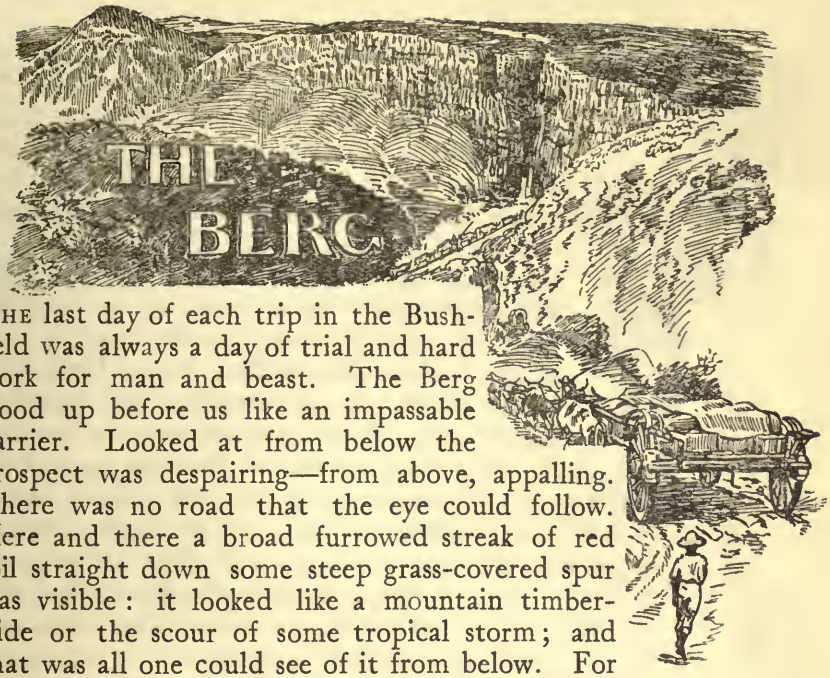


The last day of each trip in the Bushveld was always a day of trial and hard work for man and beast. The Berg stood up before us like an impassable barrier. Looked at from below the prospect was despairing—from above, appalling. There was no road that the eye could follow. Here and there a broad furrowed streak of red soil straight down some steep grass-covered spur was visible: it looked like a mountain timber-slide or the scour of some tropical storm; and that was all one could see of it from below. For perhaps a week the towering bulwarks of the Highveld were visible as we toiled along—at first only in occasional hazy glimpses, then daily clearer higher and grander, as the great barrier it was.

After many hard treks through the broken foothills, with their rocky sideling slopes and boulder-strewn torrent beds, at last the Berg itself was reached. There, on a flat-topped terrace-like spur where the last outspan was, we took breath, halved our loads, double-spanned, and pulled ourselves together for the last big climb.

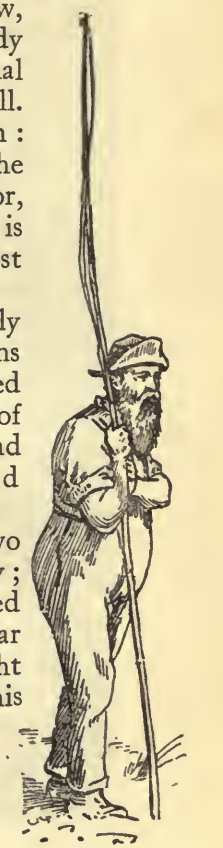
From there the scoured red streaks stood out revealed as road tracks—for, made road there was none; from there, lines of whitish rock and loose stones and big boulders, that one had taken for the beds of mountain torrents, stood revealed as bits of 'road,' linking up some of the broken sections of the route; but even from there not nearly all the track was visible. The bumpy rumbling and heavy clattering of waggons on the rocky trail, the shouts of drivers and the crack of whips, mixed with confusing echoes from somewhere above, set one puzzling and searching higher still. Then in unexpected places here and there other waggons would be seen against the shadowy mountains, creeping up with infinite labour foot by foot, tacking at all sorts of angles, winding by undetected spur and slope and ridge towards the summit—the long spans of oxen and the bulky loads, dwarfed into miniature by the vast background, looking like snails upon a face of rock.

To those who do not know, there is not much difference between spans of oxen; and the driving of them seems merely a matter of brute strength in arm and lung. One span looks like another; and the weird unearthly yells of the drivers, the cracks—like rifle-shots—of the long lashes, and the hum and thud of the more cruel doubled whip, seem to be all that is needed. But it is not so: heart and training in the cattle, skill and judgment in the driver, are needed there; for the Berg is a searching test of man and beast. Some, double-spanned and relieved of half their

three-ton loads, will stick for a whole day where the pull is steepest, the road too narrow to swing the spans, and the curves too sharp to let the fifteen couples of bewildered and despairing oxen get a straight pull; whilst others will pass along slowly but steadily and without check, knowing what each beast will do and stand, when to urge and when to ease it, when and where to stop them for a blow, and how to get them all leaning to the yoke, ready and willing for the 'heave together' that is essential for restarting a heavy load against such a hill. Patience, understanding, judgment, and decision: those are the qualities it calls for, and here again the white man justifies his claim to lead and rule; for, although they are as ten or twenty to one, there is not a native driver who can compare with the best of the white men.

It was on the Berg that I first saw what a really first-class man can do. There were many waggons facing the pass that day; portions of loads, dumped off to ease the pull, dotted the roadside; tangles of disordered maddened spans blocked the way; and fragments of yokes, skeys, strops, and reims, and broken disselbooms, told the tale of trouble.

Old Charlie Roberts came along with his two waggons. He was 'old' with us—being nearly fifty; he was also stout and in poor health. We buried him at Pilgrim's Rest a week later: the cold, clear air on top of the Berg that night, when he brought the last load up, brought out the fever. It was his last trek.



He walked slowly up past us, to "take a squint at things," as he put it, and see if it was possible to get past the stuck waggons ; and a little later he started, making three loads of his two and going up with single spans of eighteen oxen each, because the other waggons, stuck in various places on the road, did not give him room to work double spans. To us it seemed madness to attempt with eighteen oxen a harder task than we and others were essaying with thirty ; we would have waited until the road ahead was clear.

We were half-way up when we saw old Charlie coming along steadily and without any fuss at all. He had no second driver to help him ; he did no shouting ; he walked along heavily and with difficulty beside the span, playing the long whip lightly about as he gave the word to go or called quietly to individual oxen by name, but he did not touch them ; and when he paused to 'blow' them he leaned heavily on his whip-stick to rest himself. We were stopped by some break in the gear and were completely blocking the road when he caught up. Any one else would have waited : he pulled out into the rough sideling track on the slope below, to pass us. Even a good span with a good driver may well come to grief in trying to pass another that is stuck—for the sight and example are demoralising—but old Charlie did not turn a hair ; he went steadily on, giving a brisker call and touching up his oxen here and there with light flicks. They used to say he could kill a fly on a front ox or on the toe of his own boot with the voorslag of his big whip.

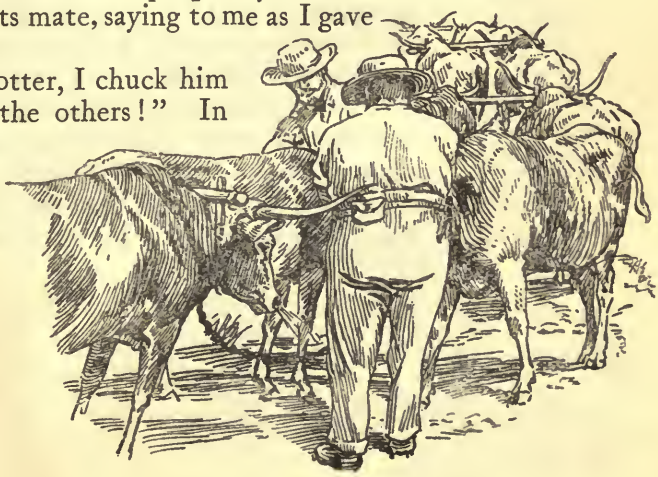
"Old Charlie coming along without any fuss at all"

The track he took was merely the scorings made by skidding waggons coming down the mountain ; it was so steep and rough there that a pull of ten yards between the spells for breath was all one could hope for ; and many were thankful to have done much less. At the second pause, as they were passing us, one of his oxen turned, leaning inwards against the chain, and looked back. Old Charlie remarked quietly, " I thought he would chuck it ; only bought him last week. He's got no heart."

He walked along the span up to the shirking animal, which continued to glare back at him in a frightened way, and touched it behind with the butt of his long whip-stick to bring it up to the yoke. The ox started forward into place with a jerk, but eased back again slightly as Charlie went back to his place near the after oxen. Once more the span went on and the shirker got a smart reminder as Charlie gave the call to start, and he warmed it up well as a lesson while they pulled. At the next stop it lay back worse than before.

Not one driver in a hundred would have done then what he did : they would have tried other courses first. Charlie dropped his whip quietly and outspanned the ox and its mate, saying to me as I gave him a hand :

" When I strike a rotter, I chuck him out before he spoils the others ! " In another ten minutes he and his stalwarts had left us behind.



Old Charlie knew

his oxen—each one of them, their characters and what they could do. I think he loved them too; at any rate, it was his care for them that day—handling them himself instead of leaving it to his boys—that killed him.

