a dash for its throat ; but again the duiker was too quick for him ; with one twist it was up and round facing him on its one knee, and dug, thrust, and swept with its black spiky horns so vigorously that it was impossible to get at its neck. As Jock rushed in the head ducked and the horns flashed round so swiftly that it seemed as if nothing could save him from being stabbed through and through, but his quickness and cleverness were a revelation to me.

If he could not catch the duiker, it could not catch him: they were in a way too quick for each other, and they were a long way too quick for me.

Time after time I tried to get in close enough to grab one of the buck's hind legs, but it was not to be caught. While Jock was at it fast and furious in front, I tried to creep up quietly behind—but it was no use: the duiker kept facing Jock with horns down, and whenever I moved it swung round and kept me in front also. Finally I tried a run straight in; and then it made another dash for liberty. On three legs, however, it had no chance, and in another minute Jock had it again, and down they came together, rolling over and over once more. The duiker struggled hard, but he hung on, and each time it got its feet to the ground to rise he would tug sideways and roll it over again, until I got up to them, and catching the buck by the head, held it down with my knee on its neck and my Bushman's Friend in hand to finish it.

There was, however, still another lesson for us both to learn that day; neither of us knew what a buck can do with its hind feet when it is down. The duiker was flat on its side; Jock, thinking the fight was over, had let go; and, before I could move the supple body doubled up, and the feet whizzed viciously at me right over its head. The little pointed cloven feet are as hard and sharp as horns and will tear the flesh like claws. By good luck the kick only grazed my arm, but although the touch was the lightest





it cut the skin and little beads of blood shot up marking the line like the scratch of a thorn. Missing my arm the hoof struck full on the handle of the Bushman's Friend and sent it flying yards out of reach. And it was not merely one kick: faster than the eye could follow them the little feet whizzed and the legs seemed to buzz round like the spokes of a wheel. Holding the horns at arm's length in order to dodge the kicks, I tried to pull the duiker towards the knife; but it was too much for me, and with a sudden twist and a wrench freed itself and was off again.

All the time Jock was moving round and round panting and licking his chops, stepping in and stepping back, giving anxious little whimpers, and longing to be at it again, but not daring to join in without permission. When the duiker broke away, however, he waited for nothing, and was on to it in one spring—again from behind; and this time he let go as it fell, and jumping free of it, had it by the throat before it could rise. I ran to them again, but the picking up of the knife had delayed me and I was not in time to save Jock the same lesson that the duiker had just taught me.

Down on its side, with Jock's jaws locked in its throat, once more the duiker doubled up and used its feet. The first kick went over his head and scraped harmlessly along his back; but the second caught him at the point of the shoulder, and the razor-like toe ripped his side right to the hip. Then the dog showed his pluck and cleverness. His side was cut open as if it had been slashed by a knife, but he never flinched

or loosened his grip for a second ; he seemed to go at it more furiously than ever, but more cleverly and warily. He swung his body round clear of the whizzing feet, watching them with his little beady eyes fixed sideways and the gleaming whites showing in the corners ; he tugged away incessantly and vigorously, keeping the buck's neck stretched out and pulling it round in a circle backwards so that it could not possibly double its body up enough to kick him again ; and before I could catch the feet to help him, the kicks grew weaker ; the buck slackened out, and Jock had won.



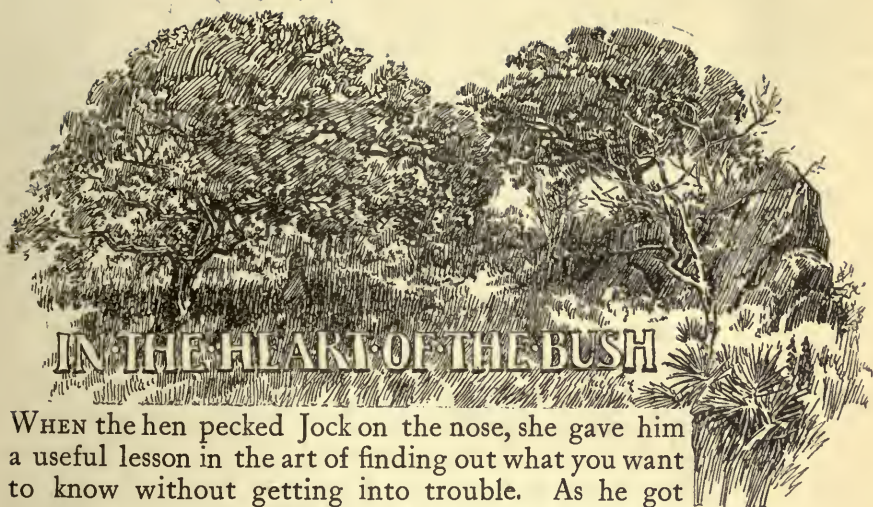
The sun was hot, the sand was deep, and the rifle was hard to find ; it was a long way back to the waggons, and the duiker made a heavy load ; but the end of that first chase seemed so good that nothing else mattered. The only thing I did mind was the open cut on Jock's side ; but he minded nothing : his tail was going like a telegraph needle ; he was panting with his mouth open from ear to ear, and his red tongue hanging out and making great slapping licks at his chops from time to time ; he was not still for a second, but kept walking in and stepping back in a circle round the duiker, and looking up at me and then down at it, as if he was not at all sure that there might not be some fresh game on, and was consulting me as to whether it would not be a good thing to have another go in and make it all safe.





He was just as happy as a dog could be, and perhaps he was proud of the wound that left a straight line from his shoulder to his hip and showed up like a cord under the golden brindle as long as he lived—a memento of his first real hunt.





IN THE HEART OF THE BUSH

WHEN the hen pecked Jock on the nose, she gave him a useful lesson in the art of finding out what you want to know without getting into trouble. As he got older, he also learned that there are only certain things which concerned him and which it was necessary for him to know. A young dog begins by thinking that he can do everything, go everywhere, and know everything; and a hunting dog has to learn to mind his own business, as well as to understand it. Some dogs turn sulky or timid or stupid when they are checked, but an intelligent dog with a stout heart will learn little by little to leave other things alone, and grow steadily keener on his own work. There was no mistake about Jock's keenness. When I took down the rifle from the waggon he did not go off into ecstasies of barking, as most sporting dogs will do, but would give a quick look up and with an eager little



run towards me give a whimper of joy, make two or three bounds as if wanting to stretch his muscles and loosen his joints, then shake himself vigorously as though he had just come out of the water, and with a soft suppressed "Woo-woo-woo" full of contentment, drop silently into his place at my heels and give his whole attention to his work.

He was the best of companions, and through the years that we hunted together I never tired of watching him. There was always something to learn, something to admire, something to be grateful for, and very often something to laugh at—in the way in which we laugh only at those whom we are fond of. It was the struggle between Jock's intense keenness and his sense of duty that most often raised the laugh. He knew that his place was behind me; but probably he also knew that nine times out of ten he scented or saw the game long before I knew there was anything near, and naturally wanted to be in front or at least abreast of me to show me whatever there was to be seen.

He noticed, just as surely and as quickly as any human being could, any change in my manner: nothing escaped him, for his eyes and ears were on the move the whole time. It was impossible for me to look for more than a few seconds in any one direction, or to stop or even to turn my head to listen, without being caught by him. His bright brown eyes were everlastingly on the watch and on the move: from me to the bush, from the bush back to me. When we were after game, and he could scent or see it, he would

keep a foot or two to the side of me so as to have a clear view ; and when he knew by my manner that I thought there was game near, he kept so close up that he would often bump against my heels as I walked, or run right into my legs if I stopped suddenly. Often when stalking buck very quietly and cautiously, thinking only of what was in front, I would get quite a start by feeling something bump up against me behind. At these times it was impossible to say anything without risk of scaring the game, and I got into the habit of making signs with my hand which he understood quite as well.



Sometimes after having crawled up I would be in the act of aiming when he would press up against me. Nothing puts one off so much as a touch or the expectation of being jogged when in the act of firing, and I used to get angry with him then, but dared not breathe a word ; I would lower my head slowly, turn round, and give him a look. He knew quite well what it meant. Down would go his ears instantly, and he would back away from me a couple of steps, drop his stump of a tail and wag it in a feeble deprecating way, and open his mouth into a sort of foolish laugh. That was his apology ! “I beg your pardon : it was an accident ! I won’t do it again.”

It was quite impossible to be angry with him, he was so keen and he meant so well ; and when he saw me laughing softly at him, he would come up again close to me, cock his tail a few inches higher and wag it a bit faster.

There is a deal of expression in a dog’s tail :





it will generally tell you what his feelings are. My friend maintained that that was how he knew his old dog was enjoying the joke against the cockerel ; and that is certainly how I knew what Jock was thinking about once when lost in the veld ; and it showed me the way back.

It is easy enough to lose oneself in the Bushveld. The Berg stands up some thousands of feet inland on the west, looking as if it had been put there to hold up the Highveld ; and between the foothills and the sea lies the Bushveld, stretching for hundreds of miles north and south. From the height and distance of the Berg it looks as flat as the floor, but in many parts it is very much cut up by deep rough dongas, sharp rises and depressions, and numbers of small kopjes. Still, it has a way of looking flat, because the hills are small, and very much alike ; and because hill and hollow are covered and hidden mile after mile by small trees of a wonderful sameness, just near enough together to prevent you from seeing more than a few hundred yards at a time. Most people see no differences in sheep : many believe that all Chinamen are exactly alike ; and so it is with the Bushveld : you have to know it first.

So far I had never lost my way out hunting. The experiences of other men and the warnings from the old hands had made me very careful. We were always hearing of men being lost through leaving the road and following up the game while they were excited, without noticing which way they went and how long they had been going. There were no beaten tracks

and very few landmarks, so that even experienced hunters went astray sometimes for a few hours or a day or two when the mists or heavy rains came on and nothing could be seen beyond fifty or a hundred yards.

Nearly every one who goes hunting in the Bushveld gets lost some time or other—generally in the beginning before he has learned to notice things. Some have been lost for many days until they blundered on to a track by accident or were found by a search-party; others have been lost and, finding no water or food, have died; others have been killed by lions, and only a boot or a coat—or, as it happened in one case that I know of, a ring found inside a lion—told what had occurred; others have been lost and nothing more ever heard of them. There is no feeling quite like that of being lost—helplessness, terror, and despair! The horror of it is so great that every beginner has it before him; every one has heard of it, thought of it, and dreamed of it, and every one feels it holding him to the beaten track, as the fear of drowning keeps those who cannot swim to shallow water. That is just in the beginning. Presently, when little excursions, each bolder than the previous, have ended without accident, the fear grows less and confidence develops. Then it is, as a rule, that the accident comes and the lesson is learned, if you are lucky enough to pull through.

When the camp is away in the trackless bush, it
needs a good man always to
find the way home after a



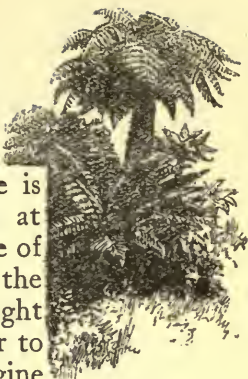
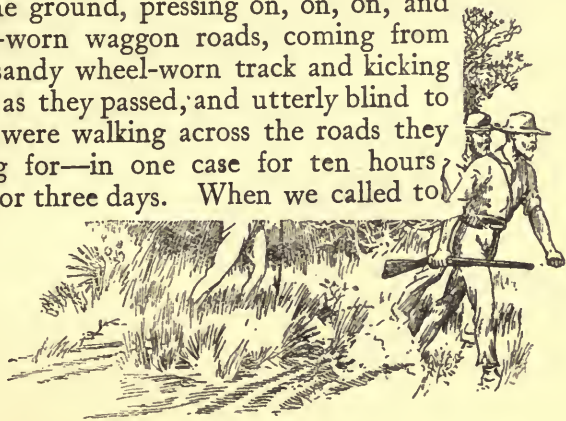


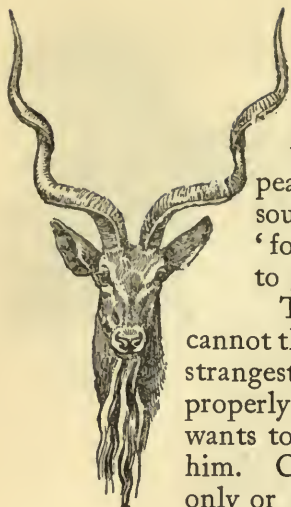
couple of hours' chase with all its twists and turns and doublings ; but when camp is made on a known road—a long main road that strikes a fair line between two points of the compass—it seems impossible for any one to be hopelessly lost. If the road runs east and west you, knowing on which side you left it, have only to walk north or south steadily and you must strike it again. The old hands told the beginners this, and we were glad to know that it was only a matter of walking for a few hours, more or less, and that in the end we were bound to find the road and strike some camp. "Yes," said the old hands, "it is simple enough here where you have a road running east and west ; there is only one rule to remember : When you have lost your way, don't lose your head." But indeed that is just the one rule that you are quite unable to observe.

Many stories have been told of men being lost : many volumes could be filled with them for the trouble of writing down what any hunter will tell you. But no one who has not seen it can realise how the thing may happen ; no one would believe the effect that the terror of being lost, and the demoralisation which it causes, can have on a sane man's senses. If you want to know what a man can persuade himself to believe against the evidence of his senses—even when his very life depends upon his holding to the absolute truth—then you should see a man who is lost in the bush. He knows that he left the road on the north side ; she loses his bearings ; he does not know how long how fat, or how far he has walked ; yet if he keep,

his head he will make due south and must inevitably strike the road. After going for half an hour and seeing nothing familiar, he begins to feel that he is going in the wrong direction; something pulls at him to face right about. Only a few minutes more of this, and he feels sure that he must have crossed the road without noticing it, and therefore that he ought to be going north instead of south, if he hopes ever to strike it again. How, you will ask, can a man imagine it possible to cross a big dusty road twenty or thirty feet wide without seeing it? The idea seems absurd; yet they do really believe it. One of the first illusions that occurs to men when they lose their heads is that they have done this, and it is the cause of scores of cases of 'lost in the bush.' The idea that they may have done it is absurd enough; but stranger still is the fact that they actually *do* it.

If you cannot understand a man thinking he had done such a thing, what can you say of a man actually doing it? Impossible, quite impossible, you think. Ah! but it is a fact: many know it for a fact and I have witnessed it twice myself, once in Mashonaland and once on the Delagoa road. I saw men, tired, haggard and wild-eyed, staring far in front of them, never looking at the ground, pressing on, on, on, and actually cross well-worn waggon roads, coming from hard veld into a sandy wheel-worn track and kicking up a cloud of dust as they passed, and utterly blind to the fact that they were walking across the roads they had been searching for—in one case for ten hours, and in the other for three days. When we called to





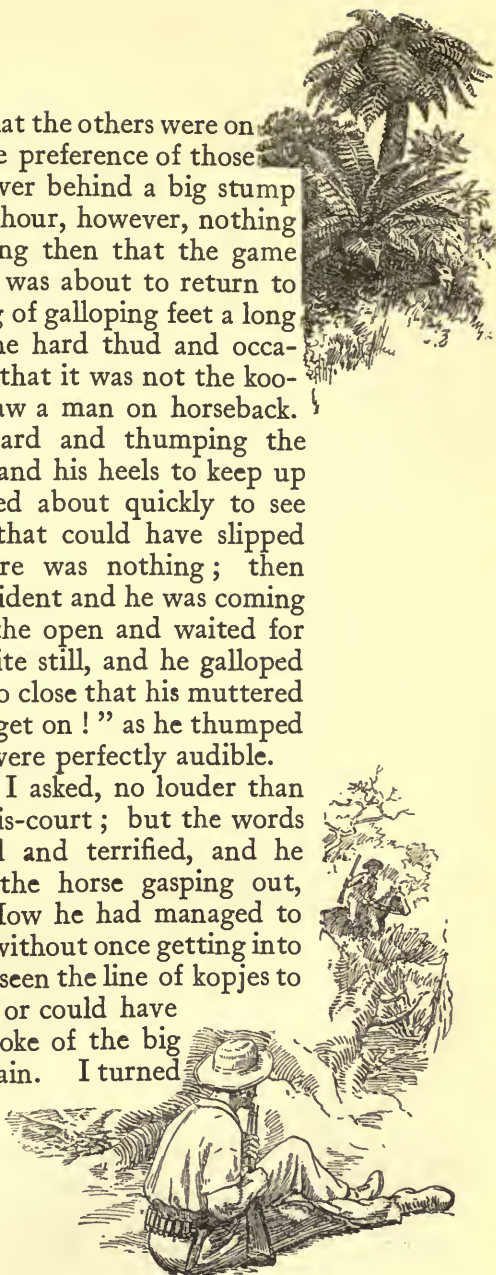
them they had already crossed and were disappearing again into the bush. In both cases the sound of the human voice and the relief of being 'found,' made them collapse. The knees seemed to give way : they could not remain standing.

The man who loses his head is really lost. He cannot think, remember, reason, or understand ; and the strangest thing of all is that he often cannot even *see* properly—he fails to see the very things that he most wants to see, even when they are as large as life before him. Crossing the road without seeing it is not the only or the most extraordinary example of this sort of thing. We were out hunting once in a mounted party, but to spare a tired horse I went on foot and took up my stand in a game run among some thorn trees on the low spur of a hill, while the others made a big circuit to head off a troop of koodoo. Among our party there was one who was very nervous : he had been lost once for six or eight hours, and being haunted by the dread of being lost again, his nerve was all gone and he would not go fifty yards without a companion. In the excitement of shooting at and galloping after the koodoo probably this dread was forgotten for a moment : he himself could not tell how it happened that he became separated, and no one else had noticed him.

The strip of wood along the hills in which I was waiting was four or five miles long but only from one to three hundred yards wide, a mere fringe enclosing the little range of kopjes ; and between the stems of the trees I could see our camp and waggons in the open a quarter of a mile away. Ten or twelve shots faintly

heard in the distance told me that the others were on to the koodoo, and knowing the preference of those animals for the bush I took cover behind a big stump and waited. For over half an hour, however, nothing came towards me, and believing then that the game had broken off another way, I was about to return to camp when I heard the tapping of galloping feet a long way off. In a few minutes the hard thud and occasional ring on the ground told that it was not the koodoo; and soon afterwards I saw a man on horseback. He was leaning eagerly forward and thumping the exhausted horse with his rifle and his heels to keep up its staggering gallop. I looked about quickly to see what it was he was chasing that could have slipped past me unnoticed, but there was nothing; then thinking there had been an accident and he was coming for help, I stepped out into the open and waited for him to come up. I stood quite still, and he galloped past within ten yards of me—so close that his muttered "Get on, you brute; get on, get on!" as he thumped away at his poor tired horse, were perfectly audible.

"What's up, sportsman?" I asked, no louder than you would say it across a tennis-court; but the words brought him up, white-faced and terrified, and he half slid, half tumbled, off the horse gasping out, "I was lost, I was lost!" How he had managed to keep within that strip of bush, without once getting into the open where he would have seen the line of kopjes to which I had told him to stick or could have seen the waggon and the smoke of the big camp-fire, he could never explain. I turned



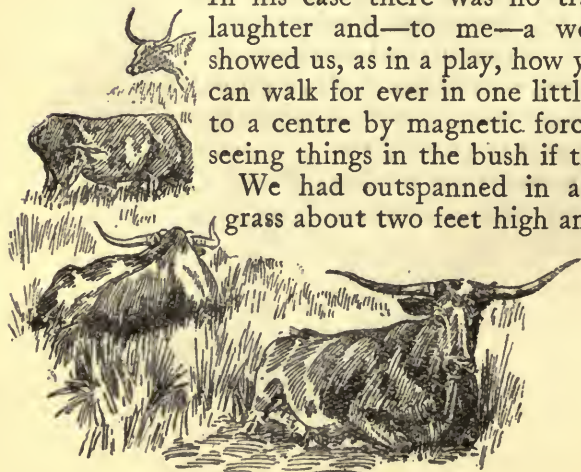


him round where he stood, and through the trees showed him the white tents of the waggons and the cattle grazing near by, but he was too dazed to understand or explain anything.

There are many kinds of men. That particular kind is not the kind that will ever do for veld life : they are for other things and other work. You will laugh at them at times—when the absurdity is greatest and no harm has been done. But see it ! See it— and realise the suspense, the strain, and the terror ; and then even the funniest incident has another side to it. See it once ; and recall that the worst of endings have had just such beginnings. See it in the most absurd and farcical circumstances ever known ; and laugh—laugh your fill ; laugh at the victim and laugh with him, when it is over—and safe. But in the end will come the little chilling thought that the strongest, the bravest, and the best have known something of it too ; and that even to those whose courage holds to the last breath there may come a moment when the pulse beats a little faster and the judgment is at fault.

Buggins who was with us in the first season was no hunter, but he was a good shot and not a bad fellow. In his case there was no tragedy ; there was much laughter and—to me—a wonderful revelation. He showed us, as in a play, how you can be lost ; how you can walk for ever in one little circle, as though drawn to a centre by magnetic force, and how you can miss seeing things in the bush if they do not move.

We had outspanned in a flat covered with close grass about two feet high and shady flat-topped horn



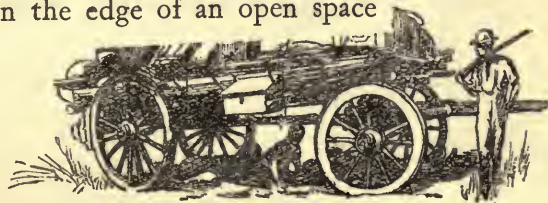
trees. The waggons, four in number, were drawn up a few yards off the road, two abreast. The grass was sweet and plentiful; the day was hot and still; and as we had had a very long early morning trek there was not much inclination to move. The cattle soon filled themselves and lay down to sleep; the boys did the same; and we, when breakfast was over, got into the shade of the waggons, some to sleep and others to smoke.



Buggins—that was his pet name—was a passenger returning to “England, Home, and Beauty”—that is to say, literally, to a comfortable home, admiring sisters and a rich indulgent father—after having sought his fortune unsuccessfully on the gold fields for fully four months. Buggins was good-natured, unselfish, and credulous; but he had one fault—he ‘yapped’: he talked until our heads buzzed. He used to sleep contentedly in a rumpled tarpaulin all through the night treks and come up fresh as a daisy and full of accumulated chat at the morning outspan, just when we—unless work or sport called for us—were wanting to get some sleep.

We knew well enough what to expect, so after breakfast Jimmy, who understood Buggins well, told him pleasantly that he could “sleep, shoot, or shut up.” To shut up was impossible, and to sleep again—without a rest—difficult, even for Buggins; so with a good-natured laugh he took the shot gun, saying that he “would potter around a bit and give us a treat.” Well, he did!

We had outspanned on the edge of an open space

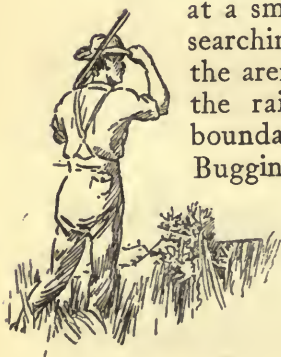




in the thorn bush; there are plenty of them to be found in the Bushveld—spaces a few hundred yards in diameter, like open park land, where not a single tree breaks the expanse of wavy yellow grass. The waggons with their greyish tents and buck sails and dusty wood-work stood in the fringe of the trees where this little arena touched the road, and into it sallied Buggins, gently drawn by the benevolent purpose of giving us a treat. What he hoped to find in the open on that sweltering day he only could tell; we knew that no living thing but lizards would be out of the shade just then, but we wanted to find him employment harmless to him and us.

He had been gone for more than half an hour when we heard a shot, and a few minutes later Jimmy's voice roused us.

"What the dickens is Buggins doing?" he asked in a tone so puzzled and interested that we all turned to watch that sportsman. According to Jimmy, he had been walking about in an erratic way for some time on the far side of the open ground—going from the one end to the other and then back again; then disappearing for a few minutes in the bush and re-appearing to again manœuvre in the open in loops and circles, angles and straight lines. Now he was walking about at a smart pace, looking from side to side apparently searching for something. We could see the whole of the arena as clearly as you can see a cricket-field from the railings—for our waggon formed part of the boundary—but we could see nothing to explain Buggins's manœuvres. Next we saw him face the





"SAY, BUGGINS, WHAT IN THUNDER ARE YOU DOING?"

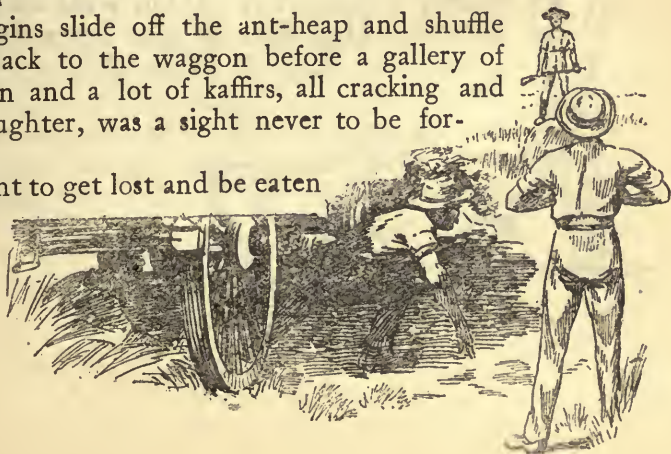
thorns opposite, raise his gun very deliberately, and fire into the top of the trees.

"Green pigeons," said Jimmy firmly; and we all agreed that Buggins was after specimens for stuffing; but either our guess was wrong or his aim was bad, for after standing dead still for a minute he resumed his vigorous walk. By this time Buggins fairly fascinated us; even the kaffirs had roused each other and were watching him. Away he went at once off to our left, and there he repeated the performance, but, again made no attempt to pick up anything and showed no further interest in whatever it was he had fired at, but turned right about face and walked across the open ground in our direction until he was only a couple of hundred yards away. There he stopped and began to look about him and making off some few yards in another direction climbed on to a fair-sized ant-heap five or six feet high, and balancing himself cautiously on this he deliberately fired off both barrels in quick succession. Then the same idea struck us all together, and "Buggins is lost" came from several—all choking with laughter.

Jimmy got up and, stepping out into the open beside the waggon, called, "Say, Buggins, what in thunder *are* you doing?"

To see Buggins slide off the ant-heap and shuffle shamefacedly back to the waggon before a gallery of four white men and a lot of kaffirs, all cracking and crying with laughter, was a sight never to be forgotten.

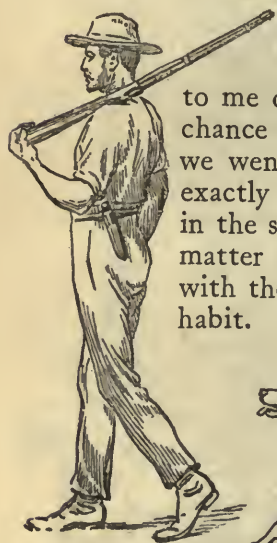
I did not want to get lost and be eaten

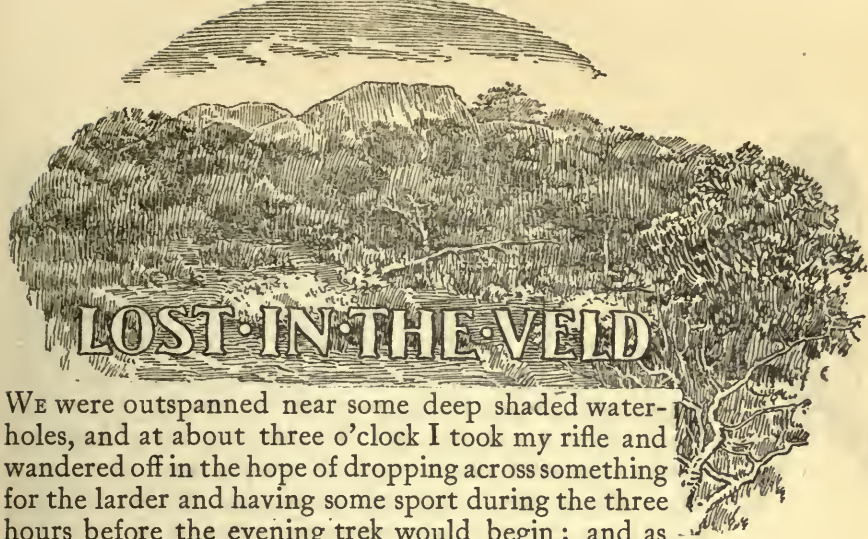




alive, or even look ridiculous, so I began very carefully: glanced back regularly to see what the track, trees, rocks, or kopjes looked like from the other side; carefully noted which side of the road I had turned off; and always kept my eye on the sun. But day after day and month after month went by without accident or serious difficulty, and then the same old thing happened: familiarity bred contempt, and I got the beginner's complaint, conceit fever, just as others did: thought I was rather a fine fellow, not like other chaps who always have doubts and difficulties in finding their way back, but something exceptional with the real instinct in me which hunters, natives, and many animals are supposed to have; thought, in fact, I could not get lost. So each day I went further and more boldly off the road, and grew more confident and careless.

The very last thing that would have occurred to me on this particular day was that there was any chance of being lost or any need to take note of where we went. For many weeks we had been hunting in exactly the same sort of country, but not of course in the same part; and the truth is I did not give the matter a thought at all, but went ahead as one does with the things that are done every day as matters of habit.





LOST IN THE VELD

WE were outspanned near some deep shaded water-holes, and at about three o'clock I took my rifle and wandered off in the hope of dropping across something for the larder and having some sport during the three hours before the evening trek would begin; and as there was plenty of spoor of many kinds the prospects seemed good enough.

We had been going along slowly, it may be for half an hour, without seeing more than a little stem-buck scurrying away in the distance, when I noticed that Jock was rather busy with his nose, sniffing about in a way that looked like business. He was not sure of anything; that was clear, because he kept trying in different directions; not as you see a pointer do, but very seriously silently and slowly, moving at a cautious walk for a few yards and then taking a look about.

The day was hot and still, as usual at that time of the year, and any noise would be easily heard, so I had stopped to give Jock a chance of ranging about. At the moment we were in rather open ground, and finding that Jock was still very suspicious I moved on towards where the bush was thicker and we were



less likely to be seen from a distance. As we got near the better cover there was a rasping, squawky cry in a cockatoo's voice, "Go 'way ; go 'way ; go 'way !" and one of those ugly big-beaked Go 'way birds came sailing up from behind and flapped on to the trees we were making for. No doubt they have another name, but in the Bushveld they were known as Go 'way birds, because of this cry and because they are supposed to warn the game when an enemy is coming. But they are not like the tick bird or the rhinoceros bird, who stick close to their friends and as soon as they see or hear anything suspicious flutter straight up filling the air with twittering cries of alarm ; the Go 'way birds do not feed on ticks and have nothing to do with the game ; you find them where there is no game, and it always seemed to me that it is not concern for the game at all, but simply a combination of vulgar curiosity, disagreeableness and bad manners, that makes them interfere as they do.

The reason why I do not believe the Go 'way birds care a rap about the game and only want to worry you is that often one of them will make up its mind to stick to you, and you can turn twist and double as many ways as you like, but as soon as you begin to walk on again the wretched thing will fly over your head and perch twenty yards or so in front of you, screeching out "Go 'way" at the top of its voice. There it will sit ready to fly off again as you come on, its ugly head on one side and big hooked bill like an aggressive nose, watching you mercilessly, as vigilant as a hungry fowl and as cross as a tired nurse in a big

family. They seem to know that you cannot shoot them without making more row and doing more harm than they do.

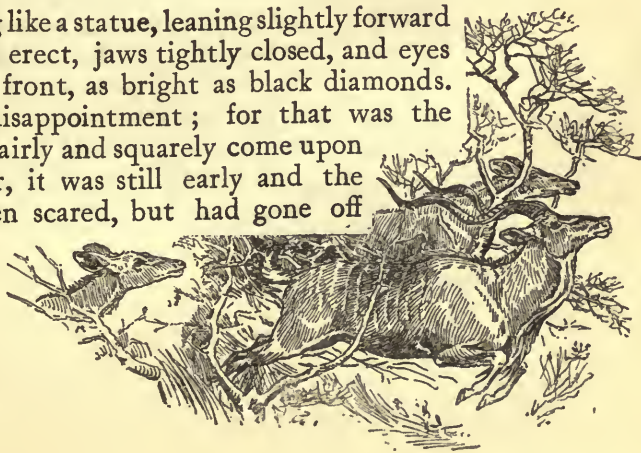
I stood still for a few minutes to give this one a chance to fly away, and when it would not do so, but kept on screeching and craning its neck at me, I threw a stone at it. It ducked violently and gave a choking hysterical squawk of alarm and anger as the stone whizzed close to its head; then flying on to another tree a few yards off, screamed away more noisily than ever. Evidently the best thing to do was to go ahead taking no notice of the creature and trusting that it would tire and leave me alone; so I walked off briskly.

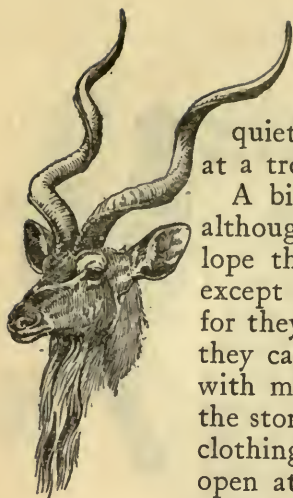
There was a slight rustling in the bush ahead of us as I stepped out, and then the sound of feet. I made a dash for the chance of a running shot, but it was too late, and all we saw was half a dozen beautiful koodoo disappearing among the tree stems.

I turned towards that Go 'way bird. Perhaps he did not like the look on my face or the way I held the rifle; for he gave one more snarling shriek, as if he was emptying himself for ever of his rage and spite, and flapped away.

Jock was standing like a statue, leaning slightly forward but with head very erect, jaws tightly closed, and eyes looking straight in front, as bright as black diamonds.

It was a bad disappointment; for that was the first time we had fairly and squarely come upon koodoo. However, it was still early and the game had not been scared, but had gone off





quietly; so hoping for another chance we started off at a trot along the fresh spoor.

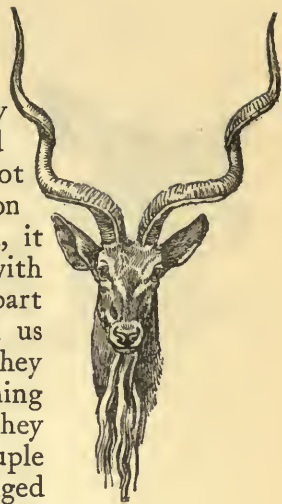
A big koodoo bull stands as high as a bullock, and although they have the small shapely feet of an antelope the spoor is heavy enough to follow at a trot except on stony ground. Perhaps they know this, for they certainly prefer the rough hard ground when they can get it. We went along at a good pace, but with many short breaks to make sure of the spoor in the stony parts; and it was pretty hot work, although clothing was light for hunting. A rough flannel shirt, open at the throat, and moleskin trousers dyed with coffee—for khaki was unknown to us then—was the usual wear; and we carried as little as possible. Generally a water-bottle filled with unsweetened cold tea and a cartridge belt were all we took besides the rifle. This time I had less than usual. Meaning to be out only for a couple of hours at most and to stick close to the road, I had pocketed half a dozen cartridges and left both bandolier and water-bottle behind.

It was not long before we came upon the koodoo again; but they were on the watch. They were standing in the fringe of some thick bush, broadside on but looking back full at us, and as soon as I stopped to aim the whole lot disappeared with the same easy movement, just melting away in the bush.

If I had only known it, it was a hopeless chase for an inexperienced hunter: they were simply playing with me. The very things that seemed so encouraging to me would have warned an old hand that running on the trail was quite useless. When they moved

off quietly, it was not because they were foolhardy or did not realise the danger. When they allowed us to catch up to them time after time, it was not because they did not expect us. When they stood on the edge of thick bush where we could see them, it was not stupidity. When they could disappear with an easy bound, it was not accident. It was all part of the game. They were keeping in touch with us so that we could not surprise them, and whenever they stopped it was always where they could see us coming through the thinner bush for a long way and where they themselves could disappear in the thick bush in a couple of strides. Moreover, with each fresh run they changed their direction with the object of making it difficult for us to follow them up, and with the deliberate purpose of eventually reaching some favourite and safe haunt of theirs.

An old hand might have known this ; but a beginner goes blindly along the spoor—exactly where they are expecting him. The chase was long and tiring, but there was no feeling of disappointment and no thought of giving it up : each time they came in sight we got keener and more excited, and the end seemed nearer and more certain. I knew what the six animals were—four cows, one young bull, and a magnificent old fellow with a glorious head and great spiral horns. I carried his picture in my eye and could pick him out instantly wherever he stood and however motionless ; for, incredibly difficult as it is to pick out still objects in the bush before your eye becomes accustomed to it, it is wonderful what you can do





when your eye is in and you are cool and intent and know what you are looking for. I had the old bull marked down as mine, and knew his every detail—his splendid bearing, strong shaggy neck with mane to the withers and bearded throat, the soft grey dove-colour of the coat with its white stripes, the easy balancing movement in carrying the massive horns as he cantered away, and the trick of throwing them back to glide them through the bush.

The last run was a long and hard one ; and the koodoo seemed to have taken matters seriously and made up their minds to put a safe distance between us and them. The sporing was often difficult and the pace hot. I was wet through from the hard work, and so winded that further effort seemed almost impossible ; but we plodded away—the picture of the koodoo bull luring me on, and Jock content with any chase. Without him the spoor would have been lost long before ; it was in many places too faint and scattered for me to follow, but he would sniff about quietly, and, by his contented looks back at me and brisk wagging of that stumpy tail, show that he was on it again, and off we would go on another tired straggling trot. But at last even his help was not enough : we had come to the end of the chase, and not a spoor, scratch, or sign of any sort was to be seen.

Time had passed unnoticed, and it was only when it became clear that further search would be quite useless that I looked at my watch and found it was nearly five o'clock. That was rather a shock, for it

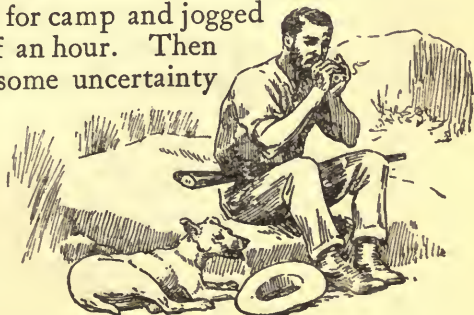


seemed reasonable to think that, as we had been out for pretty nearly two hours and going fast for most of the time, it would take almost as long to get back again.

I had not once noticed our direction or looked at the sun, yet when it came to making for camp again the idea of losing the way never occurred to me. I had not the slightest doubt about the way we had come, and it seemed the natural thing to go back the same way.

A short distance from where we finally gave up the chase there was a rise crowned by some good-sized rocks and bare of trees; it was not high enough to be fairly called a kopje, but I climbed it on chance of getting a view of the surrounding country—to see, if possible, how far we had come. The rise was not sufficient, however, to give a view; there was nothing to be seen, and I sat down on the highest rock to rest for a few minutes and smoke a cigarette.

It is over twenty years since that day, but that cigarette is not forgotten, and the little rise where we rested is still, to me, Cigarette Kopje. I was so thoroughly wet from the heat and hard work that the matches in the breast pocket of my shirt were all damp, and the heads came off most of them before one was gently coaxed into giving a light. Five minutes rest was enough. We both wanted a drink, but there was no time then to hunt for water in such a dry part as that, so off we started for camp and jogged along for a good time, perhaps half an hour. Then little by little I began to feel some uncertainty





about the way and to look about from side to side for reminders.

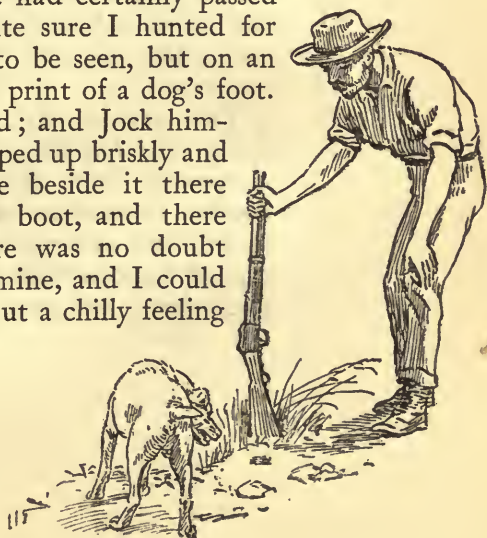
The start back had been easy enough: that part of the ground where we had lost the spoor had been gone over very thoroughly and every object was familiar; but further back, where we had followed the spoor at a trot for long stretches and I had hardly raised my eyes from the ground before me, it was a very different matter. I forgot all about those long stretches in which nothing had been noticed except the koodoo spoor, and was unconsciously looking out for things in regular succession which we had passed at quite long intervals. Of course, they were not to be found, but I kept on looking out for them—first feeling annoyed, then puzzled, then worried. Something had gone wrong, and we were not going back on our old tracks. Several times I looked about for the koodoo spoor as a guide; but it might be anywhere over a width of a hundred yards, and it seemed waste of precious time to search the dry grass-grown and leaf-strewn ground for that.

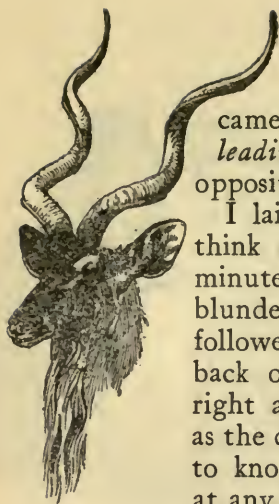
At the first puzzled stop I tried to recall some of the more noticeable things we had passed during the chase. There were two flat-topped mimosas, looking like great rustic tables on a lawn, and we had passed between them; there was a large ant-heap, with a twisty top like a crooked mud chimney, behind which the koodoo bull had calmly stood watching us approach; then a marula tree with a fork like a giant catapult stick; and so on with a score of other things, all coming readily to mind.

That was what put me hopelessly wrong. I began to look for particular objects instead of taking one direction and keeping to it. Whenever a flat-topped thorn, a quaint ant-heap, a patch of tambookie grass, or a forked marula came in sight, I would turn off to see if they were the same we had passed coming out. It was hopeless folly, of course ; for in that country there were hundreds and thousands of such things all looking very much alike, and you could walk yourself to death zigzagging about from one to another and never get any nearer home : when it comes to doing that sort of thing your judgment is gone and you have lost your head ; and the worst of it is you do not know it and would not believe it if any one could tell you so. I did not know it ; but it was nevertheless the fact.