Other men had other methods. Some are by nature brutal; others, only undiscerning or impatient. Most of them sooner or later realise that they are only harming themselves by ill-treating their own cattle; and that is one—but only the meanest—reason why the white man learns to drive better than the native, who seldom owns the span he drives; the better and bigger reasons belong to the qualities of race and the effects of civilisation. But, with all this, experience is as essential as ever; a beginner has no balanced judgment, and that explains something that I heard an old transport-rider say in the earliest days—something which I did not understand then, and heard with resentment and a boy's uppish scorn.

"The Lord help the beginner's boys and bullocks: starts by pettin', and ends by killin'. Too clever to learn; too young to own up; swearin' and sloggin' all the time; and never sets down to *think* until the boys are gone and the bullocks done!"

I felt hot all over, but had learned enough to keep quiet; besides, the hit was not meant for me, although the tip, I believe, was: the hit was at some one else who had just left us—one who had been given a start before he had gained experience and, naturally, was then busy making a mess of things himself and laying

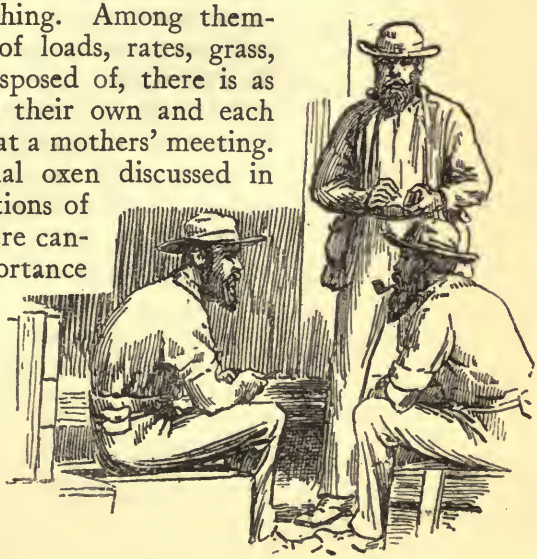
down the law for others. It was when the offender had gone that the old transport-rider took up the general question and finished his observations with a proverb which I had not heard before—perhaps he invented it :

"Yah!" he said, rising and stretching himself, "there's no rule for a young fool."

I did not quite know what he meant, and it seemed safer not to inquire.

The driving of bullocks is not an exalted occupation : it is a very humble calling indeed ; yet, if one is able to learn, there are things worth learning in that useful school. But it is not good to stay at school all one's life.

Brains and character tell there as everywhere ; experience only gives them scope ; it is not a substitute. The men themselves would not tell you so ; they never trouble themselves with introspections and analyses, and if you asked one of them the secret of success, he might tell you "Commonsense and hard work," or curtly give you the maxims 'Watch it,' and 'Stick to it'—which to him express the whole creed, and to you, I suppose, convey nothing. Among themselves, when the prime topics of loads, rates, grass, water and disease have been disposed of, there is as much interest in talking about their own and each other's oxen as there is in babies at a mothers' meeting. Spans are compared ; individual oxen discussed in minute detail ; and the reputations of 'front oxen,' in pairs or singly, are canvassed as earnestly as the importance



of the subject warrants—for, "The front oxen are half the span," they say. The simple fact is that they 'talk shop,' and when you hear them discussing the characters and qualities of each individual animal you may be tempted to smile in a superior way, but it will not eventually escape you that they think and observe, and that they study their animals and reason out what to do to make the most of them; and when they preach patience, consistency and purpose, it is the fruit of much experience, and nothing more than what the best of them practise.

Every class has its world; each one's world—however small—is a whole world, and therefore a big world; for the little things are magnified and seem big, which is much the same thing: Crusoe's island was a world to him and he got as much satisfaction out of it as Alexander or Napoleon—probably a great deal more. The little world is less complicated than the big, but the factors do not vary; and so it may be that the simpler the calling, the more clearly apparent are the working of principles and the relations of cause and effect. It was so with us. To you, as a beginner, there surely comes a day when things get out of hand and your span, which was a good one when you bought it, goes wrong: the load is not too heavy; the hill not too steep; the work is not beyond them for they have done it all before; but now no power on earth, it seems, will make them face the pull. Some jib and pull back; some bellow and thrust across; some stand out or swerve under the chain; some turn tail to front, half choked by the twisted strops, the worn-

out front oxen turn and charge downhill; and all are half frantic with excitement, bewilderment or terror. The constant shouting, the battle with refractory animals, the work with the whip, and the hopeless chaos and failure, have just about done you up; and then some one—who knows—comes along, and, because you block the way where he would pass and he can see what is wrong, offers to give a hand. Dropping his whip he moves the front oxen to where the foothold is best and a straight pull is possible; then walks up and down the team a couple of times talking to the oxen and getting them into place, using his hand to prod them up without frightening them, until he has the sixteen standing as true as soldiers on parade—their excitement calmed, their confidence won, and their attention given to him. Then, one word of encouragement and one clear call to start, and the sixteen lean forward like one, the waggon lifts and heaves, and out it goes with a rattle and rush.

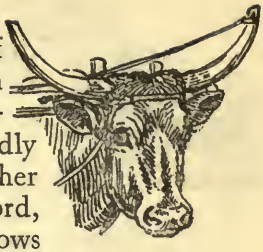
It looks magical in its simplicity; but no lecturer is needed to explain the magic, and if honest with yourself you will turn it over that night, and with a sense of vague discomfort it will all become clear. You may be tempted, under cover of darkness, to find a translation for 'watch it' and 'stick to it!' more befitting your dignity and aspirations: 'observation and reasoning,' 'patience and purpose,' will seem better; but probably you will not say so to any one else, for fear of being laughed at.

And when the new-found knowledge has risen like yeast, and is ready to froth over in advice to others,

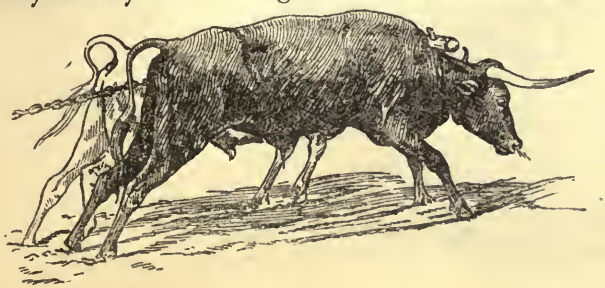
certain things will be brought home to you with simple directness: that, sufficient unto the yeast is the loaf it has to make; that, there is only one person who has got to learn from you—yourself; and that, it is better to be still, for if you keep your knowledge to yourself you keep your ignorance from others.

A marked span brands the driver. The scored bullock may be a rogue or may be a sulky obstinate brute; but the chances are he is either badly trained or overworked, and the whip only makes matters worse; the beginner cannot judge, and the oxen suffer. Indeed, the beginner may well fail in the task, for there are many and great differences in the temperaments and characters of oxen, just as there are in other animals or in human beings. Once in Mashonaland, when lions broke into a kraal and killed and ate two donkeys out of a mixed lot, the mules were found next day twenty miles away; some of the oxen ran for several miles, and some stopped within a few hundred yards; two men who had been roused by the uproar saw in the moonlight one old bullock stroll out through the gap in the kraal and stop to scratch his back with his horn; and three others were contentedly dozing within ten yards of the half-eaten donkeys when we went to the kraal in the early morning and found out what had happened

There are no two alike! You find them nervous and lethargic, timid and bold, independent and sociable, exceptional and ordinary, willing and sulky, restless and content, staunch and faint-hearted—



just like human beings. I can remember some of them now far better than many of the men known then and since :—Achmoed and Bakir, the big after-oxen who carried the disselboom contentedly through the trek and were spared all other work to save them for emergencies; who, at a word, heaved together—their great backs bent like bows and their giant strength thrown in to hoist the waggon from the deepest hole and up the steepest hill; who were the stand-by in the worst descents, lying back on their haunches to hold the waggon up when brakes could do no more ; and inseparables always—even when outspanned the two old comrades walked together. There was little Zole, contented, sociable and short of wind, looking like a fat boy on a hot day, always in distress. There was Bantom, the big red ox with the white band, lazy and selfish, with an enduring evil obstinacy that was simply incredible. There was Rooiland, the light red, with yellow eyeballs and topped horns, a fierce, wild, unapproachable, unappeasable creature, restless and impatient, always straining to start, always moaning fretfully when delayed, nervous as a young thoroughbred, aloof and unfriendly to man and beast, ever ready to stab or kick even those who handled him daily, wild as a buck, but untouched by whip and uncalled by name ; who would work with a straining, tearing impatience that there was no checking, ever ready to outpace the rest, and at the outspan standing out alone, hollow flanked and panting, eyes and nostrils wide with fierceness and distress, yet always ready to start again—a miracle of intense

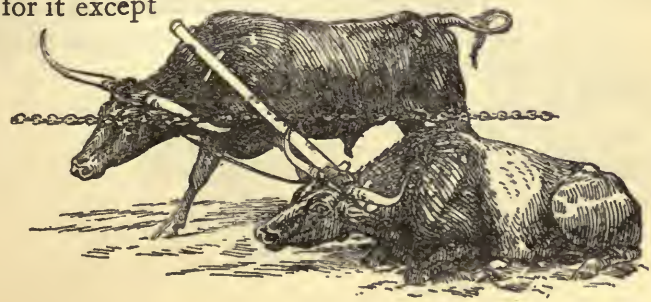


vitality! And then there was old Zwaartland, the coal-black front ox, and the best of all: the sober steadfast leader of the span, who knew his work by heart and answered with quickened pace to any call of his name; swinging wide at every curve to avoid cutting corners; easing up, yet leading free, at every steep descent, so as neither to rush the incline nor entangle the span; holding his ground, steady as a rock when the big pull came, heedless of how the team swayed and strained—steadfast even when his mate gave in. He stood out from all the rest; the massive horns—like one huge spiral pin passed through his head, eight feet from tip to tip—balancing with easy swing; the clean limbs and small neat feet moving with the quick precision of a buck's tread; and the large grave eyes so soft and clear and deep!