As the sun sank lower I hurried on faster, but never long in one line—always turning this way and that to search for the particular marks I had in mind. At last we came to four trees in a line, and my heart gave a great jump, for these we had certainly passed before. In order to make quite sure I hunted for koodoo spoor ; there was none to be seen, but on an old molehill there was the single print of a dog's foot. "Ha, Jock's !" I exclaimed aloud ; and Jock himself at the sound of his name stepped up briskly and sniffed at his own spoor. Close beside it there was the clear mark of a heeled boot, and there were others further on. There was no doubt about it, they were Jock's and mine, and I could have given a whoop of delight ; but a chilly feeling





came over me when I realised that the footprints were *leading the same way as we were going*, instead of the opposite way. What on earth did it mean?

I laid the rifle down and sat on an old stump to think it out, and after puzzling over it for some minutes came to the conclusion that by some stupid blunder I must have turned round somewhere and followed the line of the koodoo, instead of going back on it. The only thing to be done was to right about face and go faster than ever; but, bad as the disappointment was, it was a certain consolation to know that we were on the track at last. That at any rate was a certainty; for, besides the footprints, the general appearance of the country and many individual features were perfectly familiar, now that I took a good look at them from this point.

At that moment I had not a shadow of doubt about the way—no more, indeed, than if we had been on the road itself: no suspicion of the truth occurred to me; yet the simple fact is we were not then on the koodoo trail at all, but, having made a complete circle, had come on to our own trail at the molehill and were now doing the circle the second time—but the reverse way now.

The map on the opposite page is an attempt to show what happened; the details are of course only guesswork, but the general idea is correct. The koodoo themselves had moved in a rough circle and in the first attempt to return to the waggons I had started back on their trail but must have turned aside somewhere, and after that, by dodging about looking

MAP OF "LOST IN THE VELD"

Thick black line shows track of Koodoo.

Thin black line shows first circle beginning Cigarette Kopje & ending at Z, Jacks footprint in Molehill.

Dotted line shows second circle from Z, where I turned back again, to Cigarette Kopje.

Arrows show the direction in which we went on each trail.





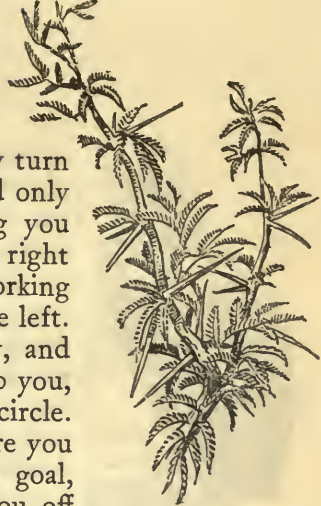
for special landmarks, have made a complete circle. Thus we eventually came back to the track on which we had started for home, and the things that then looked so convincingly familiar were things seen during the first attempt to return, and not, as I supposed, landmarks on the original koodoo trail. Jock's footprints in the molehill were only a few hundred yards from the Cigarette Kopje and about the same distance from where we had lost the koodoo spoor; and we were, at that moment, actually within a mile of the waggons.

It seems incredible that one could be so near and not see or understand. Why should one walk in circles instead of taking a fairly straight line? How was it possible to pass Cigarette Kopje and not recognise it, for I must have gone within fifty yards or less of it? As for not seeing things, the answer is that the bush does not allow you to see much: the waggons, for instance, might as well have been a hundred miles away. As for Cigarette Kop—things do not look the same unless seen from the same point; moreover there are heaps of things easily visible which you will never see at all because you are looking only for something else: you carry a preconceived idea, a sort of picture in your eye, and everything that does not fit in with that is not noticed—not even seen. As for walking in circles, it is my belief that most people, just like most horses, have a natural leaning or tendency towards one side or the other, and unless checked unconsciously indulge it.

When riding in the veld, or any open country, you

will notice that some horses will want to take any turn off to the right, others always go to the left, and only very few keep straight on. When out walking you will find that some people cannot walk on your right hand without coming across your front or working you into the gutter ; others ' mule ' you from the left. Get them out in open country, walk briskly, and talk ; then give way a little each time they bump you, and in a very little while you will have done the circle. If you have this tendency in the Bushveld, where you cannot see any distant object to make for as a goal, any obstacle straight in front of you throws you off to the side you incline to ; any openings in the trees which look like avenues or easy ways draw you ; and between any two of them you will always choose the one on your favourite side. Finally, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing in the veld, as elsewhere. When you know enough to recognise marks without being able to identify or locate them—that is, when you know you have seen them before but are not sure of the when and the where—goodness only knows what conclusion you will come to or what you will do.

I had passed Cigarette Kopje, it's true ; but when coming towards it from a new side it must have looked quite different ; and besides that, I had not been expecting it, not looking for it, not even thinking of it—had indeed said good-bye to it for ever. When we turned back at the molehill, beginning to do the circle for the second time, we must have passed quite close to Cigarette Kopje again, but again it was from a different





opening in the bush, and this time I had thought of nothing and seen nothing except the things I picked out and recognised as we hurried along. To my half-opened beginner's eyes these things were familiar: we had passed them before; that seemed to be good enough: it must be right; so on we went, simply doing the same circle a second time, but this time the reverse way. The length of my shadow stretching out before me as we started from the molehill was a reminder of the need for haste, and we set off at a smart double. A glance back every few minutes to make sure that we were returning the way we had come was enough, and on we sped, confident for my part that we were securely on the line of the koodoo and going straight for the waggons.

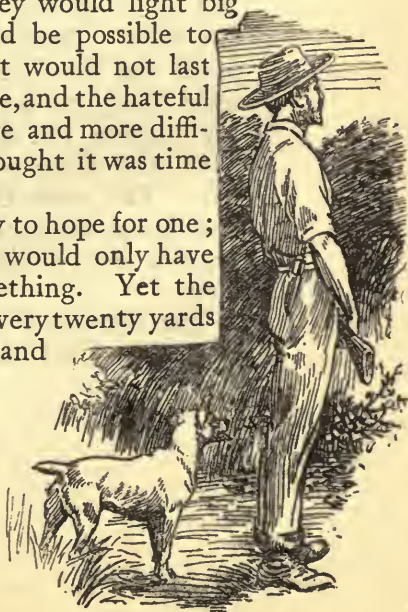
It is very difficult to say how long this lasted before once more a horrible doubt arose. It was when we had done half the circle that I was pulled up as if struck in the face: the setting sun shining into my eyes as we crossed an open space stopped me; for, as the bright gold-dust light of the sunset met me full, I remembered that it was my long shadow *in front* of me as we started from the molehill that had urged me to hurry on. We had started due east: we were going dead west! What on earth was wrong? There were the trees and spaces we had passed, a blackened stump, an ant-bear hole; all familiar. What then was the meaning of it? Was it only a temporary swerve? No! I tested that by pushing on further along the track we were following, and it held steadily to the west. Was it then all imagination about having

been there before ? No, that was absurd ! And yet—and yet, as I went on, no longer trotting and full of hope but walking heavily and weighted with doubt, the feeling of uncertainty grew until I really did not know whether the familiar-looking objects and scenes were indeed old acquaintances or merely imagination playing tricks in a country where every style and sample was copied a thousand times over.



A few minutes later I again caught sight of the sunset glow—it was on my direct right : it meant that the trail had taken another turn, while I could have sworn we were holding a course straight as an arrow. It was all a hopeless tangle. I was lost then—and knew it. It was not the dread of a night out in the bush—for after many months of roughing it, that had no great terrors for me—but the helpless feeling of being lost and the anxiety and uncertainty about finding the road again, that gnawed at me and made me feel tucked-up and drawn. I wondered when they would begin to look for me, if they would light big fires and fire shots, and if it would be possible to see or hear the signals. The light would not last much longer ; the dimness, the silence, and the hateful doubts about the trail made it more and more difficult to recognise the line ; so I thought it was time to fire a signal shot.

There was no answer. It was silly to hope for one ; for even if it had been heard they would only have thought that I was shooting at something. Yet the clinging to hope was so strong that every twenty yards or so I stopped to listen for a reply ; and





when, after what seemed an eternity, none came, I fired another. When you shoot in the excitement of the chase the noise of the report does not strike you as anything out of the way ; but a signal shot when you are alone and lost seems to fill the world with sound and to shake the earth itself. It has a most chilling effect, and the feeling of loneliness becomes acute as the echoes die away and still no answer comes.

Another short spell of tip-toe walking and intent listening, and then it came to me that one shot as a signal was useless ; I should have fired more and at regular intervals, like minute-guns at sea. I felt in my pocket : there were only four cartridges there and one in the rifle ; there was night before me, with the wolves and the lions ; there was the food for to-morrow, and perhaps more than to-morrow ! There could be no minute-guns : two shots were all that could be spared, and I looked about for some high and open ground where the sound would travel far and wide. On ahead of us to the right the trees seemed fewer and the light stronger ; and there I came upon some rising ground bare of bush. It was not much for my purpose, but it was higher than the rest and quite open, and there were some rocks scattered about the top. The same old feeling of mixed remembrance and doubt came over me as we climbed it : it looked familiar and yet different. Was it memory or imagination?

But there was no time for wonderings. From the biggest rock, which was only waist high, I fired off two

of my precious cartridges, and stood like a statue listening for the reply. The silence seemed worse than before: the birds had gone to roost; even the flies had disappeared; there was no sound at all but the beat of my own heart and Jock's panting breath.

There were three cartridges and a few damp matches left. There was no sun to dry them now, but I laid them out carefully on the smooth warm rock, and hoped that one at least would serve to light our camp fire. There was no time to waste: while the light lasted I had to drag up wood for the fire and pick a place for the camp—somewhere where the rocks behind and the fire in front would shelter us from the lions and hyenas, and where I could watch and listen for signals in the night.

There was plenty of wood near by, and thinking anxiously of the damp matches I looked about for dry tindery grass so that any spark would give a start for the fire. As I stooped to look for the grass I came on a patch of bare ground between the scattered tufts, and in the middle of it there lay a half-burnt match; and such a flood of relief and hope surged up that my heart beat up in my throat. Where there were matches there had been men! We were not in the wilds, then, where white men seldom went—not off the beaten track: perhaps not far from the road itself.

You must experience it to know what it meant at that moment. It drew me on to look for more! A yard away I found the burnt end of a cigarette; and before there was time to realise why that should





seem queer, I came on eight or ten matches with their heads knocked off.

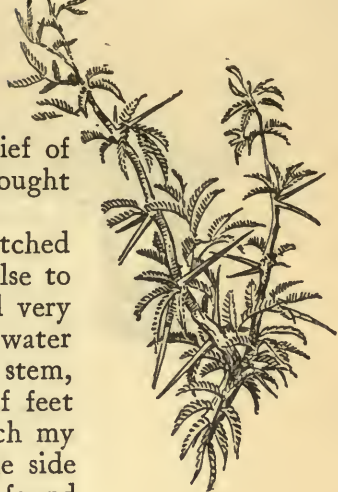
For a moment things seemed to go round and round. I sat down with my back against the rock and a funny choky feeling in my throat. I knew they were my matches and cigarette, and that we were exactly where we had started from hours before, when we gave up the chase of the koodoo. I began to understand things then : why places and landmarks seemed familiar ; why Jock's spoor in the molehill had pointed the wrong way ; why my shadow was in front and behind and beside me in turns. We had been going round in a circle. I jumped up and looked about me with a fresh light ; and it was all clear as noonday then. Why, this was the fourth time we had been on or close to some part of this same rise that day, each time within fifty yards of the same place ; it was the second time I had sat on that very rock. And there was nothing odd or remarkable about that either, for each time I had been looking for the highest point to spy from and had naturally picked the rock-topped rise ; and I had not recognised it, only because we came upon it from different sides each time and I was thinking of other things all the while.

All at once it seemed as if my eyes were opened and all was clear at last. I knew what to do : just make the best of it for the night ; listen for shots and watch for fires ; and if by morning no help came in that way, then strike a line due south for the road and follow it up until we found the waggons. It might take all day or even more, but we were sure of

water that way and one could do it. The relief of really understanding was so great that the thought of a night out no longer worried me.

There was enough wood gathered, and I stretched out on the grass to rest as there was nothing else to do. We were both tired out, hot, dusty, and very very thirsty; but it was too late to hunt for water then. I was lying on my side chewing a grass stem, and Jock lay down in front of me a couple of feet away. It was a habit of his: he liked to watch my face, and often when I rolled over to ease one side and lie on the other he would get up when he found my back turned to him and come round deliberately to the other side and sling himself down in front of me again. There he would lie with his hind legs sprawled on one side, his front legs straight out, and his head resting on his paws. He would lie like that without a move, his little dark eyes fixed on mine all the time until the stillness and the rest made him sleepy, and he would blink and blink, like a drowsy child, fighting against sleep until it beat him; and then—one long-drawn breath as he rolled gently over on his side, and Jock was away in Snoozeland.

In the loneliness of that evening I looked into his steadfast resolute face with its darker muzzle and bright faithful eyes that looked so soft and brown when there was nothing to do but got so beady black when it came to fighting. I felt very friendly to the comrade who was little more than a puppy still; and he seemed to feel something too; for as I lay there chewing the straw and looking at him, he stirred





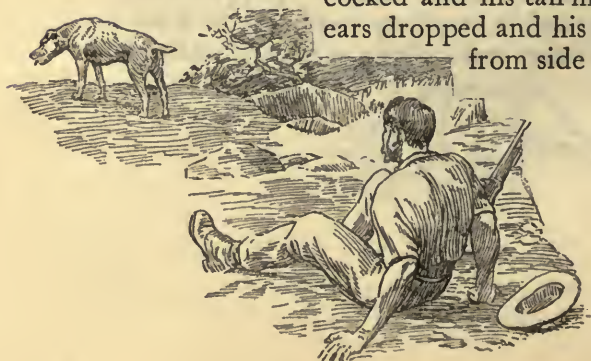
his stump of a tail in the dust an inch or so from time to time to let me know that he understood all about it and that it was all right as long as we were together.

But an interruption came. Jock suddenly switched up his head, put it a bit sideways as a man would do, listening over his shoulder with his nose rather up in the air. I watched him, and thinking that it was probably only a buck out to feed in the cool of the evening, I tickled his nose with the long straw, saying, "No good, old chap; only three cartridges left. We must keep them."

No dog likes to have his nose tickled: it makes them sneeze; and many dogs get quite offended, because it hurts their dignity. Jock was not offended, but he got up and, as if to show me that I was frivolous and not attending properly to business, turned away from me and with his ears cocked began to listen again.

He was standing slightly in front of me and I happened to notice his tail: it was not moving; it was drooping slightly and perfectly still, and he kept it like that as he stepped quietly forward on to another sloping rock overlooking a side where we had not yet been. Evidently there was something there, but he did not know what, and he wanted to find out.

I watched him, much amused by his calm businesslike manner. He walked to the edge of the rock and looked out: for a few minutes he stood stock-still with his ears cocked and his tail motionless; then his ears dropped and his tail wagged gently from side to side.



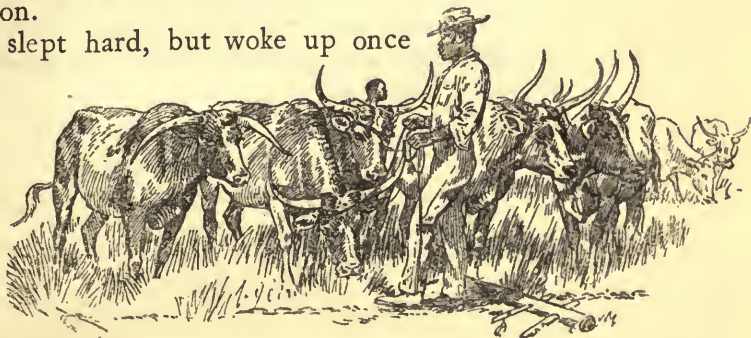
Something—an instinct or sympathy quickened by the day's experience, that I had never quite known before—taught me to understand, and I jumped up, thinking, "He sees something that he knows : he is pleased." As I walked over to him, he looked back at me with his mouth open and tongue out, his ears still down and tail wagging—he was smiling all over, in his own way. I looked out over his head, and there, about three hundred yards off, were the oxen peacefully grazing and the herd-boy in his red coat lounging along behind them.



Shame at losing myself and dread of the others' chaff kept me very quiet, and all they knew for many months was that we had had a long fruitless chase after koodoo and hard work to get back in time.

I had had my lesson, and did not require to have it rubbed in and be roasted as Buggins had been. Only Jock and I knew all about it ; but once or twice there were anxious nervous moments when it looked as if we were not the only ones in the secret. The big Zulu driver, Jim Makokel'—always interested in hunting and all that concerned Jock—asked me as we were inspanning what I had fired the last two shots at ; and as I pretended not to hear or to notice the question, he went on to say how he had told the other boys that it must have been a klipspringer on a high rock or a monkey or a bird because the bullets had whistled over the waggon. I told him to inspan and not talk so much, and moved round to the other side of the waggon.

That night I slept hard, but woke up once





dreaming that several lions were looking down at me from the top of a big flat rock and Jock was keeping them off.

Jock was in his usual place beside me, lying against my blankets. I gave him an extra pat for the dream, thinking, "Good old boy ; we know all about it, you and I, and we're not going to tell. But we've learned some things that we won't forget." And as I dropped off to sleep again I felt a few feeble sleepy pats against my leg, and knew it was Jock's tail wagging "Good night."





Not all our days were spent in excitement—far far from it. For six or seven months the rains were too heavy, the heat too great, the grass too rank, and the fever too bad in the Bushveld for any one to do any good there ; so that for more than half of the year we had no hunting to speak of, as there was not much to be done above the Berg. But even during the hunting season there were many off-days and long spells when we never fired a shot. The work with the waggons was hard when we had full loads, the trekking slow and at night, so that there was always something to do in the daytime—repairs to be done, oxen to be doctored, grass and water to be looked for, and so on ; and we had to make up sleep when we could. Even when the sport was good and the bag satisfactory there was usually nothing new to tell about it. So Jock and I had many a long spell when there was no hunting, many a bad day when we worked hard but had no sport, and many a good day when we got what we were after and nothing happened that would interest any one else.



Every hunt was exciting and interesting for us, even those in which we got nothing; indeed some of the most interesting were those in which the worst disappointments occurred, when after hard work and long chases the game escaped us. To tell all that happened would be to tell the same old story many times over; but indeed, it would not be possible to tell all, for there were some things—the most interesting of all, perhaps—which only Jock knew.

After the fight with the duiker there was never any doubt as to what he would do if allowed to follow up a wounded animal. It made a deal of difference in the hunting to know that he could be trusted to find it and hold on or bay it until I could get up. The bush was so thick that it was not possible to see more than a very few hundred yards at best, and the country was so dry and rough that if a wounded animal once got out of sight only an expert tracker had any chance of finding it again. Jock soon showed himself to be better than the best of trackers, for besides never losing the trail he would either pull down the buck or, if too big for that, attack and worry even the biggest of them to such an extent that they would have to keep turning on him to protect themselves and thus give me the chance to catch up.

But the first result of my confidence in him was some perfectly hopeless chases. It is natural enough to give oneself the benefit of any doubt; the enthusiastic beginner always does so, and in his case the lack of experience often creates a doubt where none should have existed; and the doubt is often very

welcome, helping him out with explanations of the unflattering facts. For the listener it is, at best and worst, only amusing or tiresome; but for the person concerned it is different—for, as Rocky said, 'It don't fool any one worth speakin' of 'cept yerself.' And 'there's the rub.' Whenever a bullet struck with a thud, and no dust appeared to show that it had hit the ground, I thought that it must have wounded the buck; and once you get the idea that the buck is hit, all sorts of reasons appear in support of it. There is hardly anything that the buck can do which does not seem to you to prove that it is wounded. It bounds into the air, races off suddenly, or goes away quite slowly; it switches its tail or shakes its head; it stops to look back, or does not stop at all; the spoor looks awkward and scrappy; the rust on the grass looks like dry blood. If you start with a theory instead of weighing the evidence all these things will help to prove that theory: they will, in fact, mean exactly what you want them to mean. You 'put up a job on yerself'—to quote Rocky again—and with the sweat of your brow and vexation of spirit you have to work that job out.

Poor old Jock had a few hard chases after animals which I thought were wounded but were not hit at all—not many, however, for he soon got hold of the right idea and was a better judge than his master. He went off the instant he was sent, but if there was nothing wounded—that is, if he could not pick up a 'blood spoor'—he would soon show it by casting across the trail, instead of following hard on it; and I knew then there was nothing in it. Often he would





come back of his own accord, and there was something quite peculiar in his look when he returned from these wild-goose chases that seemed to say, "No good : you were quite wrong. You missed the whole lot of them." He would come up to me with his mouth wide open and tongue out, a bit blown, and stand still with his front legs wide apart, looking up at me with that nothing-in-it sort of look in his eyes and not a movement in his ears or tail and never a turn of his head to show the least interest in anything else. I got to know that look quite well ; and to me it meant, "Well, that job was a failure—finished and done for. Now is there anything else you can think of ?"

What always seemed to me so curious and full of meaning was that he never once looked back in the direction of the unwounded game, but seemed to put them out of his mind altogether as of no further interest. It was very different when he got on to the trail of a wounded buck and I had to call him off, as was sometimes necessary when the chase looked hopeless or it was too late to go further. He would obey, of course—no amount of excitement made him forget that ; but he would follow me in a sort of sideways trot, looking back over his shoulder all the time, and whenever there was a stop, turning right round and staring intently in the direction of the game with his little tail moving steadily from side to side and his hind legs crouched as if ready to spring off the instant he got permission.

Twice I thought he was lost for ever through following wounded game. The first occasion was also



the first time that we got among the impala and saw them in numbers. There is no more beautiful and fascinating sight than that of a troop of impala or springbuck really on the move and jumping in earnest. The height and distance that they clear is simply incredible. The impala's greater size and its delicate spiral horns give it a special distinction; the springbuck's brilliant white and red, and the divided crest which fans out along the spine when it is excited, are unique. But who can say which of the many beautiful antelopes is the most beautiful? The oldest hunter will tell you of first one, then another, and then another, as they come to mind, just as he saw them in some supreme unforgettable moment; and each at that moment has seemed quite the most beautiful animal in the world.



It is when they are jumping that the impala are seen at their best. No one knows what they really can do, for there are no fences in their country by which to judge or guess, and as they run in herds it is practically impossible ever to find the take-off or landing-place of any single animal. Once when hunting along the Wenhla Mohali River we managed to turn seven of them into an old run ending in a rocky gorge; but suspecting danger they would not face the natural outlet, and turning up the slope cleared a barrier of thick thorn scrub and escaped. When we looked at the place afterwards we found that the bushes were nine feet high. We were not near enough to see whether they touched the tops or cleared them; all we were sure of was that they did not hesitate for





a second to face a jump nine feet high at the top of a sharp rise, and that all seven did it in follow-my-leader order with the most perfect ease and grace.

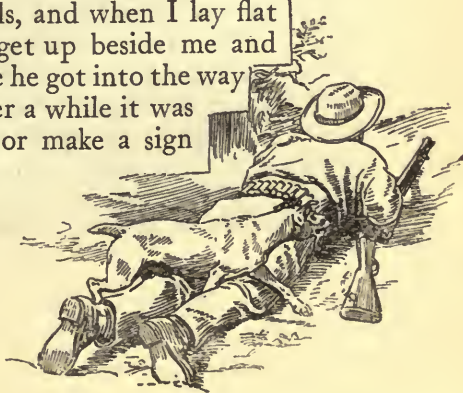
Every hunter has seen a whole troop, old and young, following the example of the leader, clear a road or donga twenty feet wide, apparently in an effortless stride. It is a fine sight, and the steady stream of buck makes an arch of red and white bodies over the road looking like the curve of a great wave. You stand and watch in speechless admiration; and the first gasp at a glorious leap is followed by steady silent wonder at the regularity of the numbers. Then suddenly you see one animal—for no apparent reason: it may be fright or it may be frolic—take off away back behind the others, shoot up, and sail high above the arch of all the rest, and with head erect and feet comfortably gathered, land far beyond them—the difference between ease and effort, and oh! the perfect grace of both! Something is wrung from you—a word, a gasp—and you stand breathless with wonder and admiration until the last one is gone. You have forgotten to shoot; but they have left you something better than a trophy, something which time will only glorify—a picture that in daylight or in dark will fill your mind whenever you hear the name Impala.

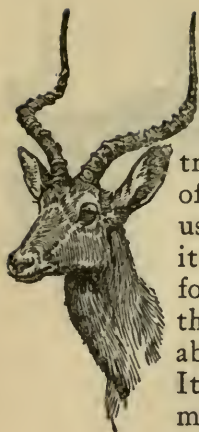
Something of this I carried away from my first experience among them. There were a few minutes of complete bewilderment, a scene of the wildest confusion, and flashes of incident that go to make a great picture which it is impossible to forget. But

then there followed many hours of keen anxiety when I believed that Jock was gone for ever; and it was long before that day found its place in the gallery of happy memories.

We had gone out after breakfast, striking well away from the main road until we got among the thicker thorns where there was any amount of fresh spoor and we were quite certain to find a troop sooner or later. The day was so still, the ground so dry, and the bush so thick that the chances were the game would hear us before we could get near enough to see them. Several times I heard sounds of rustling bush or feet cantering away: something had heard us and made off unseen; so I dropped down into the sandy bed of a dry donga and used it as a stalking trench. From this it was easy enough to have a good look around every hundred yards or so without risk of being heard or seen. We had been going along cautiously in this way for some time when, peering over the bank, I spied a single impala half hidden by a scraggy bush. It seemed queer that there should be only one, as their habit is to move in troops; but there was nothing else to be seen; indeed it was only the flicker of an ear on this one that had caught my eye. Nothing else in the land moved.

Jock climbed the bank also, following so closely that he bumped against my heels, and when I lay flat actually crawled over my legs to get up beside me and see what was on. Little by little he got into the way of imitating all I did, so that after a while it was hardly necessary to say a word or make a sign





to him. He lay down beside me and raised his head to look just as he saw me do. He was all excitement, trembling like a wet spaniel on a cold day, and instead of looking steadily at the impala as I was doing and as he usually did, he was looking here there and everywhere ; it seemed almost as if he was looking at things—not for them. It was my comfortable belief at the moment that he had not yet spotted the buck, but was looking about anxiously to find out what was interesting me. It turned out, as usual, that he had seen a great deal more than his master had.

The stalking looked very easy, as a few yards further up the donga there was excellent cover in some dense thorns, behind which we could walk boldly across open ground to within easy range of the buck and get a clear shot. We reached the cover all right, but I had not taken three steps into the open space beyond before there was a rushing and scrambling on every side of me. The place was a whirlpool of racing and plunging impala ; they came from every side and went in every direction as though caught suddenly in an enclosure and, mad with fear and bewilderment, were trying to find a way out. How many there were it was quite impossible to say : the bush was alive with them ; and the dust they kicked up, the noise of their feet, their curious sneezy snorts, and their wild confusion completely bewildered me. Not one stood still. Never for a moment could I see any single animal clearly enough or long enough to fire at it ; another would cross it ; a bush would cover it as I aimed ; or it would leap into the air, clearing bushes,



“THEY SEEMED TO WHIRL LIKE LEAVES IN A WIND EDDY”

bucks and everything in its way, and disappear again in the moving mass. They seemed to me to whirl like leaves in a wind eddy : my eyes could not follow them and my brain swam as I looked.

It was a hot day ; there was no breeze at all ; and probably the herd had been resting after their morning feed and drink when we came upon them. By creeping up along the donga we had managed to get unobserved right into the middle of the dozing herd, so they were literally on every side of us. At times it looked as if they were bound to stampede over us and simply trample us down in their numbers ; for in their panic they saw nothing, and not one appeared to know what or where the danger was. Time and again, as for part of a second I singled one out and tried to aim, others would come racing straight for us, compelling me to switch round to face them, only to find them swerve with a dart or a mighty bound when within a few paces of me.

What Jock was doing during that time I do not know. It was all such a whirl of excitement and confusion that there are only a few clear impressions left on my mind. One is of a buck coming through the air right at me, jumping over the backs of two others racing across my front. I can see now the sudden wriggle of its body and the look of terror in its eyes when it saw me and realised that it was going to land almost at my feet. I tried to jump aside, but it was not necessary : with one touch on the ground it shot slantingly past me like a ricochet bullet. Another picture that always comes back is that of a splendid





ram clearing the first of the dense thorn bushes that were to have been my cover in stalking. He flew over it outlined against the sky in the easiest most graceful and most perfect curve imaginable. It came back to me afterwards that he was eight or ten yards from me, and yet I had to look up into the sky to see his white chest and gracefully gathered feet as he cleared the thorn bush like a soaring bird.

One shot, out of three or four fired in desperation as they were melting away, hit something; the unmistakable thud of the bullet told me so. That time it was the real thing, and when you hear the real thing you cannot mistake it. The wounded animal went off with the rest and I followed, with Jock ahead of me hot on the trail. A hundred yards further on where Jock with his nose to the ground had raced along between some low stones and a marula tree I came to a stop—bush all round me, not a living thing in sight, and all as silent as the grave. On one of the smooth hot stones there was a big drop of blood, and a few yards on I found a couple more. Here and there along the spoor there were smears on the long yellow grass, and it was clear enough, judging by the height of the blood-marks from the ground, that the impala was wounded in the body—probably far back, as there were no frothy bubbles to show a lung shot. I knew that it would be a long chase unless Jock could head the buck off and bay it; but unless he could do this at once, he was so silent in his work that there was little chance of finding him. The trail became more and more difficult to follow; the blood was less

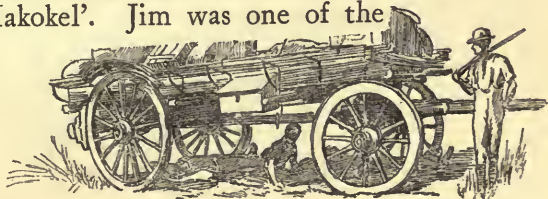


frequent, and the hot sun dried it so quickly that it was more than I could do to pick it out from the red streaks on the grass and many coloured leaves. So I gave it up and sat down to smoke and wait.

Half an hour passed, and still no Jock. Then I wandered about whistling and calling for him—calling until the sound of my own voice became quite uncanny, the only sound in an immense silence. Two hours passed in useless calling and listening, searching and waiting, and then I gave it up altogether and made back for the waggon, trying to hope against my real conviction that Jock had struck the road somewhere and had followed it to the outspan, instead of coming back on his own trail through the bush to me.

But there was no Jock at the waggon; and my heart sank, although I was not surprised. It was nearly four hours since he had disappeared, and it was as sure as anything could be that something extraordinary must have happened or he would have come back to me long before this. No one at the waggon had seen him since we started out together; and there was nothing to be done but to wait and see what would happen. It was perfectly useless to look for him: if alive and well, he was better able to find his way than the best tracker that ever lived; if dead or injured and unable to move, there was not one chance in a million of finding him.

There was only one kaffir whom Jock would take any notice of or would allow to touch him—a great big Zulu named Jim Makokel'. Jim was one of the





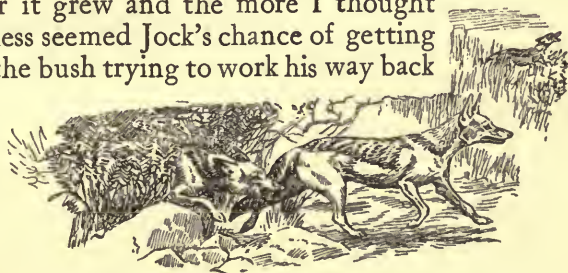
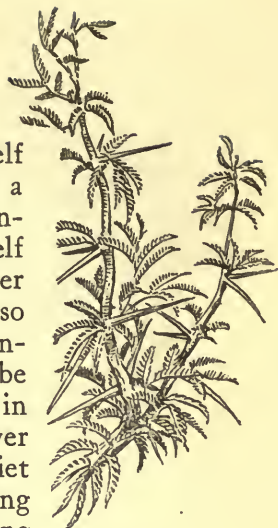
real fighting Zulu breed ; and the pride he took in Jock, and the sort of partnership that he claimed in tastes, disposition and exploits, began the day Jock fought the table-leg and grew stronger and stronger to the end. Jim became Jock's devoted champion, and more than once, as will be seen, showed that he would face man or beast to stand by him when he needed help.

This day when I returned to the waggons Jim was sitting with the other drivers in the group round the big pot of porridge. I saw him give one quick look my way and heard him say sharply to the others, "Where is the dog ? Where is Jock ?" He stood there looking at me with a big wooden spoon full of porridge stopped on the way to his mouth. In a few minutes they all knew what had happened ; the other boys took it calmly, saying composedly that the dog would find his way back. But Jim was not calm : it was not his nature. At one moment he would agree with them, swamping them with a flood of reasons why Jock, the best dog in the world, would be sure to come back ; and the next—hot with restless excitement—would picture all that the dog might have been doing and all that he might still have to face, and then break off to proclaim loudly that every one ought to go out and hunt for him. Jim was not practical or reasonable—he was too excitable for that ; but he was very loyal, and it was his way to show his feelings by doing something—generally and preferably by fighting some one. Knowing only too well how useless it would be to search for Jock, I lay down under the wagon to rest and wait.

After half an hour of this Jim could restrain himself no longer. He came over to where I lay and with a look of severe disapproval and barely controlled indignation, asked me for a gun, saying that he himself meant to go out and look for Jock. It would be nearer the mark to say that he demanded a gun. He was so genuinely anxious and so indignant at what he considered my indifference that it was impossible to be angry; and I let him talk away to me and at me in his exciting bullying way. He would take no answer and listen to no reason; so finally to keep him quiet I gave him the shot-gun, and off he went, muttering his opinions of every one else—a great springy striding picture of fierce resolution.

He came back nearly three hours later, silent, morose, hot and dusty. He put the gun down beside me without a word—just a click of disgust; and as he strode across to his waggon, called roughly to one of the drivers for the drinking water. Lifting the bucket to his mouth he drank like an ox and slammed it down again without a word of thanks; then sat down in the shade of the waggon, filled his pipe, and smoked in silence.

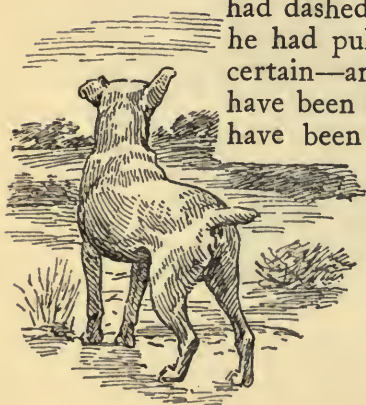
The trekking hour came and passed; but we did not move. The sun went down, and in the quiet of the evening we heard the first jackal's yapping—the first warning of the night. There were still lions and tigers in those parts, and any number of hyenas and wild dogs, and the darker it grew and the more I thought of it, the more hopeless seemed Jock's chance of getting through a night in the bush trying to work his way back to the waggons.





It was almost dark when I was startled by a yell from Jim Makokel', and looking round, saw him bound out into the road shouting, "He has come, he has come! What did I tell you?" He ran out to Jock, stooping to pat and talk to him, and then in a lower voice and with growing excitement went on rapidly, "See the blood! See it! He has fought: he has killed! Dog of all dogs! Jock, Jock!" and his savage song of triumph broke off in a burst of rough tenderness, and he called the dog's name five or six times with every note of affection and welcome in his deep voice. Jock took no notice of Jim's dancing out to meet him, nor of his shouts, endearments and antics; slowing his tired trot down to a walk, he came straight on to me, flickered his ears a bit, wagged his tail cordially, and gave my hand a splashy lick as I patted him. Then he turned round in the direction he had just come from, looked steadily out, cocked his ears well up, and moved his tail slowly from side to side. For the next half-hour or so he kept repeating this action every few minutes; but even without that I knew that it had been no wild-goose chase, and that miles away in the bush there was something lying dead which he could show me if I would but follow him back again to see.

What had happened in the eight hours since he had dashed off in pursuit can only be guessed. That he had pulled down the impala and killed it seemed certain—and what a chase and what a fight it must have been to take all that time! The buck could not have been so badly wounded in the body as to be



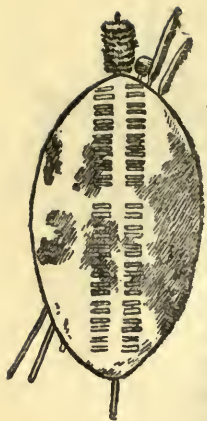
disabled or it would have died in far less time than that : then, what a fight it must have been to kill an animal six or eight times his own weight and armed with such horns and hoofs ! But was it only the impala ? or had the hyenas and wild dogs followed up the trail, as they so often do, and did Jock have to fight his way through them too ?



He was hollow-flanked and empty, parched with thirst, and so blown that his breath still caught in suffocating chokes. He was covered with blood and sand ; his beautiful golden coat was dark and stained ; his white front had disappeared ; and there on his chest and throat, on his jaws and ears, down his front legs even to the toes, the blood was caked on him—mostly black and dried but some still red and sticky. He was a little lame in one fore-leg, but there was no cut or swelling to show the cause. There was only one mark to be seen : over his right eye there was a bluish line where the hair had been shaved off clean, leaving the skin smooth and unbroken. What did it ? Was it horn, hoof, tooth, or—what ? Only Jock knew.

Hovering round and over me, pacing backwards and forwards between the waggons like a caged animal, Jim, growing more and more excited, filled the air with his talk his shouts and savage song. Wanting to help, but always in the way, ordering and thrusting the other boys here and there, he worked himself up into a wild frenzy : it was the Zulu fighting blood on fire and he ' saw red ' everywhere.

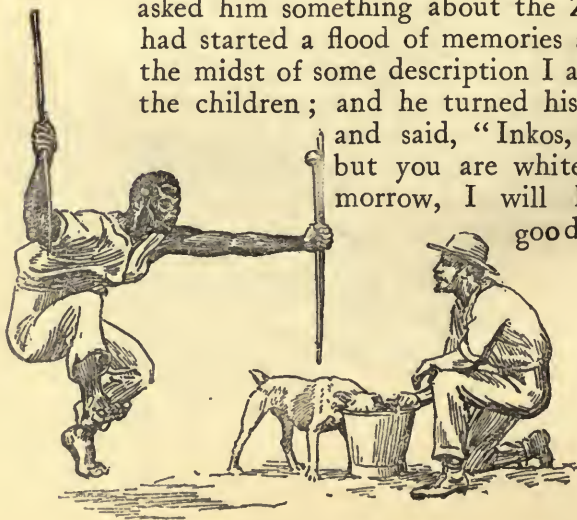




I called for water. "Water!" roared Jim, "bring water"; and glaring round he made a spring—stick in hand—at the nearest kaffir. The boy fled in terror, with Jim after him for a few paces, and brought a bucket of water. Jim snatched it from him and with a resounding thump on the ribs sent the unlucky kaffir sprawling on the ground. Jock took the water in great gulpy bites broken by pauses to get his breath again; and Jim paced up and down—talking, talking, talking! Talking to me, to the others, to the kaffirs, to Jock, to the world at large, to the heavens, and to the dead. His eyes glared like a wild beast's and gradually little seams of froth gathered in the corners of his mouth as he poured out his cataract of words, telling of all Jock had done and might have done and would yet do; comparing him with the fighting heroes of his own race, and wandering off into vivid recitals of single episodes and great battles; seizing his sticks, shouting his war cries, and going through all the mimicry of fight with the wild frenzy of one possessed. Time after time I called him and tried to quiet him; but he was beyond control.

Once before he had broken out like this. I had asked him something about the Zulu war; and that had started a flood of memories and excitement. In the midst of some description I asked why they killed the children; and he turned his glaring eyes on me and said, "Inkos, you are my Inkos; but you are white. If we fight to-morrow, I will kill you. You are good to me, you have

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saved me ; but if our own king says ' Kill ! ' we kill ! We see red ; we kill all that lives. I must kill you, your wife, your mother, your children, your horses, your oxen, your dog, the fowls that run with the waggons—all that lives I kill. The blood must run." And I believed him ; for that was the Zulu fighting spirit. So this time I knew it was useless to order or to talk : he was beyond control, and the fit must run its course.



The night closed in and there was quiet once more. The flames of the camp fires had died down ; the big thorn logs had burnt into glowing coals like the pink crisp hearts of giant water-melons ; Jock lay sleeping, tired out, but even in his sleep came little spells of panting now and then, like the after-sobs of a child that has cried itself to sleep ; we lay rolled in our blankets, and no sound came from where the kaffirs slept. But Jim—only Jim—sat on his rough three-legged stool, elbows on knees and hands clasped together, staring intently into the coals. The fit worked slowly off, and his excitement died gradually away ; now and then there was a fresh burst, but always milder and at longer intervals, as you may see it in a dying fire or at the end of a great storm ; slowly but surely he subsided until at last there were only occasional mutterings of "Ow, Jock!" followed by the Zulu click, the expressive shake of the head, and that appreciative half grunt, half chuckle, by which they pay tribute to what seems truly wonderful. He wanted no sleep that night : he sat on, waiting for the morning trek, staring into the red coals, and thinking

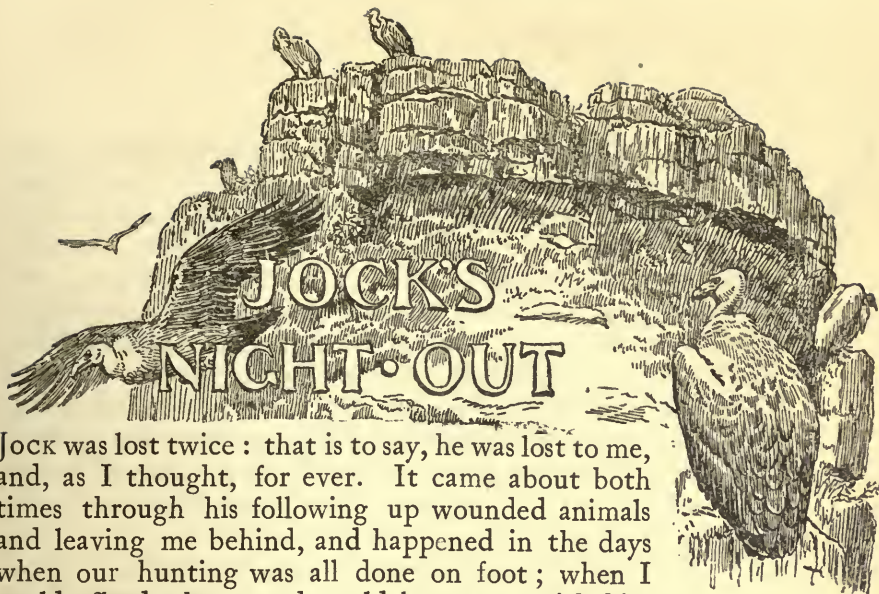
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of the bygone glories of his race in the days of the mighty Chaka.

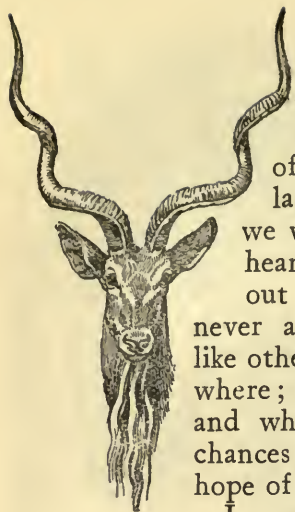
That was Jim, when the fit was on him—transported by some trifling and unforeseen incident from the hum-drum of the road to the life he once had lived with splendid recklessness.