For those who had eyes to see the book lay open: there, as elsewhere; there, as always. Jock, with his courage, fidelity and concentration, held the secrets of success! Jim—dissolute, turbulent and savage—could yield a lesson too; not a warning only, sometimes a crude but clear example! The work itself was full of test and teaching; the hard abstemious life had its daily lessons in patience and resource, driven home by every variety of means and incident on that unkindly road. And the dumb cattle—in their plodding toil, in their sufferings from drought and over-work, and in their strength and weakness—taught and tested too. There is little food for self-content when all that is best and worst comes out; but there is much food for thought.

There was a day at Kruger's Post when everything seemed small beside the figure of one black front ox, who held his ground when all others failed. The waggon had sunk to the bed-plank in gluey turf, and, although the whole load had been taken off, three spans linked together failed to move it. For eight hours that day we tried to dig and pull it out, but forty-four oxen on that soft greasy flat toiled in vain. The long string of bullocks, desperate from failure and bewilderment, swayed in the middle from side to side to seek escape from the flying whips; the unyielding waggon held them at one end, and the front oxen, with their straining forefeet scoring the slippery surface as they were dragged backwards, strove to hold them true at the other. Seven times that day we changed, trying to find a mate who would stand with Zwaartland; but he wore them all down. He broke their hearts and stood it out alone! I looked at the ground afterwards: it was grooved in long parallel lines where the swaying spans had pulled him backwards, with his four feet clawing the ground in the effort to hold them true; but he had never once turned or wavered.

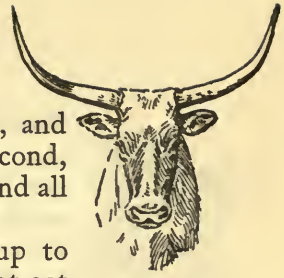
And there was a day at Sand River, when we saw a different picture. The waggons were empty, yet as we came up out of the stony drift, Bantom the sulky hung lazily back, dragging on his yoke and throwing the span out of line. Jim curled the big whip round him, without any good effect, and when the span stopped for a breather in the deep narrow road, he lay down and refused to budge. There was no reason in the world for it except



the animal's obstinate sulky temper. When the whip —the giraffe-hide thong, doubled into a heavy loop— produced no effect, the boys took the yoke off to see if freedom would tempt the animal to rise! It did. At the first touch of the whip Bantom jumped up and charged them; and then, seeing that there was nothing at all the matter, the boys inspanned him and made a fresh start—not touching him again for fear of another fit of sulks; but at the first call on the team, down he went again.

Many are the stories of cruelty to oxen, and I had never understood how human beings could be so fiendishly cruel as to do some of the things that one heard of, such as stabbing, smothering and burning cattle; nor under what circumstances or for what reasons such acts of brutality could be perpetrated; but what I saw that day threw some light on these questions, and, more than anything else, it showed the length to which sulkiness and obstinacy will go, and made me wonder whether the explanation was to be sought in endurance of pain through temper or in sheer incapacity to feel pain at all. This is no defence of such things; it is a bare recital of what took place— the only scene I can recall of what would be regarded as wanton cruelty to oxen; and to that extent it is an explanation, and nothing more! Much greater and real cruelty I have seen done by work and punishment; but it was due to ignorance, impatience, or—on rare occasions—uncontrollable temper; it did not look deliberate and wanton.

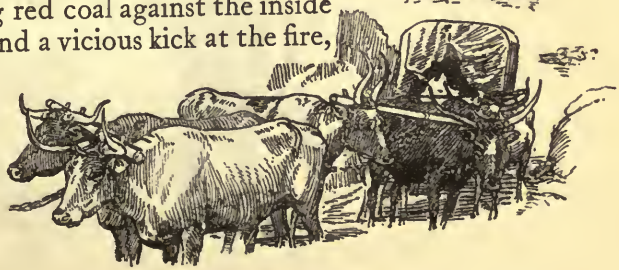
There were two considerations here which governed the whole case. The first was that as long as the ox



lay there it was impossible to move the waggon, and there was no way for the others to pass it ; the second, that the ox was free, strong and perfectly well, and all he had to do was to get up and walk.

The drivers from the other waggons came up to lend a hand and clear the way so that they might get on ; sometimes three were at it together with their double whips ; and, before they could be stopped, sticks and stones were used to hammer the animal on the head and horns, along the spine, on the hocks and shins, and wherever he was supposed to have feeling ; then he was tied by the horns to the trek-chain, so that the span would drag him bodily ; but not once did he make the smallest effort to rise. The road was merely a gutter scoured out by the floods and it was not possible either to drag the animal up the steep sides or to leave him and go on—the waggon would have had to pass over him. And all this time he was outspanned and free to go ; but would not stir.

Then they did the kaffir trick—doubled the tail and bit it : very few bullocks will stand that, but Bantom never winced. Then they took their clasp knives and used them as spurs—not stabbing to do real injury, but pricking enough to draw blood in the fleshy parts, where it would be most felt : he twitched to the pricks—but nothing more. Then they made a fire close behind him, and as the wood blazed up, the heat seemed unendurable ; the smell of singed hair was strong, and the flames, not a foot away, seemed to roast the flesh, and one of the drivers took a brand and pressed the glowing red coal against the inside of the hams ; but, beyond a vicious kick at the fire,



there was no result. Then they tried to suffocate him, gripping the mouth and nostrils so that he could not breathe; but, when the limit of endurance was reached and even the spectators tightened up with a sense of suffocation, a savage shake of the head always freed it—the brute was too strong for them. Then they raised the head with reims, and with the nose held high poured water down the nostrils, at the same time keeping the mouth firmly closed; but he blew the water all over them and shook himself free again.

For the better part of an hour the struggle went on, but there was not the least sign of yielding on Bantom's part, and the string of waiting waggons grew longer, and many others, white men and black, gathered round watching, helping or suggesting. At last some one brought a bucket of water, and into this Bantom's muzzle was thrust as far as it would go, and reims passed through the ears of the bucket were slipped round his horns so that he could not shake himself free at will. We stood back and watched the animal's sides for signs of breathing. For an incredible time he held out; but at last with a sudden plunge he was up; a bubbling muffled bellow came from the bucket; the boys let go the reims; and the terrified animal ridding himself of the bucket after a frantic struggle, stood with legs apart and eyeballs starting from the sockets, shaking like a reed.

But nothing that had happened revealed the vicious ingrained obstinacy of the animal's nature

so clearly as the last act in the struggle : it stood passive, and apparently beaten, while the boys inspanned it again. But at the first call to the team to start, and without a touch to provoke its temper again, it dropped down once more. Not one of all those looking on would have believed it possible; but there it was ! In the most deliberate manner the challenge was again flung down, and the whole fight begun afresh.

We felt really desperate : one could think of nothing but to repeat the bucket trick; for it was the only one that had succeeded at all. The bucket had been flung aside on the stones as the ox freed itself, and one of the boys picked it up to fetch more water. But no more was needed : the rattle of the bucket brought Bantom to his feet with a terrified jump, and flinging his whole weight into the yoke, he gave the waggon a heave that started the whole span, and they went out at a run. The drivers had not even picked up their whips : the only incentive applied was the bucket, which the boy—grasping the position at once—rattled vigorously behind Bantom, doubling his frantic eagerness to get away, amid shouts of encouragement and laughter from the watching group.

The trials and lessons of the work came in various shapes and at every turn ; and there were many trials where the lesson was not easy to read. It would have taken a good man to handle Bantom, at any time—even in the beginning ; but, full-grown, and confirmed in his evil ways, only the butcher could make anything out of him.

And only the butcher did !

PARADISE CAMP

THERE is a spot on the edge of the Berg which we made our summer quarters. When September came round and the sun swung higher in the steely blue, blazing down more pitilessly than ever; when the little creeks were running dry and the water-holes became saucers of cracked mud; when the whole country smelt of fine impalpable dust; it was a relief to quit the Bushveld, and even the hunting was given up almost without regret.

On the Berg the air was clear and bracing, as well it might be five to seven thousand feet above the sea. The long green sweeps of undulating country were broken by deep gorges where the mountain streams had cut their way through the up-tilted outer edge of the big plateau and tumbled in countless waterfalls into the Bushveld below; and behind the rolling downs again stood the remnants of the upper formation—the last tough fragments of those rocks which the miners believed originally held the gold—worn and washed away, inch by inch and ounce

by ounce ever since the Deluge. These broken parapets stood up like ruins of giant castles with every layer in their formation visible across their rugged time-worn fronts—lines, in places a few yards only and in others a mile or more in length, laid one upon another as true as any spirit level could set them—and a wealth of colouring over all that, day by day, one thought more wonderful in variety and blend. Grey and black and yellow, white and red and brown, were there; yet all harmonising, all shaded by growths of shrub and creeper, by festoons of moss or brilliant lichen, all weather-stained and softened, all toned, as time and nature do it, to make straight lines and many colours blend into the picturesque.