Jock was lost twice : that is to say, he was lost to me, and, as I thought, for ever. It came about both times through his following up wounded animals and leaving me behind, and happened in the days when our hunting was all done on foot ; when I could afford a horse and could keep pace with him that difficulty did not trouble us. The experience with the impala had made me very careful not to let him go unless I felt sure that the game was hard hit and that he would be able to pull it down or bay it. But it is not always easy to judge that. A broken leg shows at once ; but a body shot is very difficult to place, and animals shot through the lungs, and even through the lower part of the heart, often go away at a cracking pace and are out of sight in no time, perhaps to keep it up for miles, perhaps to drop dead within a few minutes.

After that day with the impala we had many good days together and many hard ones : we had our disappointments, but we had our triumphs ; and we were both getting to know our way about by degrees. Buck of many kinds had fallen to us ; but so far as I



was concerned there was one disappointment that was not to be forgotten. The picture of that koodoo bull as he appeared for the last time looking over the ant-heap the day we were lost was always before me. I could not hear the name or see the spoor of koodoo without a pang of regret and the thought that never again would such a chance occur. Koodoo, like other kinds of game, were not to be found everywhere; they favoured some localities more than others, and when we passed through their known haunts chances of smaller game were often neglected in the hope of coming across the koodoo.

I could not give up whole days to hunting—for we had to keep moving along with the waggons all the time—or it would have been easy enough in many parts to locate the koodoo and make sure of getting a good bag. As it was, on three or four occasions we did come across them, and once I got a running shot, but missed. This was not needed to keep my interest in them alive, but it made me keener than ever. Day by day I went out always hoping to get my chance, and when at last the chance did come it was quite in accordance with the experience of many others that it was not in the least expected.

The great charm of Bushveld hunting is its variety: you never know what will turn up next—the only certainty being that it will not be what you are expecting.

The herd boy came noon to say that there

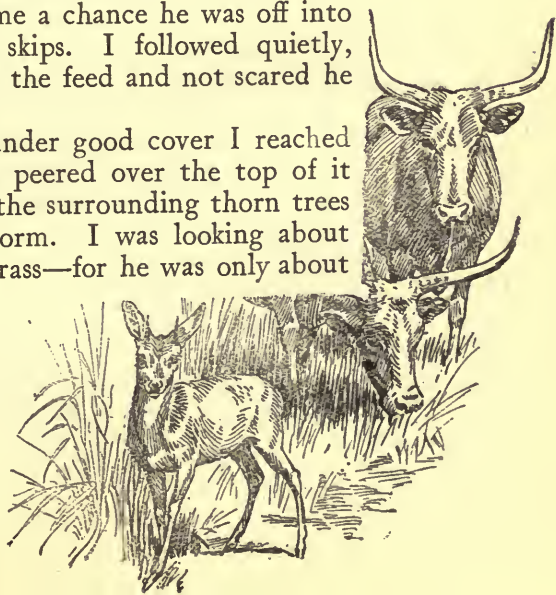
in one afternoon was a stem-



buck feeding among the oxen only a couple of hundred yards away. He had been quite close to it, he said, and it was very tame. Game, so readily alarmed by the sight of white men, will often take no notice of natives, allowing them to approach to very close quarters. They are also easily stalked under cover of cattle or horses, and much more readily approached on horseback than on foot. The presence of other animals seems to give them confidence or to excite mild curiosity without alarm, and thus distract attention from the man. In this case the bonny little red-brown fellow was not a bit scared; he maintained his presence of mind admirably; from time to time he turned his head our way and, with his large but shapely and most sensitive ears thrown forward examined us frankly while he moved slightly one way or another so as to keep under cover of the oxen and busily continue his browsing.

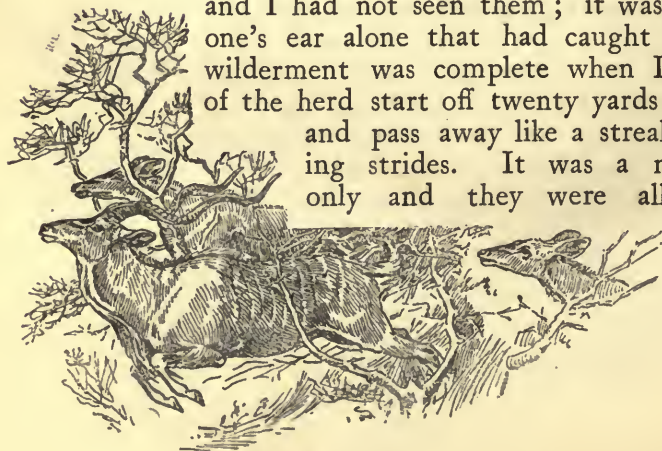
In and out among some seventy head of cattle we played hide-and-seek for quite a while—I not daring to fire for fear of hitting one of the bullocks—until at last he found himself manœuvred out of the troop; and then without-giving me a chance he was off into the bush in a few frisky skips. I followed quietly, knowing that as he was on the feed and not scared he would not go far.

Moving along silently under good cover I reached a thick scrubby bush and peered over the top of it to search the grass under the surrounding thorn trees for the little red-brown form. I was looking about low down in the russety grass—for he was only about



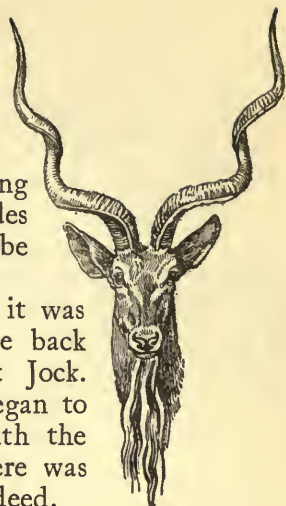


twice the size of Jock, and not easy to spot—when a movement on a higher level caught my eye. It was just the flip of a fly-tickled ear; but it was a movement where all else was still, and instantly the form of a koodoo cow appeared before me as a picture is thrown on a screen by a magic-lantern. There it stood within fifty yards, the soft grey-and-white looking still softer in the shadow of the thorns, but as clear to me—and as still—as a figure carved in stone. The stem of a mimosa hid the shoulders, but all the rest was plainly visible as it stood there utterly unconscious of danger. The tree made a dead shot almost impossible, but the risk of trying for another position was too great, and I fired. The thud of the bullet and the tremendous bound of the koodoo straight up in the air told that the shot had gone home; but these things were for a time forgotten in the surprise that followed. At the sound of the shot twenty other koodoo jumped into life and sight before me. The one I had seen and shot was but one of a herd all dozing peacefully in the shade, and strangest of all, it was the one that was farthest from me. To the right and left of this one, at distances from fifteen to thirty yards from me, the magnificent creatures had been standing, and I had not seen them; it was the flicker of this one's ear alone that had caught my eye. My bewilderment was complete when I saw the big bull of the herd start off twenty yards on my right front and pass away like a streak in a few sweeping strides. It was a matter of seconds only and they were all out of sight—



all except the wounded one, which had turned off from the others. For all the flurry and confusion I had not lost sight of her, and noting her tucked-up appearance and shortened strides set Jock on her trail, believing that she would be down in a few minutes.

It is not necessary to go over it all again : it was much the same as the impala chase. I came back tired, disappointed and beaten, and without Jock. It was only after darkness set in that things began to look serious. When it came to midnight, with the camp wrapped in silence and in sleep, and there was still no sign of Jock, things looked very black indeed.



I heard his panting breath before it was possible to see anything. It was past one o'clock when he returned.

* * * * *

As we had missed the night trek to wait for Jock I decided to stay on where we were until the next evening and to have another try for the wounded koodoo, with the chance of coming across the troop again.

By daybreak Jock did not seem much the worse for his night's adventures—whatever they were. There were no marks of blood on him this time ; there were some scratches which might have been caused by thorns during the chase, and odd-looking grazes on both hind-quarters near the hip-bones, as though he had been roughly gravelled there. He seemed a little stiff, and flinched when I pressed his sides and muscles, but he was as game as ever when he saw the rifle taken down.



The koodoo had been shot through the body, and even without being run to death by Jock must have died in the night, or have lain down and become too cold and stiff to move. If not discovered by wild animals there was a good chance of finding it untouched in the early morning; but after sunrise every minute's delay meant fresh risk from the aasvogels. There is very little which, if left uncovered, will escape their eyes. You may leave your buck for help to bring the meat in, certain from the most careful scrutiny that there is not one of these creatures in sight, and return in half an hour to find nothing but a few bones, the horns and hoofs, a rag of skin, and a group of disgusting gorged vultures squatting on a patch of ground all smeared, torn and feather-strewn from their voracious struggles.

In the winter sky unrelieved by the least fleck of cloud—a dome of spotless polished steel—nothing, you would think, can move unseen. Yet they are there. In the early morning, from their white-splashed eeries on some distant mountain they slide off like a launching ship into their sea of blue, and, striking the currents of the upper air, sweep round and upwards in immense circles, their huge motionless wings carrying them higher and higher until they are lost to human sight. Lie on your back in some dense shade where no side-lights strike in, but where an opening above forms a sort of natural telescope to the sky, and you may see tiny specks where nothing could be seen before. Take your field-glasses: the specks are vultures circling up on high! Look again, and far, far above you will see still other specks; and for

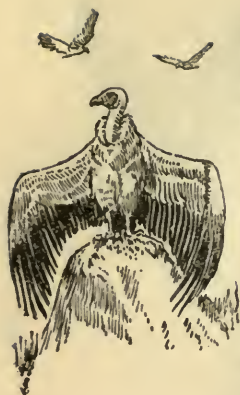
ought you know, there may be others still beyond. How high are they ? And what can they see from there ? Who knows ? But this is sure, that within a few minutes scores will come swooping down in great spiral rushes where not one was visible before. My own belief is that they watch each other, tier above tier away into the limitless heavens—watching jealously, as hungry dogs do, for the least suspicious sign—to swoop down and share the spoil.



In the dewy cool of the morning we soon reached the place where Jock had left me behind the evening before ; and from that on he led the way. It was much slower work then ; as far as I was concerned, there was nothing to guide me, and it was impossible to know what he was after. Did he understand that it was not fresh game but the wounded koodoo that I wanted ? And, if so, was he following the scent of the old chase or merely what he might remember of the way he had gone ? It seemed impossible that scent could lie in that dry country for twelve hours ; yet it was clearly nose more than eyes that guided him. He went ahead soberly and steadily, and once when he stopped completely, to sniff at a particular tuft of grass, I found out what was helping him. The grass was well streaked with blood : quite dry, it is true ; still it was blood.

A mile or so on we checked again where the grass was trampled and the ground scored with spoor. The heavy spoor was all in a ring four or five yards in diameter ; outside this the grass was also flattened, and there I found a dog's footprints. But it had no further interest for Jock ; while I was examining it he

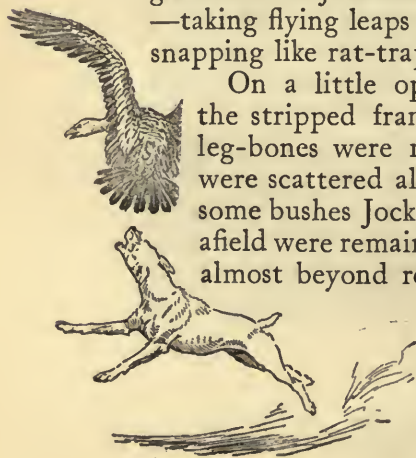




picked up the trail and trotted on. We came upon four or five other rings where they had fought. The last of these was curiously divided by a fallen tree, and it puzzled me to guess how they could have made a circle with a good-sized trunk some two feet high intersecting it. I examined the dead tree and found a big smear of blood and a lot of coarse greyish hair on it. Evidently the koodoo had backed against it whilst facing Jock and had fallen over it, renewing the fight on the other side. There were also some golden hairs sticking on the stumpy end of a broken branch, which may have had something to do with Jock's scraped sides.

Then for a matter of a hundred yards or more it looked as if they had fought and tumbled all the way. Jock was some distance ahead of me, trotting along quietly, when I saw him look up, give that rare growling bark of his—one of suppressed but real fury—lower his head, and charge. Then came heavy flapping and scrambling and the wind of huge wings, as twenty or thirty great lumbering aasvogels flopped along the ground with Jock dashing furiously about among them—taking flying leaps at them as they rose, and his jaws snapping like rat-traps as he missed them.

On a little open flat of hard-baked sand lay the stripped frame of the koodoo: the head and leg-bones were missing; meat-stripped fragments were scattered all about; fifty yards away among some bushes Jock found the head; and still further afield were remains of skin and thigh-bones crushed almost beyond recognition.



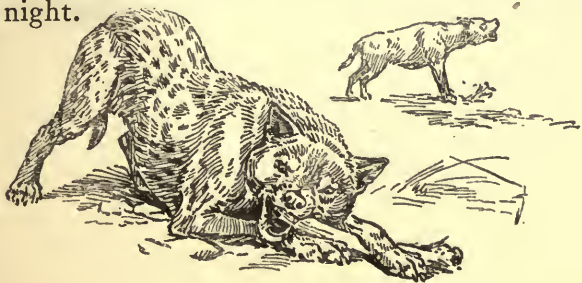


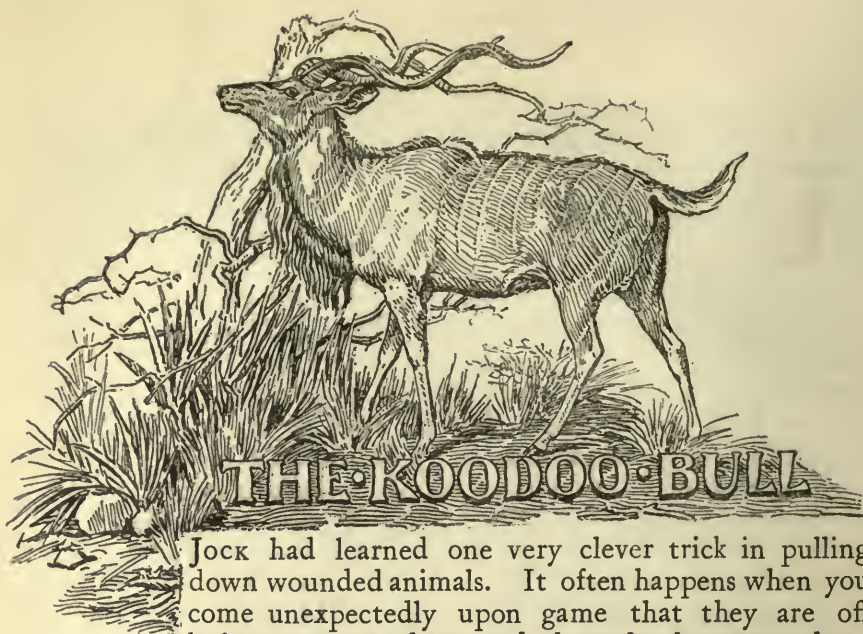
“WHAT HAD HAPPENED OUT IN THE SILENT GHOSTLY BUSH THAT NIGHT?”

No aasvogel had done this: it was hyenas' work. The high-shouldered slinking brute, with jaws like a stone-crusher, alone cracks bones like those and bigger ones which even the lion cannot tackle. I walked back a little way and found the scene of the last stand, all harrowed bare; but there was no spoor of koodoo or of Jock to be seen there—only prints innumerable of wild dogs, hyenas and jackals, and some traces of where the carcase, no doubt already half eaten, had been dragged by them in the effort to tear it asunder.

Jock had several times shown that he strongly objected to any interference with his quarry; other dogs, kaffirs, and even white men, had suffered or been badly scared for rashly laying hands on what he had pulled down. Without any doubt he had expected to find the koodoo there and had dealt with the aasvogels as trespassers; otherwise he would not have tackled them without word from me. It was also sure that until past midnight he had been there with the koodoo, watching or fighting. Then when had the hyenas and wild-dogs come? That was the question I would have given much to have had answered. But only Jock knew that!

I looked at him. The mane on his neck and shoulders which had risen at the sight of the vultures was not flat yet; he was sniffing about slowly and carefully on the spoor of the hyenas and wild dogs; and he looked 'fight' all over. But what it all meant was beyond me; I could only guess—just as you will—what had happened out in the silent ghostly bush that night.





Jock had learned one very clever trick in pulling down wounded animals. It often happens when you come unexpectedly upon game that they are off before you see them, and the only chance you have of getting anything is with a running shot. If they go straight from you the shot is not a very difficult one, although you see nothing but the lifting and falling hind-quarters as they canter away; and a common result of such a shot is the breaking of one of the hind-legs between the hip and the hock. Jock made his discovery while following a rietbuck which I had wounded in this way. He had made several tries at its nose and throat, but the buck was going too strongly and was out of reach; moreover it would not stop or turn when he headed it, but charged straight on, bounding over him. In trying once more for the throat he cannoned against the buck's shoulder and

was sent rolling yards away. This seemed to madden him : racing up behind he flew at the dangling leg, caught it at the shin, and thrusting his feet well out, simply dragged until the buck slowed down, and then began furiously tugging sideways. The crossing of the legs brought the wounded animal down immediately and Jock had it by the throat before it could rise again.

Every one who is good at anything has some favourite method or device of his own : that was Jock's. It may have come to him, as it comes to many, by accident ; but having once got it, he perfected it and used it whenever it was possible. Only once he made a mistake ; and he paid for it—very nearly with his life.

He had already used this device successfully several times, but so far only with the smaller buck. This day he did what I should have thought to be impossible for a dog of three or four times his size. I left the scene of torn carcase and crunched bones, consumed by regrets and disappointment ; each fresh detail only added to my feeling of disgust, but Jock did not seem to mind ; he jumped out briskly as soon as I started walking in earnest, as though he recognised that we were making a fresh start, and he began to look forward immediately.

The little bare flat where the koodoo had fallen for the last time was at the head of one of those depressions which collect the waters of the summer floods and, changing gradually into shallow valleys, are eventually scoured out and become the dongas—dry in winter but full charged with muddy flood in summer—which drain the Bushveld to its rivers. Here and there where an impermeable rock formation crosses these





channels there are deep pools which, except in years of drought, last all through the winter ; and these are the drinking-places of the game. I followed this one down for a couple of miles without any definite purpose until the sight of some greener and denser wild figs suggested that there might be water, and perhaps a rietbuck or a duiker near by. As we reached the trees Jock showed unmistakable signs of interest in something, and with the utmost caution I moved from tree to tree in the shady grove towards where it seemed the water-hole might be.

There were bushy wild plums flanking the grove, and beyond them the ordinary scattered thorns. As I reached this point, and stopped to look out between the bushes on to the more open ground, a koodoo cow walked quietly up the slope from the water, but before there was time to raise the rifle her easy stride had carried her behind a small mimosa tree. I took one quick step out to follow her up and found myself face to face at less than a dozen yards with a grand koodoo bull. It is impossible to convey in words any real idea of the scene and how things happened. Of course, it was only for a fraction of a second that we looked straight into each other's eyes ; then, as if by magic, he was round and going from me with the overwhelming rush of speed and strength and weight combined. Yet it is the first sight that remains with me : the proud head, the huge spiral horns, and the wide soft staring eyes—before the wildness of panic had stricken them. The picture seems photographed on eye and brain, never to be forgotten. A whirlwind of

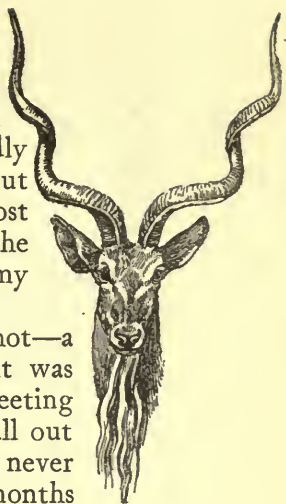


dust and leaves marked his course, and through it I fired, unsteadied by excitement and hardly able to see. Then the right hind-leg swung out and the great creature sank for a moment, almost to the ground; and the sense of triumph, the longed for and unexpected success, 'went to my head' like a rush of blood.

There had been no time to aim, and the shot—a real snap shot—was not at all a bad one. It was after that that the natural effect of such a meeting and such a chance began to tell. Thinking it all out beforehand does not help much, for things never happen as they are expected to; and even months of practice among the smaller kinds will not ensure a steady nerve when you just come face to face with big game—there seems to be too much at stake.

I fired again as the koodoo recovered himself, but he was then seventy or eighty yards away and partly hidden at times by trees and scrub. He struck up the slope, following the line of the troop through the scattered thorns, and there, running hard and dropping quickly to my knee for steadier aim, I fired again and again—but each time a longer shot and more obscured by the intervening bush; and no tell-tale thud came back to cheer me on.