Paradise Camp perched on the very edge of the Berg. Behind us rolled green slopes to the feet of the higher peaks, and in front of us lay the Bushveld. From the broken battlements of the Berg we looked down three thousand feet, and eastward to the sea a hundred and fifty miles away, across the vast panorama. Black densely-timbered kloofs broke the edge of the plateau into a long series of projecting turrets, in some places cutting far in, deep crevices into which the bigger waterfalls plunged and were lost. But the top of the Berg itself was bare of trees: the breeze blew cool and fresh for ever there; the waters trickled and splashed in every little break or tumbled with steady roar down the greater gorges; deep pools, fringed with masses of ferns, smooth as mirrors or flecked with dancing sunlight, were set like brilliants in the silver chain of each little stream; and rocks and

pebbles, wonderful in their colours, were magnified and glorified into polished gems by the sparkling water.

But Nature has her moods, and it was not always thus at Paradise Camp. When the cold mist-rains, like wet grey fogs, swept over us and for a week blotted out creation, it was neither pleasant nor safe to grope along the edge of the Berg, in search of strayed cattle—wet and cold, unable to see, and checked from time to time by a keener straighter gust that leapt up over the unseen precipice a few yards off.

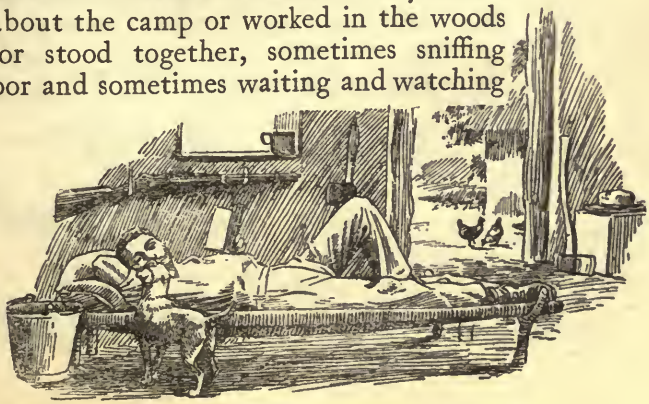
And there was still another mood when the summer rains set in and the storms burst over us, and the lightning stabbed viciously in all directions, and the crackling crash of the thunder seemed as if the very Berg itself must be split and shattered. Then the rivers rose; the roar of waters was all around us; and Paradise Camp was isolated from the rest by floods which no man would lightly face.

Paradise Camp stood on the edge of the kloof where the nearest timber grew; Tumbling Waters, where stood the thousand grey sandstone sentinels of strange fantastic shapes, was a couple of miles away facing Black Bluff, the highest point of all, and The Camel, The Wolf, The Sitting Hen and scores more, rough casts in rock by Nature's hand, stood there. Close below us was the Bathing Pool, with its twenty feet of purest water, its three rock-ledge 'springboards,' and its banks of moss and canopies of tree ferns. Further down the stream spread in a thousand pools and rapids over a mile of black bedrock and then poured in one broad sheet over Graskop Falls. And still further down were the

Mac Mac Falls, three hundred feet straight drop into the rock-strewn gorge, where the straight walls were draped with staghorn moss, like countless folds of delicate green lace, bespangled by the spray. We were felling and slipping timber for the goldfields then, and it was in these surroundings that the work was done.

It was a Sunday morning, and I was lying on my back on a sack-stretcher taking it easy, when Jock gave a growl and trotted out. Presently I heard voices in the next hut and wondered who the visitors were—too lazily content to get up and see; then a cold nose was poked against my cheek and I looked round to see Jess's little eyes and flickering ears within a few inches of my face. For the moment she did not look cross, but as if a faint smile of welcome were flitting across a soured face; then she trotted back to the other hut where Ted was patting Jock and trying to trace a likeness to The Rat.

It was a long time since mother and son had been together, and if the difference between them was remarkable, the likeness seemed to me more striking still. Jock had grown up by himself and made himself; he was so different from other dogs that I had forgotten how much he owed to good old Jess; but now that they were once more side by side everything he did and had done recalled the likeness and yet showed the difference between them. Many times as we moved about the camp or worked in the woods they walked or stood together, sometimes sniffing along some spoor and sometimes waiting and watching



for us to come up—handsome son and ugly mother. Ugly she might be, with her little fretful hostile eyes and her uncertain ever-moving ears, and silent sour and cross; but stubborn fidelity and reckless courage were hers too; and all the good Jock had in him came from Jess.

To see them side by side was enough: every line in his golden brindled coat had its counterpart in her dull markings; his jaw was hers, with a difference, every whit as determined but without the savage look; his eyes were hers—brown to black as the moods changed—yet not fretful and cross, but serenely observant, when quiet, and black, hot and angry, like hers, when roused—yet without the look of relentless cruelty; his ears were hers—and yet how different, not shifting, flickering and ever on the move, nor flattened back with the look of most uncertain temper, but sure in their movements and faithful reflectors of more sober moods and more balanced temper, and so often cocked—one full and one half—with a look of genuinely friendly interest which, when he put his head on one side, seemed to change in a curiously comical way into an expression of quiet amusement.

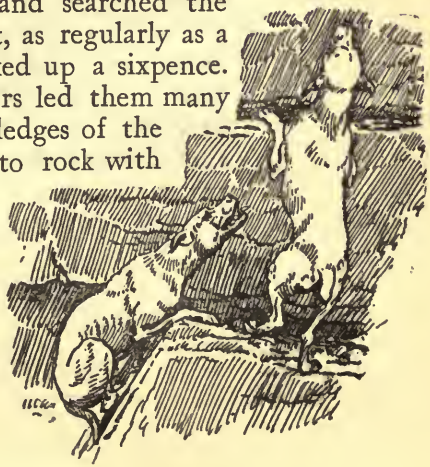
The work kept us close to camp and we gave no thought to shooting; yet Jess and Jock had some good sport together. We gave them courses for breathers after Oribi in the open, but these fleetest of little antelopes left them out of sight in very few minutes. Bushbuck too were plentiful enough, but so wily in keeping to the dark woods and deep kloofs that unless we organised

a drive the only chance one got was to stalk them in the early morning as they fed on the fringes of the bush. I often wondered how the dogs would have fared with those desperate fighters that have injured and killed more dogs and more men than any other buck, save perhaps the Sable.

Once they caught an ant-bear in the open, and there was a rough-and-tumble ; we had no weapons—not even sticks—with us, and the dogs had it all to themselves. The clumsy creature could do nothing with them ; his powerful digging claws looked dangerous, but the dogs never gave him a chance ; he tried hard to reach his hole, but they caught him as he somersaulted to dodge them, and, one in front and one behind, worried the life out of him.

Once they killed a tiger-cat. We heard the rush and the row, and scrambled down through the tangled woods as fast as we could, but they fought on, tumbling and rolling downhill before us, and when we came up to them it was all over and they were tugging and tearing at the lifeless black and white body, Jess at the throat and Jock at the stomach. The cat was as big as either of them and armed with most formidable claws, which it had used to some purpose, for both dogs were torn and bleeding freely in several places. Still they thoroughly enjoyed it and searched the place afresh every time we passed it, as regularly as a boy looks about where he once picked up a sixpence.

Then the dainty little klipspringers led them many a crazy dance along the crags and ledges of the mountain face, jumping from rock to rock with



the utmost ease and certainty and looking down with calm curiosity at the clumsy scrambling dogs as they vainly tried to follow. The dassies too—watchful, silent and rubber-footed—played hide-and-seek with them in the cracks and crevices ; but the dogs had no chance there.

Often there were races after baboons. There were thousands of them along the Berg, but except when a few were found in the open, we always called the dogs in. Among a troop of baboons the best of dogs would have no show at all. Ugly, savage and treacherous as they are, they have at least one quality which compels admiration—they stand by each other. If one is attacked or wounded the others will often turn back and help, and they will literally tear a dog to pieces. Even against one full-grown male a dog has little or no chance ; for they are very powerful, quick as lightning, and fierce fighters. Their enormous jaws and teeth outmatch a dog's, and with four 'hands' to help them the advantage is altogether too great. Their method of fighting is to hold the dog with all four feet and tear pieces out of him with their teeth.

We knew the danger well, for there was a fighting baboon at a wayside place not far from us—a savage brute, owned by a still greater savage. It was kept chained up to a pole with its house on the top of the pole ; and what the owner considered to be a good joke was to entice dogs up, either to attack the baboon or at least to come sniffing about within reach of it, and then see them worried to death. The excuse was

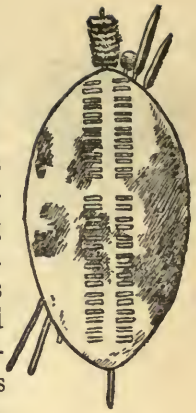
always the same : " Your dog attacked the baboon. I can't help it." Sometimes the dogs were rescued by their owners ; but many were killed. To its native cunning this brute added all the tricks that experience had taught, sometimes hiding up in its box to induce the dog to come sniffing close up ; sometimes grubbing in the sand for food, pretending not to see the intruder until he was well within reach ; sometimes running back in feigned alarm to draw him on. Once it got a grip the baboon threw itself on its side or back and, with all four feet holding the dog off, tore lumps out of the helpless animal. A plucky dog that would try to make a fight of it had no chance ; the only hope was to get away, if possible.