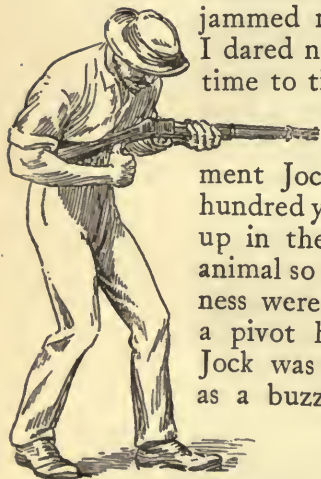
Forgetting the last night's experience, forgetting everything except how we had twice chased and twice lost them, seeing only another and the grandest prize slipping away, I sent Jock on and followed as fast as I could. Once more the koodoo came in sight—just a chance at four hundred yards as he reached an open





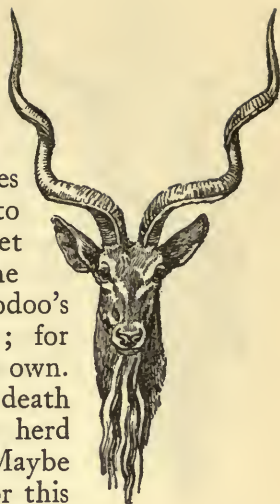
space on rising ground. Jock was already closing up, but still unseen, and the noble old fellow turned full broadside to me as he stopped to look back. Once more I knelt, gripping hard and holding my breath to snatch a moment's steadiness, and fired; but I missed again, and as the bullet struck under him he plunged forward and disappeared over the rise at the moment that Jock, dashing out from the scrub, reached his heels.

The old Martini carbine had one bad fault; even I could not deny that; years of rough and careless treatment in all sorts of weather—for it was only a discarded old Mounted Police weapon—had told on it, and both in barrel and breech it was well pitted with rust scars. One result of this was that it was always jamming, and unless the cartridges were kept well greased the empty shells would stick and the ejector fail to work; and this was almost sure to happen when the carbine became hot from quick firing. It jammed now, and fearing to lose sight of the chase I dared not stop a second, but ran on, struggling from time to time to wrench the breach open.



Reaching the place where they had disappeared, I saw with intense relief and excitement Jock and the koodoo having it out less than a hundred yards away. The koodoo's leg was broken right up in the ham, and it was a terrible handicap for an animal so big and heavy, but his nimbleness and quickness were astonishing. Using the sound hind-leg as a pivot he swung round, always facing his enemy; Jock was in and out, here, there and everywhere, as a buzzing fly torments one on a hot day; and

indeed, to the koodoo just then he was the fly and nothing more; he could only annoy his big enemy, and was playing with his life to do it. Sometimes he tried to get round; sometimes pretended to charge straight in, stopping himself with all four feet spread—just out of reach; then like a red streak he would fly through the air with a snap for the koodoo's nose. It was a fight for life and a grand sight; for the koodoo, in spite of his wound, easily held his own. No doubt he had fought out many a life and death struggle to win and hold his place as lord of the herd and knew every trick of attack and defence. Maybe too he was blazing with anger and contempt for this persistent little gad-fly that worried him so and kept out of reach. Sometimes he snorted and feinted to charge; at other times backed slowly, giving way to draw the enemy on; then with a sudden lunge the great horns swished like a scythe with a tremendous reach out, easily covering the spot where Jock had been a fraction of a second before. There were pauses too in which he watched his tormentor steadily, with occasional impatient shakes of the head, or, raising it to full height, towered up a monument of splendid and contemptuous indifference, looking about with big angry but unfrightened eyes for the herd—his herd—that had deserted him; or with a slight toss of his head he would walk limpingly forward, forcing the ignored Jock before him; then, interrupted and annoyed by a flying snap at his nose, he would spring forward and strike with the sharp cloven fore-foot—zip—zip—zip—at Jock as he landed. Any





one of the vicious flashing stabs would have pinned him to the earth and finished him; but Jock was never there.

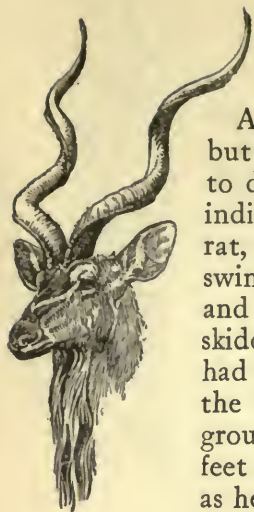
Keeping what cover there was I came up slowly behind them, struggling and using all the force I dared, short of smashing the lever, to get the empty cartridge out. At last one of the turns in the fight brought me in view, and the koodoo dashed off again. For a little way the pace seemed as great as ever, but it soon died away; the driving power was gone; the strain and weight on the one sound leg and the tripping of the broken one were telling; and from that on I was close enough to see it all. In the first rush the koodoo seemed to dash right over Jock—the swirl of dust and leaves and the bulk of the koodoo hiding him; then I saw him close abreast, looking up at it and making furious jumps for its nose, alternately from one side and the other, as they raced along together. The koodoo holding its nose high and well forward, as they do when on the move, with the horns thrown back almost horizontally, was out of his reach and galloped heavily on completely ignoring his attacks.

There is a suggestion of grace and poise in the movement of the koodoo bull's head as he gallops through the bush which is one of his distinctions above the other antelopes. The same supple balancing movement that one notes in the native girls bearing their calabashes of water upon their heads is seen in the neck of the koodoo, and for the same reason: the movements of the body are softened into mere

undulations, and the head with its immense spiral horns seems to sail along in voluntary company—indeed almost as though it were bearing the body below.

At the fourth or fifth attempt by Jock a spurt from the koodoo brought him cannoning against its shoulder, and he was sent rolling unnoticed yards away. He scrambled instantly to his feet, but found himself again behind: it may have been this fact that inspired the next attempt, or perhaps he realised that attack in front was useless; for this time he went determinedly for the broken leg. It swung about in wild eccentric curves, but at the third or fourth attempt he got it and hung on; and with all fours spread he dragged along the ground. The first startled spring of the koodoo jerked him into the air; but there was no let go now, and although dragged along the rough ground and dashed about among the scrub, sometimes swinging in the air, and sometimes sliding on his back, he pulled from side to side in futile attempts to throw the big animal. Ineffectual and even hopeless as it looked at first, Jock's attacks soon began to tell; the koodoo made wild efforts to get at him, but with every turn he turned too, and did it so vigorously that the staggering animal swayed over and had to plunge violently to recover its balance. So they turned, this way and that, until a wilder plunge swung Jock off his feet, throwing the broken leg across the other one; then, with feet firmly planted, Jock tugged again, and the koodoo trying to regain its footing was tripped by the crossed legs and came down with a crash.





As it fell Jock was round and fastened on the nose ; but it was no duiker, impala or rietbuck that he had to deal with this time. The koodoo gave a snort of indignation and shook its head : as a terrier shakes a rat, so it shook Jock, whipping the ground with his swinging body, and with another indignant snort and toss of the head flung him off, sending him skidding along the ground on his back. The koodoo had fallen on the wounded leg and failed to rise with the first effort ; Jock while still slithering along the ground on his back was tearing at the air with his feet in his mad haste to get back to the attack, and as he scrambled up, he raced in again with head down and the little eyes black with fury. He was too mad to be wary, and my heart stood still as the long horns went round with a swish ; one black point seemed to pierce him through and through, showing a foot out the other side, and a jerky twist of the great head sent him twirling like a tip-cat eight or ten feet up in the air. It had just missed him, passing under his stomach next to the hind-legs ; but, until he dropped with a thud and, tearing and scrambling to his feet, he raced in again, I felt certain he had been gored through.

The koodoo was up again then. I had rushed in with rifle clubbed, with the wild idea of stunning it before it could rise, but was met by the lowered horns and unmistakable signs of charging, and beat a retreat quite as speedy as my charge.

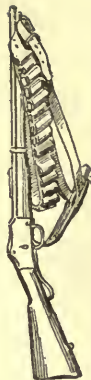
It was a running fight from that on : the instant the koodoo turned to go Jock was on to the leg again,

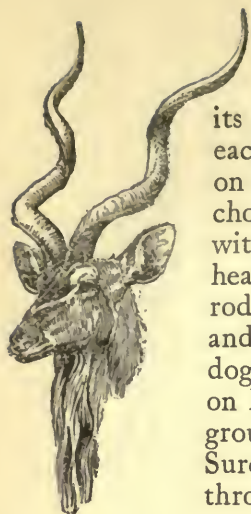


and nothing could shake his hold. I had to keep at a respectful distance, for the bull was still good for a furious charge, even with Jock hanging on, and eyed me in the most unpromising fashion whenever I attempted to head it off or even to come close up.

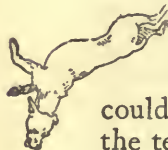
The big eyes were blood-shot then, but there was no look of fear in them—they blazed with baffled rage. Impossible as it seemed to shake Jock off or to get away from us, and in spite of the broken leg and loss of blood, the furious attempts to beat us off did not slacken. It was a desperate running fight, and right bravely he fought it to the end.

Partly barring the way in front were the whitened trunks and branches of several trees struck down by some storm of the year before, and running ahead of the koodoo I made for these, hoping to find a stick straight enough for a ramrod to force the empty cartridge out. As I reached them the koodoo made for me with half a dozen plunges that sent me flying off for other cover; but the broken leg swayed over one of the branches, and Jock with feet planted against the tree hung on; and the koodoo, turning furiously on him, stumbled, floundered, tripped, and came down with a crash amongst the crackling wood. Once more like a flash Jock was over the fallen body and had fastened on the nose—but only to be shaken worse than before. The koodoo literally flogged the ground with him, and for an instant I shut my eyes; it seemed as if the plucky dog would be beaten into pulp. The bull tried to chop him with



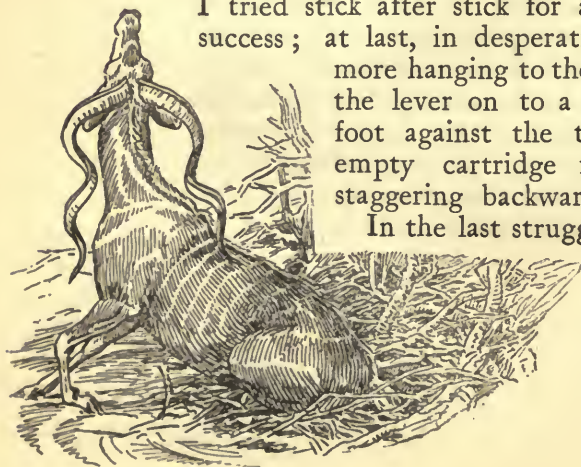


its fore-feet, but could not raise itself enough, and at each pause Jock, with his watchful little eyes ever on the alert, dodged his body round to avoid the chopping feet without letting go his hold. Then with a snort of fury the koodoo, half rising, gave its head a wild upward sweep, and shook. As a springing rod flings a fish the koodoo flung Jock over its head and on to a low flat-topped thorn-tree behind. The dog somersaulted slowly as he circled in the air, dropped on his back in the thorns some twelve feet from the ground, and came tumbling down through the branches. Surely the tree saved him, for it seemed as if such a throw must break his back. As it was he dropped with a sickening thump; yet even as he fell I saw again the scrambling tearing movement, as if he was trying to race back to the fight even before he reached ground. Without a pause to breathe or even to look, he was in again and trying once more for the nose.



The koodoo lying partly on its side, with both hind-legs hampered by the mass of dead wood, could not rise, but it swept the clear space in front with the terrible horns, and for some time kept Jock at bay. I tried stick after stick for a ram-rod, but without success; at last, in desperation at seeing Jock once more hanging to the koodoo's nose, I hooked the lever on to a branch and setting my foot against the tree wrenched until the empty cartridge flew out and I went staggering backwards.

In the last struggle, while I was busy with

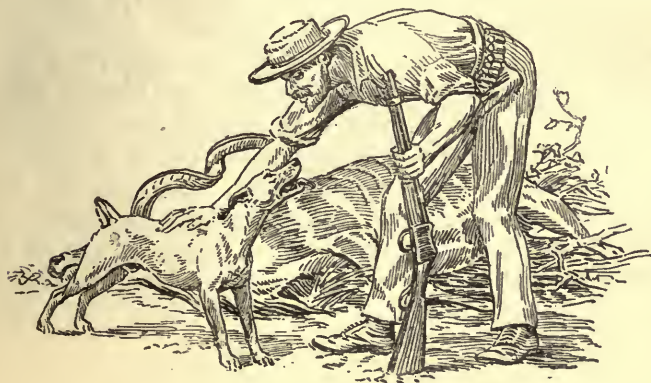
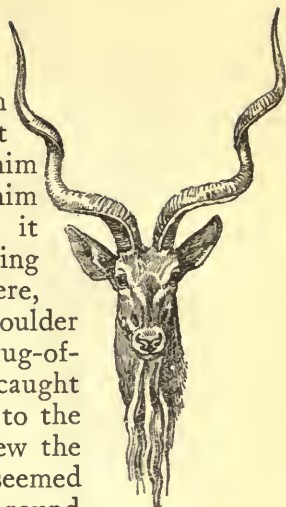


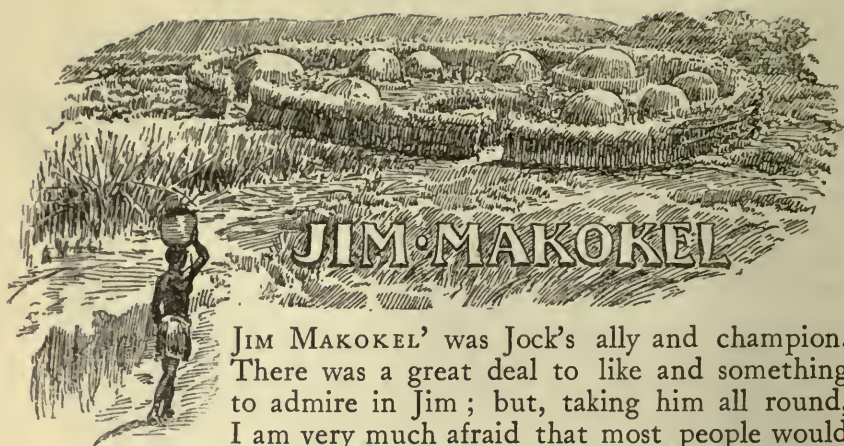


“ HIS SHOULDER HUMPED AGAINST THE TREE, HE STOOD THE TUG OF WAR ”

the rifle, the koodoo had moved, and it was then lying against one of the fallen trunks. The first swing to get rid of Jock had literally slogged him against the tree; the second swing swept him under it where a bend in the trunk raised it about a foot from the ground, and gaining his foothold there Jock stood fast—there, there, with his feet planted firmly and his shoulder humped against the dead tree, he stood this tug-of-war. The koodoo with its head twisted back, as caught at the end of the swing, could put no weight to the pull; yet the wrenches it gave to free itself drew the nose and upper lip out like tough rubber and seemed to stretch Jock's neck visibly. I had to come round within a few feet of them to avoid risk of hitting Jock, and it seemed impossible for bone and muscle to stand the two or three terrible wrenches that I saw. The shot was the end; and as the splendid head dropped slowly over, Jock let go his hold.

He had not uttered a sound except the grunts that were knocked out of him.

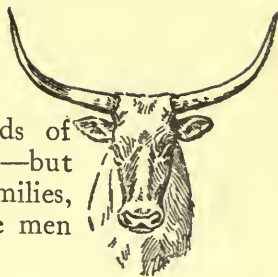




JIM MAKOKEL

JIM MAKOKEL' was Jock's ally and champion. There was a great deal to like and something to admire in Jim ; but, taking him all round, I am very much afraid that most people would consider him rather a bad lot. The fact of the matter is he belonged to another period and other conditions. He was simply a great passionate fighting savage, and, instead of wearing the cast-off clothing of the white man and peacefully driving bullock waggons along a transport road, should have been decked in his savage finery of leopard skin and black ostrich feathers, showing off the powerful bronzed limbs and body all alive with muscle, and sharing in some wild war-dance ; or, equipped with shield and assegais, leading in some murderous fight. Yes, Jim was out of date : he should have been one of the great Chaka's fighting guard—to rise as a leader of men, or be killed on the way. He had but one argument and one answer to everything : Fight ! It was his nature, bred and born in him ; it ran in his blood and grew in his bones. He was a survival of

a great fighting race—there are still thousands of them in the kraals of Zululand and Swaziland—but it was his fate to belong to one of the expelled families, and to have to live and work among the white men under the Boer Government of the Transvaal.



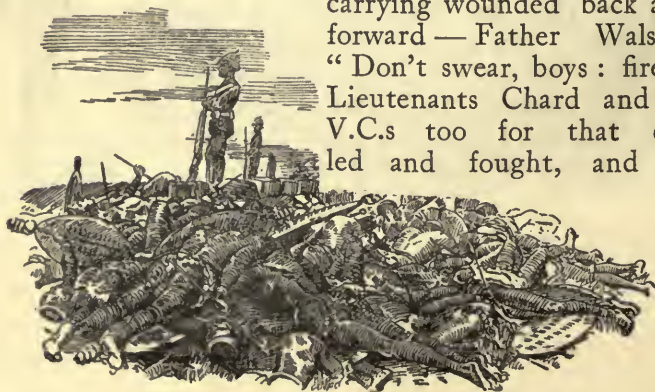
In a fighting nation Jim's kraal was known as a fighting one, and the turbulent blood that ran in their veins could not settle down into a placid stream merely because the Great White Queen had laid her hand upon his people and said, "There shall be peace!" Chaka, the 'black Napoleon' whose wars had cost South Africa over a million lives, had died—murdered by his brother Dingaan—full of glory, lord and master wherever his impis could reach. "Dogs whom I fed at my kraal!" he gasped, as they stabbed him. Dingaan his successor, as cruel as treacherous, had been crushed by the gallant little band of Boers under Potgieter for his fiendish massacre of Piet Retief and his little band. Panda the third of the three famous brothers—Panda the peaceful—had come and gone! Ketshwayo, after years of arrogant and unquestioned rule, had loosed his straining impis at the people of the Great White Queen. The awful day of 'Sandhlwana—where the 24th Regiment died almost to a man—and the fight on H'lobani Mountain had blooded the impis to madness; but Rorke's Drift and Kambula had followed those bloody victories—each within a few hours—to tell another tale; and at Ulundi the tides met—the black and the white. And the kingdom and might of the house of Chaka were no more.





Jim had fought at 'Sandhlwana, and could tell of an umfaan sent out to herd some cattle within sight of the British camp to draw the troops out raiding while the impis crept round by hill and bush and donga behind them ; of the fight made by the red-coats as, taken in detail, they were attacked hand to hand with stabbing assegais, ten and twenty to one ; of one man in blue—a sailor—who was the last to die, fighting with his back to a waggon wheel against scores before him, and how he fell at last, stabbed in the back through the spokes of the wheel by one who had crept up behind.

Jim had fought at Rorke's Drift ! Wild with lust of blood, he had gone on with the maddest of the victory-maddened lot to invade Natal and eat up the little garrison on the way. He could tell how seventy or eighty white men behind a little rampart of biscuit-tins and flour-bags had fought through the long and terrible hours, beating off five thousand of the Zulu best, fresh from a victory without parallel or precedent ; how, from the burning hospital, Sergeant Hook, V.C., and others carried sick and wounded through the flames into the laager ; how a man in black with a long beard, Father Walsh, moved about with calm face, speaking to some, helping others, carrying wounded back and cartridges forward—Father Walsh who said “ Don't swear, boys : fire low ” ; how Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead—V.C.s too for that day's work—led and fought, and guided and

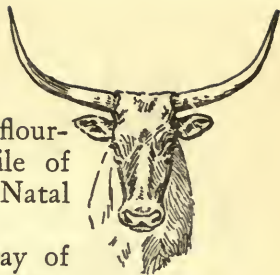


heartened their heroic little band until the flour-bags and biscuit-tins stood lower than the pile of dead outside, and the Zulu host was beaten and Natal saved that day.

Jim had seen all that—and Ulundi, the Day of Despair! And he knew the power of the Great White Queen and the way that her people fight. But peace was not for him or his kraal: better any fight than no fight. He rallied to Usibepu in the fight for leadership when his King, Ketshwayo, was gone, and Jim's kraal had moved—and moved too soon: they were surrounded one night and massacred; and Jim fought his way out, wounded and alone. Without kith or kin, cattle, king, or country, he fled to the Transvaal—to work for the first time in his life!

Waggon-boys—as the drivers were called—often acquired a certain amount of reputation on the road or in the locality where they worked; but it was, as a rule, only a reputation as good or bad drivers. In Jim's case it was different. He was a character and had an individual reputation, which was exceptional in a Kaffir. I had better say at once that not even his best friend would claim that that reputation was a good one. He was known as the best driver, the strongest nigger, the hardest fighter, and the worst drinker on the road.

His real name was Makokela, but in accordance with a common Zulu habit, it was usually abbreviated to Makokel'! Among a certain number of the white men—of the sort who never can get any name right—he was oddly enough known as McCorkindale. I called him





Jim as a rule—Makokel', when relations were strained. The waggon-boys found it safer to use his proper name. When anything had upset him it was not considered wise to take the liberty of shouting "Jim": the answer sometimes came in the shape of a hammering.

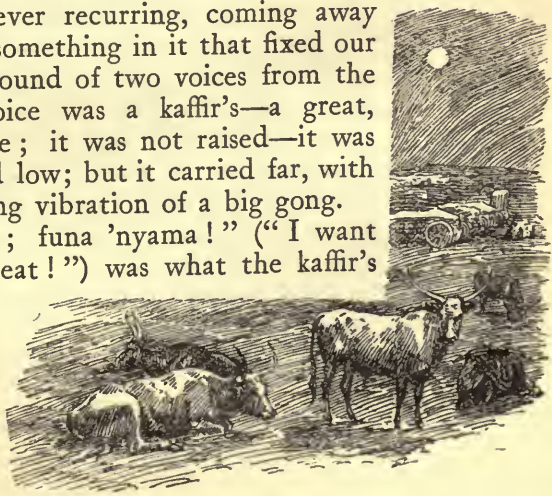
Many men had employed Jim before he came to me, and all had 'sacked' him for fighting, drinking, and the unbearable worry he caused. They told me this, and said that he gave more trouble than his work was worth. It may have been true: he certainly was a living test of patience, purpose, and management; but, for something learnt in that way, I am glad now that Jim never 'got the sack' from me. Why he did not, is not easy to say; perhaps the circumstances under which he came to me and the hard knocks of an unkind fate pleaded for him. But it was not that alone: there was something in Jim himself—something good and fine, something that shone out from time to time through his black skin and battered face as the soul of a real man.