Not every baboon is a fighter like this, but in almost every troop there will be at least one terrible old fellow, and the biggest, strongest and fiercest always dominate and lead the others ; and their hostility and audacity are such that they will loiter behind the retreating troop and face a man on foot or on horseback, slowly and reluctantly giving way, or sometimes moving along abreast, a hostile escort, giving loud roars of defiance and hoarse challenges as though ready on the least provocation or excuse to charge. It is not a pleasant position for an unarmed man, as at the first move or call from the leader the whole troop would come charging down again. It is not actual danger that impresses one, but the uncanny effect of the short defiant roars, the savage half-human look of the repulsive creatures, their still more human methods of facial expression and threatening attitudes, their tactics

in encircling their object and using cover to approach and peer out cautiously from behind it, and their evident co-operation and obedience to the leader's directions and example.

One day while at work in the woods there came to us a grizzled worn-looking old kaffir, whose head ring of polished black wax attested his dignity as a kehla. He carried an old musket and was attended by two youngsters armed with throwing-sticks and a hunting assegai each. He appeared to be a 'somebody' in a small way, and we knew at a glance that he had not come for nothing.

There is a certain courtesy and a good deal of formality observed among the natives which is appreciated by but few of the white men who come in contact with them. One reason for this failure in appreciation is that native courtesy is in its method and expression sometimes just the reverse of what we consider proper; and if actions which seem suggestive of disrespect were judged from the native's standpoint, and according to his code, there would be no misunderstanding. The old man, passing and ignoring the group of boys, came towards us as we sat in the shade for the midday rest, and slowly came to a stand a few yards off, leaning on his long flint-lock quietly taking stock of us each in turn, and waiting for us to inspect him. Then, after three or four minutes of this, he proceeded to salute us separately with "Sakubona, Umlungu!" delivered with measured deliberation at intervals of about a quarter of a minute, each salutation being accompanied by the customary upward



movement of the head—their respectful equivalent of our nod or bow. When he had done the round, his two attendants took their turns, and when this was over, and another long pause had served to mark his respect, he drew back a few paces to a spot about halfway between us and where the kaffirs sat, and, tucking his loin skins comfortably under him, squatted down. Ten minutes more elapsed before he allowed his eyes to wander absently round towards the boys and finally to settle on them for a repetition of the performance that we had been favoured with. But in this case it was they who led off with the "Sakubona, Umganaam!" which he acknowledged with the raising of the head and a soft murmur of contented recognition, "A-hé."

Once more there was silence for a spell, while he waited to be questioned in the customary manner and to give an account of himself, before it would be courteous or proper to introduce the subject of his visit. It was Jim's voice that broke the silence—clear and imperative, as usual, but not uncivil. It always was Jim who cut in, as those do who are naturally impatient of delays and formalities.

"Velapi, Umganaam?" (Where do you come from, friend?) he asked, putting the question which is recognised as courteously providing the stranger with an opening to give an account of himself; and he is expected and required to do so to their satisfaction before he in turn can ask all about them, their occupations, homes, destination and master. and his occupation, purpose and possessions.

The talk went round in low exchanges until at last the old man moved closer and joined the circle ; and then the other voices dropped out, only to be heard once in a while in some brief question or that briefest of all comments—the kaffir click and "Ow!" It may mean anything, according to the tone, but it was clearly sympathetic on that occasion. The old man's voice went on monotonously in a low-pitched impassive tone ; but the boys hung intent on every word to the end. Then one or two questions, briefly answered in the same tone of detached philosophic indifference, brought their talk to a close. The old fellow tapped his carved wood snuff-box with the carefully-preserved long yellowish nail of one forefinger, and pouring some snuff into the palm of his hand, drew it into each nostril in turn with long luxurious sniffs ; and then, resting his arms on his knees, he relapsed into complete silence.

We called the boys to start work again, and they came away, as is their custom, without a word or look towards the man whose story had held them for the last half-hour. Nor did he speak or stir, but sat on unmoved, a picture of stoical indifference. But who can say if it be indifference or fatalism or the most astute diplomacy ? Among white men opinions differ : I put it down as fatalism.

We asked no questions, for we knew it was no accident that had brought the old man our way : he wanted something, and we would learn soon enough what it was. So we waited.

As we gathered round the fallen tree to finish the

cleaning and slip it down to the track Jim remarked irrelevantly that tigers were 'schelms,' and it was his conviction that there were a great many in the kloofs round about. At intervals during the next hour or so he dropped other scraps about tigers and their ways, and how to get at them and what good sport it was, winding up with a short account of how two seasons back an English 'Capitaine' had been killed by one only a few miles away.

Jim was no diplomatist: he had tiger on the brain, and showed it; so when I asked him bluntly what the old man had been talking about, the whole story came out. There was a tiger—it was of course the biggest ever seen—which had been preying on the old chief's kraal for the last six months: dogs, goats and kaffir sheep innumerable had disappeared, even fowls were not despised; and only two days ago the climax had been reached when, in the cool of the afternoon and in defiance of the yelling herdboy, it had slipped into the herd at the drinking-place and carried off a calf—a heifer-calf too! The old man was poor: the tiger had nearly ruined him; and he had come up to see if we, "who were great hunters," would come down and kill the thief, or at least lend him a tiger-trap, as he could not afford to buy one.

In the evening when we returned to camp we found the old fellow there, and heard the story told with the same patient resignation or stoical indifference with which he had told it to the boys; and, if there was something inscrutable in the smoky eyes that might

have hidden a more calculating spirit, it did not trouble us—the tiger was what we wanted ; the chance seemed good enough ; and we decided to go. Tigers —as they are almost invariably called, but properly, leopards—were plentiful enough and were often to be heard at night in the kloofs below ; but they are extremely wary animals and in the inhabited parts rarely move about by day ; however, the marauding habits and the audacity of this fellow were full of promise.

The following afternoon we set off with our guns and blankets, a little food for two days, and the tiger-trap ; and by nightfall we had reached the foot of the Berg by paths and ways which you might think only a baboon could follow.

It was moonlight, and we moved along through the heavily-timbered kloofs in single file behind the shadowy figure of the shrivelled old chief. His years seemed no handicap to him, as with long easy soft-footed strides he went on hour after hour. The air was delightfully cool and sweet with the fresh smells of the woods ; the damp carpet of moss and dead leaves dulled the sound of our more blundering steps ; now and again through the thick canopy of evergreens we caught glimpses of the moon, and in odd places the light threw stumps or rocks into quaint relief or turned some tall bare trunk into a ghostly sentinel of the forest.

We had crossed the last of the many mountain streams and reached open ground when the old chief stopped, and pointing to the face of a high krans—black and threatening in the shadow, as it seemed

to overhang us—said that somewhere up there was a cave which was the tiger's home, and it was from this safe refuge that he raided the countryside.

The kraal was not far off. From the top of the spur we could look round, as from the pit of some vast coliseum, and see the huge wall of the Berg towering up above and half enclosing us, the whole arena roofed over by the star-spattered sky. The brilliant moonlight picked out every ridge and hill, deepening the velvet black of the shadowed valleys, and on the rise before us there was the twinkling light of a small fire, and the sound of voices came to us, borne on the still night air, so clearly that words picked out here and there were repeated by our boys with grunting comments and chuckles of amusement.

We started on again down an easy slope passing through some bush, and at the bottom came on level ground thinly covered with big shady trees and scattered undergrowth. As we walked briskly through the flecked and dappled light and shade, we were startled by the sudden and furious rush of Jess and Jock off the path and away into the scrub on the left; and immediately after there was a grunting noise, a crashing and scrambling, and then one sharp clear yelp of pain from one of the dogs. The old chief ran back behind us, shouting "Ingwa, ingwa!" (Tiger, tiger). We slipped our rifles round and stood facing front, unable to see anything and not knowing what to expect. There were sounds of some sort in the bush—something like a faint scratching, and something like smothered sobbing grunts, but so indistinct

as to be more ominous and disquieting than absolute silence.

" He has killed the dogs," the old chief said, in a low voice.

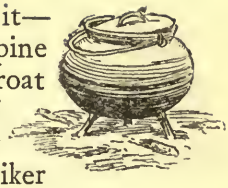
But as he said it there was a rustle in front, and something came out towards us. The guns were up and levelled, instantly, but dropped again when we saw it was a dog; and Jess came back limping badly and stopping every few paces to shake her head and rub her mouth against her fore-paws. She was in great pain and breathed out faint barely-audible whines from time to time.

We waited for minutes, but Jock did not appear; and as the curious sounds still came from the bush we moved forward in open order, very slowly and with infinite caution. As we got closer, scouting each bush and open space, the sounds grew clearer, and suddenly it came to me that it was the noise of a body being dragged and the grunting breathing of a dog. I called sharply to Jock and the sound stopped; and taking a few paces forward then, I saw him in a moonlit space turning round and round on the pivot of his hind-legs and swinging or dragging something much bigger than himself.