It was in the first season in the Bushveld that we were outspanned one night on the sand-hills overlooking Delagoa Bay among scores of other waggons dotted about in little camps—all loading or waiting for loads to transport to the Transvaal. Delagoa was not a good place to stay in, in those days: liquor was cheap and bad; there was very little in the way of law and order; and every one took care of himself as well as he could. The Kaffir kraals were close about the town, and the natives of the place were as rascally a lot of thieves and vagabonds as you could find any-

where. The result was everlasting trouble with the waggon-boys and a chronic state of war between them and the natives and the banyans or Arab traders of the place. The boys, with pockets full of wages, haggled and were cheated in the stores, and by the hawkers, and in the canteens ; and they often ended up the night with beer-drinking at the kraals or reprisals on their enemies. Every night there were fights and robberies : the natives or Indians would rob and half-kill a waggon-boy ; then he in turn would rally his friends, and raid and clear out the kraal or the store. Most of the waggon-boys were Zulus or of Zulu descent, and they were always ready for a fight and would tackle any odds when their blood was up.

It was the third night of our stay, and the usual row was on. Shouts and cries, the beating of tom-toms, and shrill ear-piercing whistles, came from all sides ; and through it all the dull hum of hundreds of human voices, all gabbling together. Near to us there was another camp of four waggons drawn up in close order, and as we sat talking and wondering at the strange babel in the beautiful calm moonlight night, one sound was ever recurring, coming away out of all the rest with something in it that fixed our attention. It was the sound of two voices from the next waggons. One voice was a kaffir's—a great, deep, bull-throated voice ; it was not raised—it was monotonously steady and low ; but it carried far, with the ring and the lingering vibration of a big gong.

“Funa 'nyama, Inkos ; funa 'nyama !” (“I want meat, Chief ; I want meat !”) was what the kaffir's





voice kept repeating at intervals of a minute or two with deadly monotony and persistency.

The white man's voice grew more impatient, louder, and angrier, with each refusal; but the boy paid no heed. A few minutes later the same request would be made, supplemented now and then with, "I am hungry, Baas, I can't sleep. Meat! Meat! Meat!"; or, "Porridge and bread are for women and picaninnies. I am a man: I want meat, Baas, meat." From the white man it was, "Go to sleep, I tell you!" "Be quiet, will you?" "Shut up that row!" "Be still, you drunken brute, or I'll tie you up!" and "You'll get twenty-five in a minute!"

It may have lasted half an hour when one of our party said, "That's Bob's old driver, the big Zulu. There'll be a row to-night; he's with a foreigner chap from Natal now. New chums are always roughest on the niggers."

In a flash I remembered Bob Saunderson's story of the boy who had caught the lion alive, and Bob's own words, "a real fine nigger, but a terror to drink, and always in trouble. He fairly wore me right out."

A few minutes later there was a short scuffle, and the boy's voice could be heard protesting in the same deep low tone: they were tying him up to the waggon-wheel for a flogging. Others were helping the white man, but the boy was not resisting.

At the second thin whistling stroke some one said, "That's a sjambok he's using, not a nek-strop!" Sjambok, that will cut a bullock's hide! At about the eighth there was a wrench that made the waggon rattle, and the deep voice was raised in protest, "Ow, Inkos!"

It made me choke : it was the first I knew of such things, and the horror of it was unbearable ; but the man who had spoken before—a good man too, straight and strong, and trusted by black and white—said, “Sonny, you must not interfere between a man and his boys here ; it’s hard sometimes, but we’d not live a day if they didn’t know who was baas.”

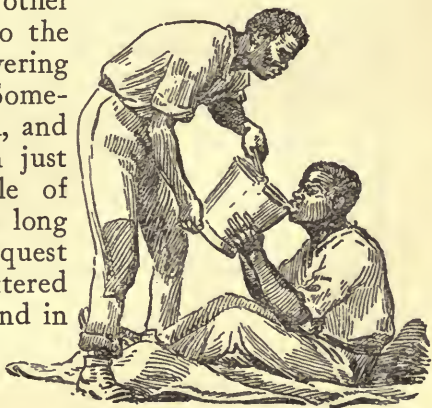
I think we counted eighteen ; and then everything seemed going to burst.

* * * * *

The white man looked about at the faces close to him—and stopped. He began slowly to untie the out-stretched arms, and blustered out some threats. But no one said a word !

* * * * *

The noises died down as the night wore on, until the stillness was broken only by the desultory barking of a kaffir dog or the crowing of some awakened rooster who had mistaken the bright moonlight for the dawn and thought that all the world had overslept itself. But for me there was one other sound for which I listened into the cool of morning with the quivering sensitiveness of a bruised nerve. Sometimes it was a long catchy sigh, and sometimes it broke into a groan just audible, like the faintest rumble of most distant surf. Twice in the long night there came the same request to one of the boys near him, uttered in a deep clear unshaken voice and in





a tone that was civil but firm, and strangely moving from its quiet indifference.

“Landela manzi, Umganaam ! ” (“Bring water, friend !”) was all he said ; and each time the request was so quickly answered that I had the guilty feeling of being one in a great conspiracy of silence. The hush was unreal ; the stillness alive with racing thoughts ; the darkness full of watching eyes.

There is, we believe, in the heart of every being a little germ of justice which men call conscience ! If that be so, there must have been in the heart of the white man that night some uneasy movement—the first life-throb of the thought which one who had not yet written has since set down :

“ Though I’ve belted you and flayed you,
By the living God that made you,
You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Din ! ”

* * * * *



The following afternoon I received an ultimatum. We had just returned from the town when from a group of boys squatting round the fire there stood up one big fellow—a stranger—who raised his hand high above his head in Zulu fashion and gave their salute in the deep bell-like voice that there was no mistaking, “Inkos ! Bayete !”

He stepped forward, looking me all over, and announced with calm and settled conviction, “I have come to work for you !” I said nothing. Then he rapped a chest like a big drum, and nodding his head with a sort of defiant confidence added in quaint

English, "My naam Makokela! Jim Makokel'! Yes! My catchum lion 'live! Makokela, me!"

He had heard that I wanted a driver, had waited for my return, and annexed me as his future 'baas' without a moment's doubt or hesitation.

I looked him over. Big, broad-shouldered, loose-limbed, and as straight as an assegai! A neck and head like a bull's; a face like a weather-beaten rock, storm-scarred and furrowed, rugged and ugly, but steadfast, massive and strong! So it looked then, and so it turned out: for good and for evil Jim was strong.

I nodded and said, "You can come."

Once more he raised his head aloft, and, simply and without a trace of surprise or gratification, said:

"Yes, you are my chief, I will work for you." In his own mind it had been settled already: it had never been in doubt.

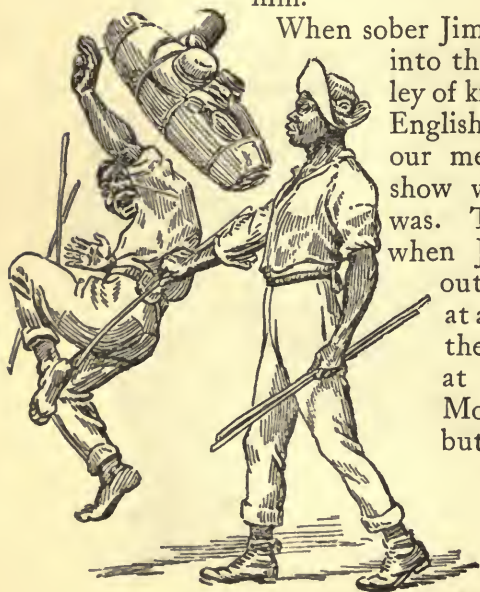
Jim—when sober—was a splendid worker and the most willing of servants, and, drunk or sober, he was always respectful in an independent, upstanding, hearty kind of way. His manner was as rough and rugged as his face and character; in his most peaceful moments it was—to one who did not understand him—almost fierce and aggressive; but this was only skin deep; for the childlike simplicity of the African native was in him to the full, and rude bursts of Titanic laughter came readily—laughter as strong and unrestrained as his bursts of passion.

To the other boys he was what his nature and training had made him—not really a bully, but





masterful and over-riding. He gave his orders with the curtness of a drill sergeant and the rude assurance of a savage chief. Walking, he walked his course, giving way for none of them. At the outspan or on the road or footpath he shouldered them aside as one walks through standing corn, not aggressively but with the superb indifference of right and habit unquestioned. If one, loitering before him, blocked his way unseeing, there was no pause or step aside—just “Suka!” (“Get out”) and a push that looked effortless enough but sent the offender staggering; or, if he had his sticks, more likely a smart whack on the stern that was still more surprising; and not even the compliment of a glance back from Jim as he stalked on. He was like the old bull in a herd—he walked his course; none molested and none disputed; the way opened before him.



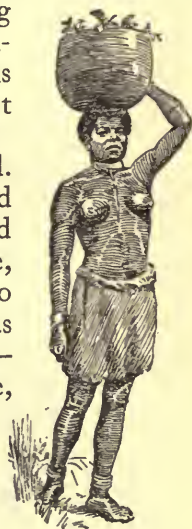
When sober Jim spoke Zulu; when drunk, he broke into the strangest and most laughable medley of kitchen-Kaffir, bad Dutch, and worse English—the idea being, in part to consider our meaner intelligences and in part to show what an accomplished linguist he was. There was no difficulty in knowing when Jim would go wrong: he broke out whenever he got a chance, whether at a kraal, where he could always quicken the reluctant hospitality of any native, at a wayside canteen, or in a town. Money was fatal—he drank it all out; but want of money was no security, for

he was known to every one and seemed to have friends everywhere ; and if he had not, he made them on the spot—annexed and overwhelmed them.

From time to time you do meet people like that. The world's their oyster, and the gift of a masterful and infinite confidence opens it every time : they walk through life taking of the best as a right, and the world unquestioningly submits.

I had many troubles with Jim, but never on account of white men : drunk or sober, there was never trouble there. It may have been Rorke's Drift and Ulundi that did it ; but whatever it was, the question of black and white was settled in his mind for ever. He was respectful, yet stood upright with the rough dignity of an unvanquished spirit ; but on the one great issue he never raised his hand or voice again. His troubles all came from drink, and the exasperation was at times almost unbearable—so great, indeed, that on many occasions I heartily repented ever having taken him on. Warnings were useless, and punishment—well, the shiny new skin that made patterns in lines and stars and crosses on his back for the rest of his life made answer for always upon that point.

The trials and worries were often great indeed. The trouble began as soon as we reached a town, and he had a hundred excuses for going in, and a hundred more for not coming out : he had some one to see, boots to be mended, clothes to buy, or medicine to get—the only illness I ever knew him have was 'a pain inside,' and the only medicine wanted—grog !—some one owed him money—a stock excuse,





and the idea of Jim, always penniless and always in debt, posing as a creditor never failed to raise a laugh, and he would shake his head with a half-fierce half-sad disgust at the general scepticism and his failure to convince me. Then he had relations in every town ! Jim, the sole survivor of his fighting kraal, produced 'blulus,' 'babas,' 'sisteles,' and even 'mamas,' in profusion, and they died just before we reached the place, as regularly as the office-boy's aunt dies before Derby Day, and with the same consequence—he had to go to the funeral.

The first precaution was to keep him at the waggons and put the towns and canteens 'out of bounds' ; and the last defence, to banish him entirely until he came back sober, and meanwhile set other boys to do his work, paying them his wages in cash in his presence when he returned fit for duty.

"Is it as I told you ? Is it just ?" I would ask when this was done.

"It is just, Inkos," he would answer with a calm dispassionate simplicity which appealed for forgiveness and confidence with far greater force than any repentance ; and it did so because it was genuine ; it was natural and unstudied. There was never a trace of feeling to be detected when these affairs were squared off, but I knew how he hated the treatment, and it helped a little from time to time to keep him right.

The banishing of him from the waggons in order that he might go away and have it over was not a device to save myself trouble, and I did it only when it was clear that he could stand the strain no longer.

It was simply a choice of evils, and it seemed to me better to let him go, clearly understanding the conditions, than drive him into breaking away with the bad results to him and the bad effects on the others of disobeying orders. It was, as a rule, far indeed from saving me trouble, for after the first bout of drinking he almost invariably found his way back to the waggons: the drink always produced a ravenous craving for meat, and when his money was gone and he had fought his fill and cleared out all opposition, he would come back to the waggons at any hour of the night, perhaps even two or three times between dark and dawn, to beg for meat. Warnings and orders had no effect whatever; he was unconscious of everything except the overmastering craving for meat. He would come to my waggon and begin that deadly monotonous recitation, "Funa 'nyama, Inkos! Wanta meat, Baas!" There was a kind of hopeless determination in the tone conveying complete indifference to all consequences: meat he must have. He was perfectly respectful; every order to be quiet or go away or go to bed was received with the formal raising of the hand aloft, the most respectful of salutations, and the assenting, "Inkos!" but in the very next breath would come the old monotonous request, "Funa 'nyama, Inkos," just as if he was saying it for the first time. The persistency was awful—it was maddening; and there was no remedy, for it was not the result of voluntary or even conscious effort on his part; it was a sort of automatic process, a result of his physical condition. Had he





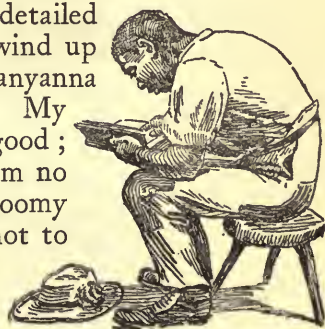
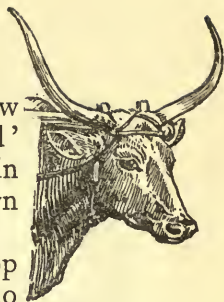
known it would cost him his life, he could no more have resisted it than have resisted breathing.

When the meat was there I gave it, and he would sit by the fire for hours eating incredible quantities—cutting it off in slabs and devouring it when not much more than warmed. But it was not always possible to satisfy him in that way; meat was expensive in the towns and often we had none at all at the waggons. Then the night became one long torment: the spells of rest might extend from a quarter of an hour to an hour; then from the dead sleep of downright weariness I would be roused by the deep far-reaching voice; “Funa ’nyama, Inkos” wove itself into my dreams, and waking I would find Jim standing beside me remorselessly urging the same request in Zulu, in broken English, and in Dutch—“My wanta meat, Baas,” “Wil fleisch krij, Baas,” and the old, old, hatefully familiar explanation of the difference between “man’s food” and “picanins’ food,” interspersed with grandiose declarations that he was “Makokela—Jim Makokel’,” who “catchum lion ’live.” Sometimes he would expand this into comparisons between himself and the other boys, much to their disadvantage; and on these occasions he invariably worked round to his private grievances, and expressed his candid opinions of Sam.

Sam was the boy whom I usually set to do Jim’s neglected work. He was a ‘mission boy,’ that is a Christian kaffir—very proper in his behaviour, but a weakling and not much good at work. Jim would enumerate all Sam’s shortcomings; how he got his oxen mixed up on dark nights and could not pick them

out of the herd—a quite unpardonable offence ; how he stuck in the drifts and had to be ‘double-spanned’ and pulled out by Jim ; how he once lost his way in the bush ; and how he upset the waggon coming down the Devil’s Shoot.

Jim had once brought down the Berg from Spitzkop a loaded waggon on which there was a cottage piano packed standing upright. The road was an awful one, it is true, and few drivers could have handled so top-heavy a load without capsizing—he had received a bansela for his skill—but to him the feat was one without parallel in the history of waggon driving ; and when drunk he usually coupled it with his other great achievement of catching a lion alive. His contempt for Sam’s misadventure on the Devil’s Shoot was therefore great, and to it was added resentment against Sam’s respectability and superior education, which the latter was able to rub in in safety by ostentatiously reading his Bible aloud at nights as they sat round the fire. Jim was a heathen, and openly affirmed his conviction that a Christian kaffir was an impostor, a bastard, and a hypocrite—a thing not to be trusted under any circumstances whatever. The end of his morose outburst was always the same. When his detailed indictment of Sam was completed he would wind up with, “My catchum lion ’live. My bling panyanna fon Diskop (I bring piano from Spitzkop). My naam Makokela : Jim Makokel’. Sam no good ; Sam leada Bible (Sam reads the Bible). Sam no good !” The intensity of conviction and the gloomy disgust put into the last reference to Sam are not to be expressed in words.



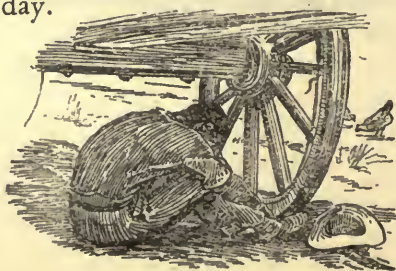


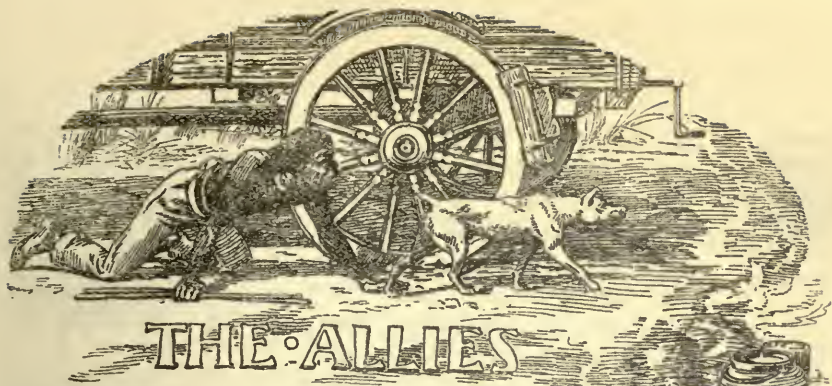
Where warning and punishment availed nothing threats would have been worse than foolish. Once, when he had broken bounds and left the waggons, I threatened that if he did it again I would tie him up, since he was like a dog that could not be trusted; and I did it. He had no excuse but the old ones; some one, he said, had brought him liquor to the waggons and he had not known what he was doing. The truth was that the craving grew so with the nearer prospect of drink that by hook or by crook he would find some one, a passer-by or a boy from other waggons, to fetch some for him; and after that nothing could hold him.

If Jim ever wavered in his loyalty to me, it must have been the day I tied him up: he must have been very near hating me then. I had caught him as he was leaving the waggons and still sober; brought him back and told him to sit under his own waggon where I would tie him up like a dog. I took a piece of sail twine, tied it to one wrist, and, fastening the other end to the waggon-wheel, left him.

A kaffir's face becomes, when he wishes it, quite inscrutable—as expressionless as a blank wall. But there are exceptions to every rule; and Jim's stoicism was not equal to this occasion. The look of unspeakable disgust and humiliation on his face was more than I could bear with comfort; and after half an hour or so in the pillory I released him. He did not say a word, but, heedless of the hot sun, rolled himself in his blankets and, sleeping or not, never moved for the rest of the day.

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JOCK disliked kaffirs : so did Jim. To Jim there were three big divisions of the human race—white men, Zulus, and niggers. Zulu, old or young, was greeted by him as equal, friend and comrade ; but the rest were trash, and he cherished a most particular contempt for the Shangaans and Chopis, as a lot who were just about good enough for what they did—that is, work in the mines. They could neither fight nor handle animals ; and the sight of them stirred him to contempt and pricked him to hostilities.

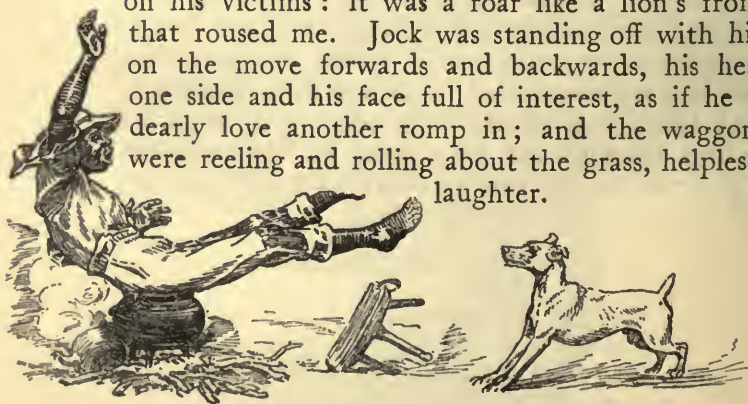
It was not long before Jim discovered this bond of sympathy between him and Jock, and I am perfectly sure that the one bad habit which Jock was never cured of was due to deliberate encouragement from Jim on every possible opportunity. It would have been a matter of difficulty and patience in any case to teach Jock not to unnecessarily attack strange kaffirs. It was very important that he should have nothing to do with them, and should treat them with suspicion as possible enemies and keep them off the premises. I was glad that he did it by his own choice and instinct ;



but this being so, it needed all the more intelligence and training to get him to understand just where to draw the line. Jim made it worse; he made the already difficult task practically impossible by egging Jock on; and what finally made it quite impossible was the extremely funny turn it took, which caused such general amusement that every one joined in the conspiracy and backed up Jock.

Every one knows how laughable it is to see a person dancing about like a mad dervish, with legs and arms going in all directions, dodging the rushes of a dog, especially if the spectator knows that the dog will not do any real harm and is more intent on scaring his victim, just for the fun of the thing, than on hunting him. Well, that is how it began.

As far as I know the first incident arose out of the intrusion of a strange kaffir at one of the outspans. Jock objected, and he was forcing a scared boy back step by step—doing the same feinting rushes that he practised with game—until the boy tripped over a camp stool and sat plump down on the three-legged pot of porridge cooking at the camp fire. I did not see it; for Jock was, as usual, quite silent—a feature which always had a most terrifying effect on his victims: it was a roar like a lion's from Jim that roused me. Jock was standing off with his feet on the move forwards and backwards, his head on one side and his face full of interest, as if he would dearly love another romp in; and the waggon-boys were reeling and rolling about the grass, helpless with laughter.



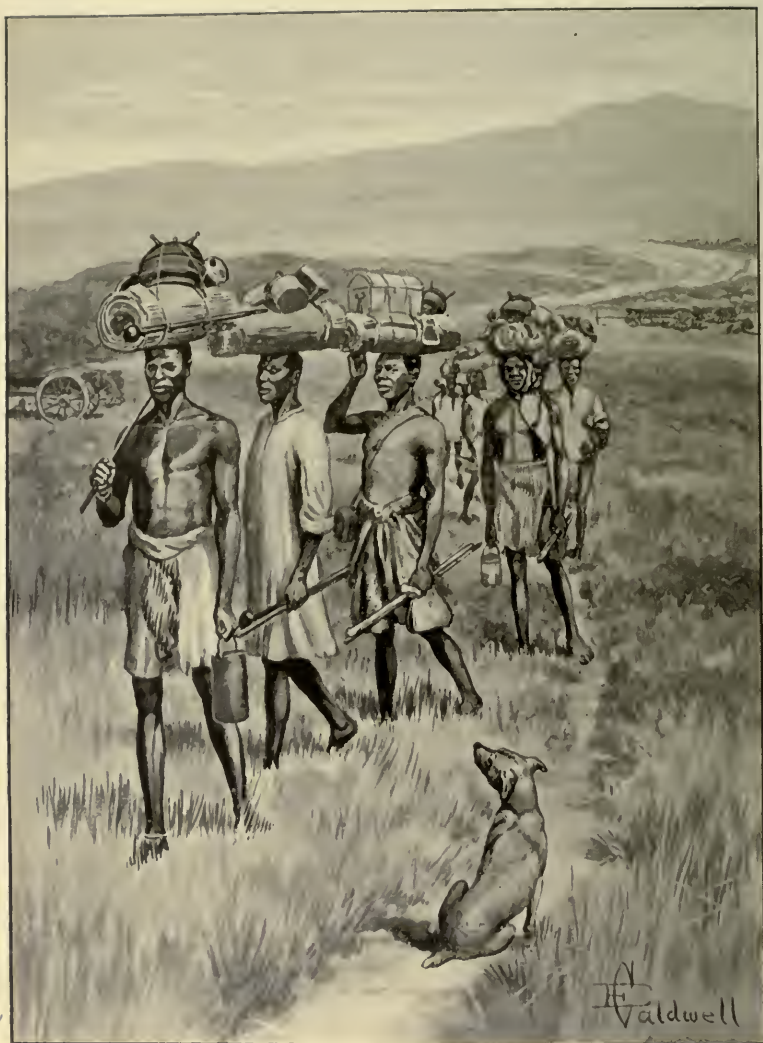
A dog is just as quick as a child to find out when he can take liberties ; he knows that laughter and serious disapproval do not go together ; and Jock with the backing of the boys thoroughly enjoyed himself. That was how it began ; and by degrees it developed into the great practical joke. The curious thing to note was the way in which Jock entered into the spirit of the thing, and how he improved and varied his methods. It was never certain what he would do ; sometimes it would be a wild romp, as it was that day ; at other times he would stalk the intruder in the open, much as a pointer approaches his birds in the last strides, and with eyes fixed steadily and mouth tightly pursed up, he would move straight at him with infinite slowness and deliberation until, the boy's nerve failed, and he turned and ran. At other times again he trotted out as if he had seen nothing, and then stopped suddenly. If the boy came on, Jock waited ; but if there was any sign of fear or hesitation, he lowered his head, humped up his shoulders—as a stagey boxer does when he wants to appear ferocious—and gave his head a kind of chuck forward, as if in the act of charging : this seldom failed to shake the intruder's nerve, and as soon as he turned or backed, the romp began. Still another trick was to make a round in the bush and come up behind unobserved, and then make a furious dash with rumbly gurgly growls ; the startled boy invariably dropped all he had, breaking into a series of fantastic capers and excited yells, to the huge delight of Jim and the others.





But these things were considered trifles : the piece that always 'brought the house down' was the Shangaan gang trick, which on one occasion nearly got us all into serious trouble. The natives going to or from the gold-fields travel in gangs of from four or five to forty or fifty ; they walk along in Indian file, and even when going across the veld or walking on wide roads they wind along singly in the footsteps of the leader. What prompted the dog to start this new game I cannot imagine : certainly no one could have taught it to him ; and as well as one could judge, he did it entirely 'off his own bat,' without anything to lead up to or suggest it.

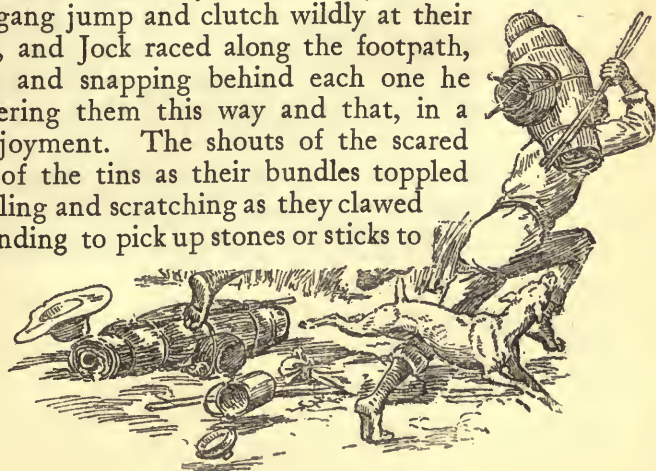
One day a gang of about thirty of these Shangaans, each carrying his load of blankets, clothing, pots, billies and other valuables on his head, was coming along a footpath beside the road some twenty yards away from the waggons. Jock strolled out and sat himself down in the middle of the path ; it was the way he did it and his air, utterly devoid of hostile or even serious purpose, that attracted my attention without rousing any doubts. The leader of the gang, however, was suspicious and shied off wide into the veld ; he passed in a semicircle round Jock, a good ten yards away, and came safely back to the path again, and the dog with his nose in the air merely eyed him with a look of humorous interest and mild curiosity. The second kaffir made the loop shorter, and the third shorter still, as they found their alarm and suspicions unjustified ; and so on, as each came along, the loop was lessened until they passed in safety almost



“ WITH HIS NOSE IN THE AIR EYED THEM WITH MILD CURIOSITY ”

brushing against Jock's nose. And still he never budged—never moved—except, as each boy approached, to look up at his face and, slowly turning his head, follow him round with his eyes until he re-entered the path. There was something extremely funny in the mechanical regularity with which his head swung round. It was so funny that not only the boys at the waggons noticed it and laughed; the unsuspecting Shangaans themselves shared the joke. When half a dozen had passed round in safety, comments followed by grunts of agreement or laughter ran along the line, and then, as each fresh boy passed and Jock's calm inspection was repeated, a regular chorus of guffaws and remarks broke out. The long heavy bundles on their heads made turning round a slow process, so that, except for the first half-dozen, they were content to enjoy what they saw in front and to know by the laughter from behind that the joke had been repeated all down the line.

The last one walked calmly by; but as he did so there came one short muffled bark, "Whoop!" from Jock as he sprang out and nipped the unsuspecting Shangaan behind. The boy let out a yell that made the whole gang jump and clutch wildly at their toppling bundles, and Jock raced along the footpath, leaping, gurgling and snapping behind each one he came near, scattering them this way and that, in a romp of wild enjoyment. The shouts of the scared boys, the clatter of the tins as their bundles toppled down, the scrambling and scratching as they clawed the ground pretending to pick up stones or sticks to





stop his rushes, and the ridiculous rout of the thirty Shangaans in every direction, abandoning their baggage and fleeing from the little red enemy only just visible in the grass as he hunted and harried them, were too much for my principles and far too much for my gravity. To be quite honest, I weakened badly, and from that day on preferred to look another way when Jock sallied out to inspect a gang of Shangaans. Between them, Jim and Jock had beaten me.

But the weakening brought its own punishment and the joke was not far from making a tragedy. Many times while lying some way off in the shade of a tree or under another waggon I heard Jim, all unconscious of my presence, call in a low deep voice, almost a whisper, "Jock, Jock ; kaffirs ; Shangaans ! " Jock's head was up in a moment, and a romp of some sort followed unless I intervened. Afterwards, when Jock was deaf, Jim used to reach out and pull his foot or throw a handful of sand or a bunch of grass to rouse him, and when Jock's head switched up Jim's big black fist pointing to their common enemy was quite enough.

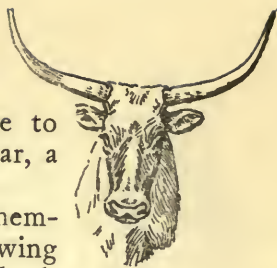
Jim had his faults, but getting others into mischief while keeping out of it himself was not one of them. If he egged Jock on, he was more than ready to stand by him, and on these occasions his first act was to jump for his sticks, which were always pretty handy, and lie in readiness to take a hand if any of the gang should use what he considered unfair means of defence, such as throwing stones and kerries or using assegais or knives ; and Jim—the friend of Jock, the avoided

enemy of all Shangaans, aching for an excuse to take a hand in the row himself—was not, I fear, a very impartial judge.

There was a day outside Barberton which I remember well. We were to start that evening, and knowing that if Jim got into the town he might not be back and fit to work for days, I made him stay with the waggons. He lay there flat out under his waggon with his chin resting on his arms, staring steadily at the glistening corrugated iron roofs of the town, as morose and unapproachable as a surly old watchdog. From the tent of my waggon I saw him raise his head, and following his glance, picked out a row of bundles against the sky-line. Presently a long string of about fifty time-expired mine-boys came in sight. Jim on his hands and knees scrambled over to where Jock lay asleep, and shook him; for this incident occurred after Jock had become deaf.

“Shangaans, Jock; Shangaans! Kill them; kill, kill, kill!” said Jim in gusty ferocious whispers. It must have seemed as if Fate had kindly provided an outlet for the rebellious rage and the craving for a fight that were consuming him.

As Jock trotted out to head them off Jim reached up to the buck-rails and pulled down his bundle of sticks and lay down like a tiger on the spring. I had had a lot of trouble with Jim that day, and this annoyed me; but my angry call to stop was unavailing. Jim, pretending not to understand, made no attempt to stop Jock, but contented himself with calling to him to come back; and Jock, stone deaf, trotted evenly



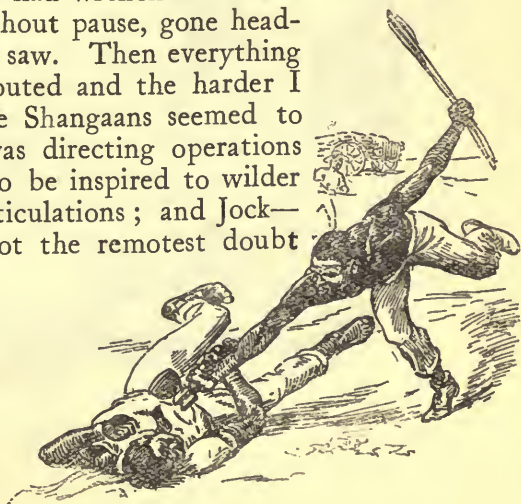
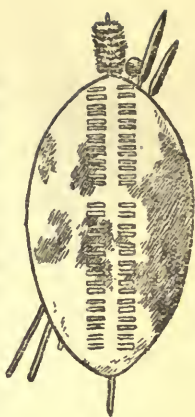


along with his head, neck, back, and tail, all level—an old trick of Jess's which generally meant trouble for some one. Slowing down as he neared the Shangaans he walked quietly on until he headed off the leader, and there he stood across the path. It was just the same as before: the boys, finding that he did nothing, merely stepped aside to avoid bumping against him. They were boys taking back their purchases to their kraals to dazzle the eyes of the ignorant with the wonders of civilisation—gaudy blankets, collections of bright tin billies and mugs, tin plates, three-legged pots, clothing, hats, and even small tin trunks painted brilliant yellow, helped to make up their huge bundles. The last boy was wearing a pair of Royal Artillery trousers; and I have no doubt he regarded it ever afterwards as nothing less than a calamity that they were not safely stowed away in his bundle—for a kaffir would sacrifice his skin rather than his new pants any day. It was from the seat of these too ample bags that Jock took a good mouthful; and it was the boy's frantic jump, rather than Jock's tug, that made the piece come out. The sudden fright and the attempts to face about quickly caused several downfalls; the clatter of these spread the panic; and on top of it all came Jock's charge along the broken line, and the excited shouts of those who thought they were going to be worried to death.

Jim had burst into great bellows of laughter and excited—but quite superfluous—shouts of encouragement to Jock, who could not have heard a trumpet at ten yards.

But there came a very unexpected change. One big Shangaan had drawn from his bundle a brand new side-axe : I saw the bright steel head flash, as he held it menacingly aloft by the short handle and marched towards Jock. There was a scrambling bound from under the waggon, and Jim, with face distorted and grey with fury, rushed out. In his right hand he brandished a tough stout fighting stick ; in his left I was horrified to see an assegai, and well I knew that, with the fighting fury on him, he would think nothing of using it. The Shangaan saw him coming, and stopped ; then, still facing Jim, and with the axe raised and feinting repeatedly to throw it, he began to back away. Jim never paused for a second : he came straight on with wild leaps and blood-curdling yells in Zulu fighting fashion and ended with a bound that seemed to drop him right on top of the other. The stick came down with a whirr and a crash that crimped every nerve in my body ; and the Shangaan dropped like a log

I had shouted myself hoarse at Jim, but he heard or heeded nothing ; and seizing a stick from one of the other boys I was already on the way to stop him, but before I got near him he had wrenched the axe from the kicking boy and, without pause, gone headlong for the next Shangaan he saw. Then everything went wrong : the more I shouted and the harder I ran, the worse the row. The Shangaans seemed to think I had joined in and was directing operations against them : Jim seemed to be inspired to wilder madness by my shouts and gesticulations ; and Jock—well, Jock at any rate had not the remotest doubt



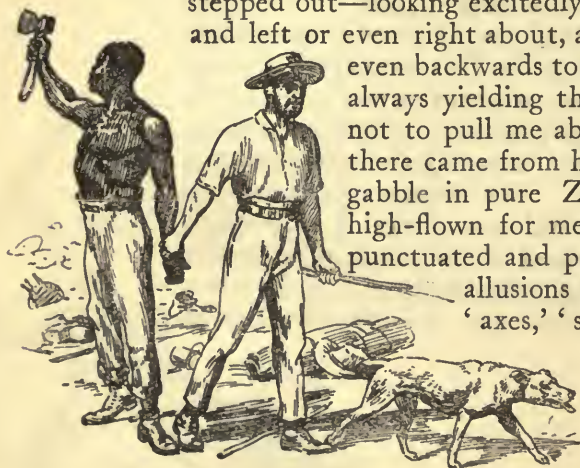


as to what he should do. When he saw me and Jim in full chase behind him, his plain duty was to go in for all he was worth ; and he did it.

It was half an hour before I got that mad savage back. He was as unmanageable as a runaway horse. He had walloped the majority of the fifty himself ; he had broken his own two sticks and used up a number of theirs ; on his forehead there was a small cut and a lump like half an orange ; and on the back of his head another cut left by the sticks of the enemy when eight or ten had rallied once in a half-hearted attempt to stand against him.

It was strange how Jim, even in that mood, yielded to the touch of one whom he regarded as his "Inkos." I could not have forced him back : in that maniac condition it would have needed a powerful combination indeed to bring him back against his will. He yielded to the light grip of my hand on his wrist and walked freely along with me ; but a fiery bounding vitality possessed him, and with long springy strides he stepped out—looking excitedly about, turning to right and left or even right about, and stepping sideways or even backwards to keep pace with me—yet always yielding the imprisoned arm so as not to pull me about. And all the time there came from him a torrent of excited gabble in pure Zulu, too fast and too high-flown for me to follow, which was punctuated and paragraphed by bursting allusions to 'dogs of Shangaans,' 'axes,' 'sticks,' and 'Jock.'

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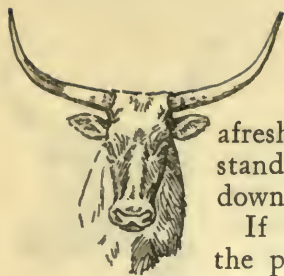


Near the waggons we passed over the 'battle-field,' and a huge guffaw of laughter broke from Jim as we came on the abandoned impedimenta of the defeated enemy. Several of the bundles had burst open from the violence of the fall, and the odd collections of the natives were scattered about ; others had merely shed the outside luggage of tin billies, beakers, pans, boots and hats. Jim looked on it all as the spoils of war, wanting to stop and gather in his loot there and then, and when I pressed on, he shouted to the other drivers to come out and collect the booty.

But my chief anxiety was to end the wretched escapade as quickly as possible and get the Shangaans on their way again ; so I sent Jim back to his place under the waggon, and told the cook-boy to give him the rest of my coffee and half a cup of sugar to provide him with something else to think of and to calm him down.

After a wait of half an hour or so, a head appeared just over the rise, and then another and another, at irregular intervals and at various points : they were scouting very cautiously before venturing back again. I sat in the tent-waggon out of sight and kept quiet, hoping that in a few minutes they would gain confidence, collect their goods, and go their way again. Jim, lying flat under the waggon, was much lower than I was, and—continuing his gabble to the other boys—saw nothing. Unfortunately he looked round just as a scared face peered cautiously over the top of an ant-heap. The temptation was, I suppose, irresistible : he scrambled to his knees with a pretence of starting





afresh and let out one ferocious yell that made my hair stand up; and in that second every head bobbed down and the field was deserted once more.

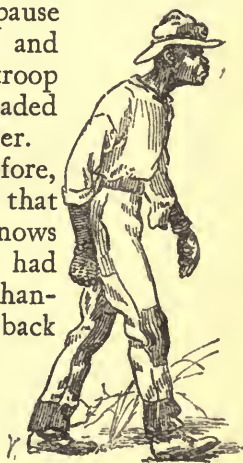
If this went on there could be but one ending: the police would be appealed to, Jim arrested, and I should spend days hanging about the courts waiting for a trial from which the noble Jim would probably emerge with three months' hard labour; so I sallied out as my own herald of peace. But the position was more difficult than it looked: as soon as the Shangaans saw my head appearing over the rise, they scattered like chaff before the wind, and ran as if they would never stop. They evidently took me for the advance guard in a fresh attack, and from the way they ran seemed to suspect that Jim and Jock might be doing separate flanking movements to cut them off. I stood upon an ant-heap and waved and called, but each shout resulted in a fresh spurt and each movement only made them more suspicious. It seemed a hopeless case, and I gave it up.

On the way back to the waggons, however, I thought of Sam—Sam, with his neatly patched European clothes, with the slouchy heavy-footed walk of a nigger in boots, with his slack lanky figure and serious timid face! Sam would surely be the right envoy; even the routed Shangaans would feel that there was nothing to fear there. But Sam was by no means anxious to earn laurels; he was clearly of the poet's view that "the paths of glory lead but to the grave;" and it was a poor-looking weak-kneed and much dejected scarecrow that dragged its way reluctantly out into

the veld to hold parley with the routed enemy that day.

At the first mention of Sam's name Jim had twitched round with a snort, but the humour of the situation tickled him when he saw the too obvious reluctance with which his rival received the honour conferred on him. Between rough gusts of laughter Jim rained on him crude ridicule and rude comments; and Sam slouched off with head bent, relieving his heart with occasional clicks and low murmurs of disgust. How far the new herald would have ventured, if he had not received most unexpected encouragement, is a matter for speculation. Jim's last shout was to advise him not to hide in an ant-bear hole; but, to Sam's relief, the Shangaans seemed to view him merely as a decoy, even more dangerous than I was; for, as no one else appeared, they had now no idea at all from which quarter the expected attack would come. They were widely scattered more than half a mile away when Sam came in sight; a brief pause followed in which they looked anxiously around, and then, after some aimless dashes about like a startled troop of buck, they seemed to find the line of flight and headed off in a long string down the valley towards the river.

Now, no one had ever run away from Sam before, and the exhilarating sight so encouraged him that he marched boldly on after them. Goodness knows when, if ever, they would have stopped, if Sam had not met a couple of other natives whom the Shangaans had passed and induced them to turn back and reassure the fugitives.





An hour later Sam came back in mild triumph, at the head of the Shangaan gang; and, 'clothed in a little brief authority,' stood guard and superintended while they collected their scattered goods—all except the axe that caused the trouble. That they failed to find. The owner may have thought it wise to make no claim on me; Sam, if he remembered it, would have seen the Shangaans and all their belongings burned in a pile rather than raise so delicate a question with Jim; I had forgotten all about it—being anxious only to end the trouble and get the Shangaans off; and that villain Jim 'lay low.' At the first outspan from Barberton next day I saw him carving his mark on the handle, unabashed, under my very nose.

The next time Jim got drunk he added something to his opinion of Sam:

"Sam no good: Sam leada Bible! Shangaan, Sam; Shangaan!"