Jim gave a yell and shot past me, plunging his assegai into the object and shouting " Porcupine, porcupine," at the top of his voice. We were all round it in a couple of seconds, but I think the porcupine was as good as dead even before Jim had stabbed it. Jock was still holding on grimly, tugging with all his might and always with the same movement of

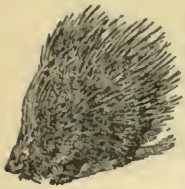
"Tugging with all his might"

swinging it round him, or, of himself circling round it—perhaps that is the fairer description, for the porcupine was much the heavier. He had it by the throat where the flesh is bare of quills, and had kept himself out of reach of the terrible spikes by pulling away all the time, just as he had done with the duiker and other buck to avoid their hind-feet.



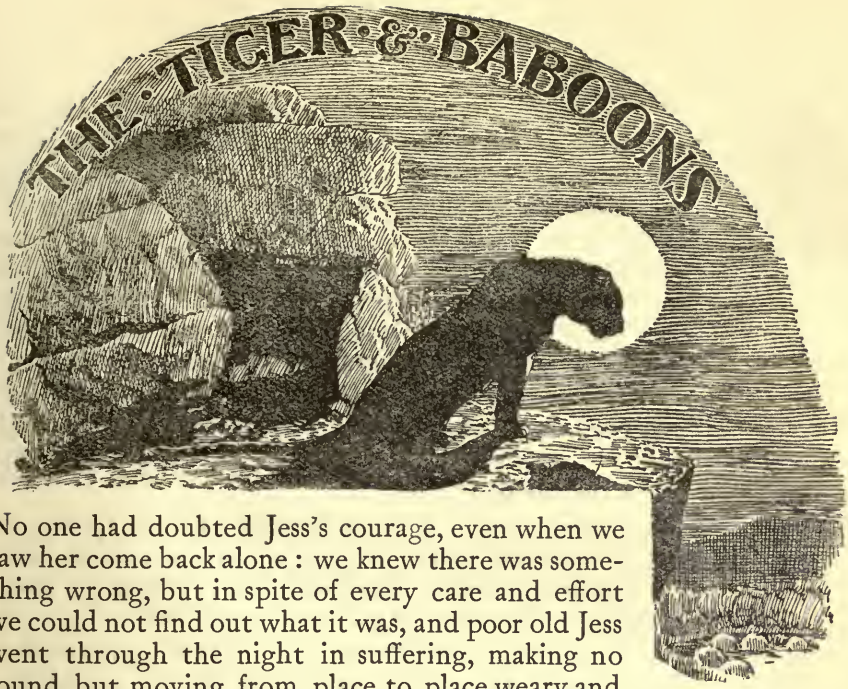
This encounter with the porcupine gave us a better chance of getting the tiger than we ever expected—too good a chance to be neglected; so we cut the animal up and used the worthless parts to bait the big tiger-trap, having first dragged them across the veld for a good distance each way to leave a blood spoor which would lead the tiger up to the trap. This, with the quantity of blood spread about in the fight, lying right in the track of his usual prowling ought to attract his attention, we thought; and we fastened the trap to a big tree, making an avenue of bushes up to the bait so that he would have to walk right over the trap hidden under the dead leaves, in order to get at the bait. We hoped that, if it failed to hold, it would at least wound him badly enough to enable us to follow him up in the morning.

In the bright light of the fire that night, as Jock lay beside me having his share of the porcupine steaks, I noticed something curious about his chest, and on looking closer found the whole of his white 'shirt front' speckled with dots of blood; he had been pricked in dozens of places, and it was clear that it had been no walk-over for him; he must have had a pretty rough handling before he got the porcupine



on the swing. He was none the worse, however, and was the picture of contentment as he lay beside me in the ring facing the fire.

But Jess was a puzzle. From the time that she had come hobbling back to us, carrying her one foot in the air and stopping to rub her mouth on her paws, we had been trying to find out what was the matter. The foot trouble was clear enough, for there was a quill fifteen inches long and as stiff and thick as a lead pencil still piercing the ball of her foot, with the needle-like point sticking out between her toes. Fortunately it had not been driven far through and the hole was small, so that once it was drawn and the foot bandaged she got along fairly well. It was not the foot that was troubling her ; all through the evening she kept repeating the movement of her head, either rubbing it on her front legs or wiping her muzzle with the paws, much as a cat does when washing its face. She would not touch food and could not lie still for five minutes ; and we could do nothing to help her.



No one had doubted Jess's courage, even when we saw her come back alone : we knew there was something wrong, but in spite of every care and effort we could not find out what it was, and poor old Jess went through the night in suffering, making no sound, but moving from place to place weary and restless, giving long tired quivering sighs, and pawing at her mouth from time to time. In the morning light we again looked her all over carefully, and especially opened her mouth and examined that and her nostrils, but could find nothing to show what was wrong.

The puzzle was solved by accident : Ted was sitting on the ground when she came up to him, looking wistfully into his face again with one of the mute appeals for help.

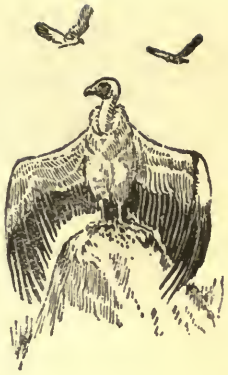
" What is it, Jess, old girl ? " he said, and reaching out, he caught her head in both hands and drew her towards him ; but with a sharp exclamation he instantly

let go again, pricked by something, and a drop of blood oozed from one finger-tip. Under Jess's right ear there was a hard sharp point just showing through the skin : we all felt it, and when the skin was forced back we saw it was the tip of a porcupine quill. There was no pulling it out or moving it, however, nor could we for a long time find where it had entered. At last Ted noticed what looked like a tiny narrow strip of bark adhering to the outside of her lower lip, and this turned out to be the broken end of the quill, snapped off close to the flesh ; not even the end of the quill was visible—only the little strip that had peeled off in the breaking.

Poor old Jess ! We had no very grand appliances for surgery, and had to slit her lip down with an ordinary skinning knife. Ted held her between his knees and gripped her head with both hands, while one of us pulled with steel pliers on the broken quill until it came out. The quill had pierced her lower lip, entered the gums beside the front teeth, run all along the jaw and through the flesh behind, coming out just below the ear. It was over seven inches long. She struggled a little under the rough treatment, and there was a protesting whimper when we tugged ; but she did not let out one cry under all the pain.

We knew then that Jess had done her share in the fight, and guessed that it was she who in her reckless charge had rolled the porcupine over and given Jock his chance.

The doctoring of Jess had delayed us considerably, and while we were still busy at it the old chief came



up to say that his scouts had returned and reported that there was no tiger to be seen, but that they thought the trap had been sprung. They had not liked to go close up, preferring to observe the spot from a tree some way off.

The first question was what to do with Jess. We had no collar or chain, of course, and nothing would induce her to stay behind once Ted started; she would have bitten through ropes and reims in a few minutes, and no kaffir would have faced the job of watching over and checking her. Finally we put her into one of the reed and mud huts, closing the entrance with some raw hides weighted with heavy stones; and off we went.

We found the trap sprung and the bait untouched. The spoor was a tiger's, right enough, and we saw where it had circled suspiciously all round before finally entering the little fenced approach which we had built to shepherd it on to the trap. There each footprint was clear, and it appeared that instead of cautiously creeping right up to the bait and stepping on the setting-plate, it had made a pounce at the bait from about ten feet away, releasing the trap by knocking the spring or by touching the plate with the barrel of its body. The tiger had evidently been nipped, but the body was too big for the teeth to close on, and no doubt the spring it gave on feeling the grip underneath set it free with nothing worse than a bad scraping and a tremendous fright. There was plenty of hair and some skin on the teeth of the trap, but very little blood there, and none at all to be found round about.

That was almost the worst result we could have had : the tiger was not crippled, nor was it wounded enough to enable us to track it, but must have been so thoroughly alarmed that it would certainly be extremely nervous and suspicious of everything now, and would probably avoid the neighbourhood for some time to come.

The trap was clearly of no further use, but after coming so far for the tiger we were not disposed to give up the hunt without another effort. The natives told us it was quite useless to follow it up as it was a real ' schelm,' and by that time would be miles away in some inaccessible krans. We determined however to go on, and if we failed to get a trace of the tiger, to put in the day hunting bushbuck or wild pig, both of which were fairly plentiful.

We had not gone more than a few hundred yards when an exclamation from one of the boys made us look round, and we saw Jess on the opposite slope coming along full speed after us with her nose to the trail. She had scratched and bitten her way through the reed and mud wall of the hut, scared the wits out of a couple of boys who had tried to head her off, and raced away after us with a pack of kaffir mongrels yelping unnoticed at her heels. She really did not seem much the worse for her wounds, and was—for her—quite demonstrative in her delight at finding us again.

In any case there was nothing to be done but to let her come, and we went on once more beating up towards the lair in the black krans with the two dogs in the lead.

The guides led us down into the bed of one of the mountain streams, and following this up we were soon in the woods where the big trees meeting overhead made it dark and cool. It was difficult in that light to see anything clearly at first, and the considerable undergrowth of shrub and creepers and the boulders shed from the Berg added to the difficulty and made progress slow. We moved along as much as possible abreast, five or six yards apart, but were often driven by obstacles into the bed of the stream for short distances in order to make headway at all, and although there did not seem to be much chance of finding the tiger at home, we crept along cautiously and noiselessly, talking—when we had to—only in whispers.

We were bunched together, preparing to crawl along a rock overhanging a little pool, when the boy in front made a sign and pointed with his assegai to the dogs. They had crossed the stream and were walking—very slowly and abreast—near the water's edge. The rawest of beginners would have needed no explanation. The two stood for a few seconds sniffing at a particular spot and then both together looked steadily upstream : there was another pause and they moved very slowly and carefully forward a yard or so and sniffed again with their noses almost touching. As they did this the hair on their backs and shoulders began to rise until, as they reached the head of the pool, they were bristling like hedgehogs and giving little purring growls.

The guide went over to them while we waited, afraid to move lest the noise of our boots on the stones

should betray us. After looking round for a bit he pointed to a spot on the bank where he had found the fresh spoor of the tiger, and picking up something there to show to us he came back to our side. It was a little fragment of whitish skin with white hairs on it. There was no doubt about it then : we were on the fresh spoor of the tiger where it had stopped to drink at the pool and probably to lick the scratches made by the trap ; and leaving the bed of the stream it had gone through the thick undergrowth up towards the krans.

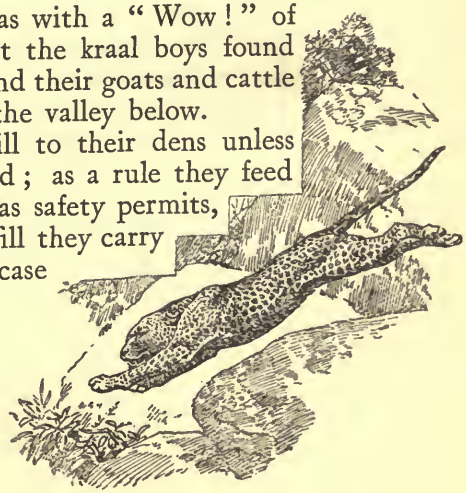
We were not more than a hundred yards from the krans then, and the track taken by the tiger was not at all an inviting one. It was at first merely a narrow tunnel in the undergrowth up the steep hillside, through which we crept in single file with the two dogs a few yards in front; they moved on in the same silent deliberate way, so intent and strung up that they started slightly and instantly looked up in front at the least sound. As the ascent became steeper and more rocky, the undergrowth thinned and we were able to spread out into line once more, threading our way through several roughly-parallel game tracks or natural openings and stooping low to watch the dogs and take our cue from them.

We were about fifteen yards from the precipitous face of the krans, and had just worked round a huge boulder into a space fairly free of bush but cumbered with many big rocks and loose stones, when the dogs stopped and stood quivering and bristling all over, moving their heads slowly about with noses well

raised and sniffing persistently. There was something now that interested them more than the spoor : they winded the tiger itself, but could not tell where. No one stirred : we stood watching the dogs and snatching glances right and left among the boulders and their shady creeper-hidden caves and recesses, and as we stood thus, grouped together in breathless silence, an electrifying snarling roar came from the krans above and the spotted body of the tiger shot like a streak out of the black mouth of a cave and across our front into the bush ; there was a series of crashing bounds, as though a stone rolled from the mountain were leaping through the jungle ; and then absolute silence.

We explored the den ; but there was nothing of interest in it—no remains of food, no old bones, or other signs of cubs. It seemed to be the retreat of a male tiger—secluded, quiet, and cool. The opening was not visible from any distance, a split-off slab of rock partly hiding it ; but when we stood upon the rock platform we found that almost the whole of the horseshoe bay in the Berg into which we had descended was visible, and it was with a " Wow ! " of surprise and mortification that the kraal boys found they could see the kraal itself and their goats and cattle grazing on the slopes and in the valley below.

Tigers do not take their kill to their dens unless there are young cubs to be fed ; as a rule they feed where they kill, or as near to it as safety permits, and when they have fed their fill they carry off the remainder of the carcase



and hide it. Lions, hyenas, and others leave what they cannot eat and return to it for their next feed; but tigers are more provident and more cunning, and — being able to climb trees — they are very much more difficult to follow or waylay by means of their kill. They are not big fellows, rarely exceeding seven feet from nose to tip of tail and 130 lb. in weight; but they are extraordinarily active and strong, and it is difficult to believe until one has seen the proof of it that they are able to climb the bare trunk of a tree carrying a kill much bigger and heavier than themselves, and hang it safely wedged in some hidden fork out of reach of any other animal. I have repeatedly seen the remains of their victims in the forks of trees; once it was part of a pig, but on the other occasions the remains were of horned animals; the pig was balanced in the fork; the others were hooked in by the heads and horns.

A well-known hunter once told me an experience of his illustrating the strength and habits of tigers. He had shot a young giraffe and carried off as much as he could put on his horse, and hid the rest; but when he returned next morning it had disappeared, and the spoor of a full-grown tiger told him why. He followed the drag mark up to the foot of a big tree and found the remains of the carcase, fully 300 lb. in weight, in a fork more than twenty feet from the ground.

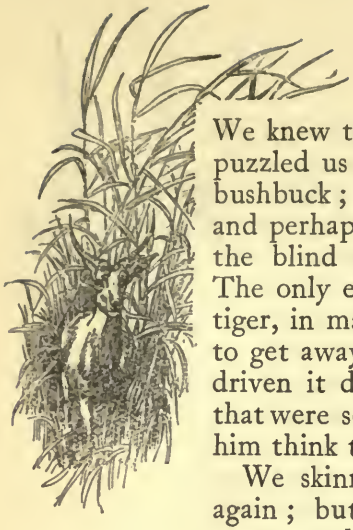
He left it there as a bait and returned again the following morning on the chance of a shot; but the meat had once more been removed and on following

up the spoor he found what was left hidden in another tree some two hundred yards away.

It would have been waste of time to follow our tiger—he would be on the watch and on the move for hours ; so we gave it up at once, and struck across the spurs for another part of the big arena where pig and bushbuck were known to feed in the mornings. It was slow and difficult work, as the bush was very dense and the ground rough. The place was riddled with game tracks, and we saw spoor of koodoo and eland several times, and tracks innumerable of wild pig, rietbuck, bushbuck, and duiker. But there was more than spoor : a dozen times we heard the crash of startled animals through the reeds or bush only a few yards away without being able to see a thing.

We had nearly reached the kloof we were aiming for when we had the good luck to get a bushbuck in a very unexpected way. We had worked our way out of a particularly dense patch of bush and brambles into a corner of the woods and were resting on the mossy ground in the shade of the big trees when the sound of clattering stones a good way off made us start up again and grab our rifles; and presently we saw, outlined against the band of light which marked the edge of the timber, a buck charging down towards us. Three of us fired together, and the buck rolled over within a few yards of where we stood.

We were then in a 'dead end' up against the precipitous face of the Berg where there was no road or path other than game tracks, and where no human being ever went except for the purpose of hunting.



We knew there was no one else shooting there, and it puzzled us considerably to think what had scared the bushbuck; for the animal had certainly been startled and perhaps chased; the pace, the noise it made, and the blind recklessness of its dash, all showed that. The only explanation we could think of was that the tiger, in making a circuit along the slopes of the Berg to get away from us, must have put the buck up and driven it down on to us in the woods below, and if that were so, the reports of our rifles must have made him think that he was never going to get rid of us.

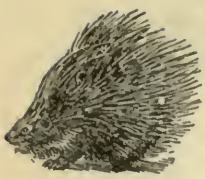
We skinned and cut up the buck and pushed on again; but the roughness of the trail and the various stoppages had delayed us greatly, and we failed to get the expected bag. We got one rietbuck and a young boar; the rietbuck was a dead shot; but the pig, from the shooting standpoint, was a most humiliating failure. A troop of twenty or thirty started up from under our feet as we came out of the blazing sunlight into the gloom of the woods, and no one could see well enough to aim. They were led by a grand boar, and the whole lot looked like a troop of charging lions as they raced by with their bristly manes erect and their tufted tails standing straight up.

As we stood there, crestfallen and disgusted, we heard fresh grunting behind, and turning round we saw one pig racing past in the open, having apparently missed the troop while wallowing in a mudhole and known nothing of our intrusion until he heard the shooting. We gave him a regular broadside, and—as is usually the case when you think that quantity

will do in place of quality—made an awful mess of it, and before we had time to reload Jess and Jock had cut in, and we could not fire again for fear of hitting them. The boys, wildly delighted by this irregular development which gave them such a chance, joined in the chase and in a few seconds it became a chaotic romp like a rat hunt in a schoolroom. The dogs ranged up on each side and were on to the pig together, Jess hanging on to one ear and Jock at the neck; the boar dug right and left at them, but his tusks were short and blunt, and if he managed to get at them at all they bore no mark of it afterwards. For about twenty yards they dragged and tugged, and then all three came somersaulting over together. In the scramble Jock got his grip on the throat, and Jess—rolled and trampled on—appeared between the pig's hind-legs, sliding on her back with her teeth embedded in one of the hams. For half a minute the boar, grunting and snorting, plunged about madly, trying to get at them or to free himself; and then the boys caught up and riddled him with their assegais.

After the two bombardments of the pigs and the fearful row made by the boys there was not much chance of putting up anything more, and we made for the nearest stream in the woods for a feed and a rest before returning to camp.

We had failed to get the tiger, it is true, and it would be useless giving more time or further thought to him, for in all probability it would be a week or more before he returned to his old hunting-ground and his old marauding tricks, but the porcupine and



the pig had provided more interest and amusement than much bigger game might have done, and on the whole, although disappointed, we were not dissatisfied: in fact, it would have needed an ungrateful spirit indeed to feel discontented in such surroundings.

Big trees of many kinds and shapes united to make a canopy of leaves overhead through which only occasional shafts of sunlight struck. The cold mountain stream tumbling over ledges, swirling among rocks or rippling over pebble-strewn reaches, gurgled, splashed and bubbled with that wonderful medley of sounds that go to make the lullaby of the brook. The floor of the forest was carpeted with a pile of staghorn moss a foot thick, and maidenhair fern grew everywhere with the luxuriant profusion of weeds in a tropical garden. Traveller's Joy covered whole trees with dense creamy bloom and spread its fragrance everywhere; wild clematis trailed over stumps and fallen branches; quantities of maidenhair overflowed the banks and drooped to the water all along the course of the stream; whilst, marshalled on either side, huddled together on little islands, perched on rocks, and grouped on overhanging ledges, stood the tree-ferns—as though they had come to drink—their wide-reaching delicate fronds like giant green ostrich-feathers waving gently to each breath of air or quivering as the movement of the water shook the trunks.

Long-tailed greeny-gray monkeys with black faces peered down at us, moving lightly on their branch trapezes, and pulled faces or chattered their indignant

protest against intrusion ; in the tops of the wild fig-trees bright green pigeons watched us shyly—great big birds of a wonderful green ; gorgeous louries too flashed their colours and raised their crests—pictures of extreme and comical surprise ; golden cuckoos there were also and beautiful little green-backed ruby-throated honey-suckers, flitted like butterflies among the flowers on the sunlit fringe of the woods.

Now and again guinea-fowl and bush-pheasant craned their necks over some fallen log or stone to peer curiously at us, then stooping low again darted along their well-worn runs into the thick bush. The place was in fact a natural preserve; a 'bay' let into the wall of the Berg, half-encircled by cliffs which nothing could climb, a little world where the common enemy—man—seldom indeed intruded.

We stayed there until the afternoon sun had passed behind the crest of the Berg above us ; and, instead of going back the way we came, skirted along the other arm enclosing the bay to have the cool shade of the mountain with us on our return journey. But the way was rough ; the jungle was dense ; we were hot and torn and tired ; and the shadow of the mountain stretched far out across the foothills by the time the corner was reached. We sat down to rest at last in the open on the long spur on which, a couple of miles away, the slanting sun picked out the red and black cattle, the white goats, and the brown huts of the kaffir kraal.

Our route lay along the side of the spur, skirting the rocky backbone and winding between occasional

boulders, clumps of trees and bush, and we had moved on only a little way when a loud "Waugh" from a baboon on the mountain behind made us stop to look back. The hoarse shout was repeated several times, and each time more loudly and emphatically; it seemed like the warning call of a sentry who had seen us. Moved by curiosity we turned aside on to the ridge itself, and from the top of a big rock scanned the almost precipitous face opposite. The spur on which we stood was divided from the Berg itself only by a deep but narrow kloof or ravine, and every detail of the mountain side stood out in the clear evening air, but against the many-coloured rocks the grey figure of a baboon was not easy to find as long as it remained still, and although from time to time the barking roar was repeated, we were still scanning the opposite hill when one of the boys pointed down the slope immediately below us and called out, "There, there, Baas!"

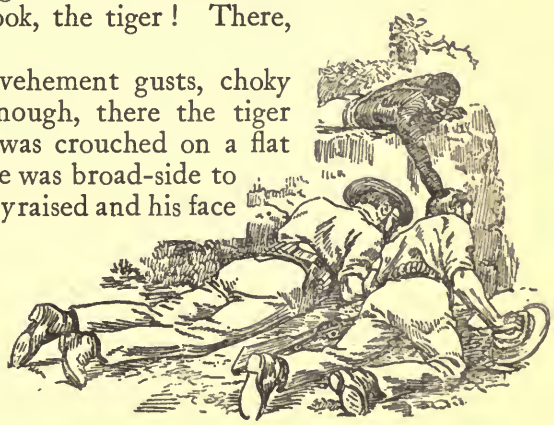
The troop of baboons had evidently been quite close to us—hidden from us only by the little line of rocks—and on getting warning from their sentry on the mountain had stolen quietly away and were then disappearing into the timbered depth of the ravine. We sat still to watch them come out on the opposite side a few minutes later and clamber up the rocky face, for they are always worth watching; but while we watched, the stillness was broken by an agonised scream—horribly human in its expression of terror—followed by roars, barks, bellows and screams from scores of voices in every key; and the crackle of break-

ing sticks and the rattle of stones added to the medley of sound as the baboons raced out of the wood and up the bare rocky slope.

"What is it?" "What's the matter?" "There's something after them." "Look, look! there they come": burst from one and another of us as we watched the extraordinary scene. The cries from below seemed to waken the whole mountain; great booming "waughs" came from different places far apart and ever so high up the face of the Berg; each big roar seemed to act like a trumpet-call and bring forth a multitude of others; and the air rang with bewildering shouts and echoes volleying round the kloofs and faces of the Berg. The strange thing was that the baboons did not continue their terrified scramble up the mountain, but, once out of the bush, they turned and rallied. Forming an irregular semi-circle they faced down hill, thrusting their heads forward with sudden jerks as though to launch their cries with greater vehemence, and feinting to charge; they showered loose earth, stones and débris of all sorts down with awkward underhand scrapes of their fore-paws, and gradually but surely descended to within a dozen yards of the bush's edge.

"Baas, Baas, the tiger! Look, the tiger! There, there on the rock below!"

Jim shot the words out in vehement gusts, choky with excitement; and true enough, there the tiger was. The long spotted body was crouched on a flat rock just below the baboons; he was broad-side to us, with his fore-quarters slightly raised and his face



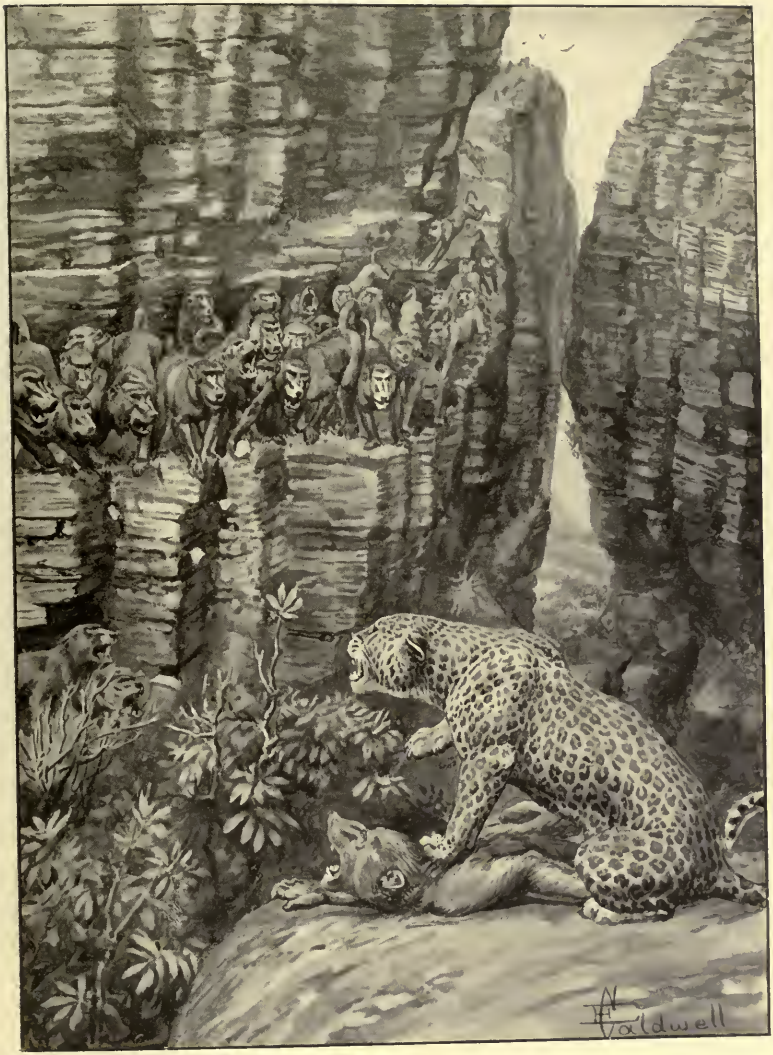
turned towards the baboons; with wide-opened mouth he snarled savagely at the advancing line, and with right paw raised made threatening dabs in their direction. His left paw pinned down the body of a baboon.

The voices from the mountain boomed louder and nearer as, clattering and scrambling down the face, came more and more baboons: there must have been hundreds of them; the semicircle grew thicker and blacker, more and more threatening, foot by foot closer. The tiger raised himself a little more and took swift looks from side to side across the advancing front, and then his nerve went, and with one spring he shot from the rock into the bush.

There was an instant forward rush of the half-moon, and the rock was covered with roaring baboons, swarming over their rescued comrade; and a moment later the crowd scrambled up the slope again, taking the tiger's victim with them. In that seething rabble I could pick out nothing, but all the kaffirs maintained they could see the mauled one dragged along by its arms by two others, much as a child might be helped uphill.

We were still looking excitedly about—trying to make out what the baboons were doing, watching the others still coming down the Berg, and peering anxiously for a sight of the tiger—when once more Jim's voice gave us a shock.

"Where are the dogs?" he asked; and the question turned us cold. If they had gone after the baboons they were as good as dead already—nothing could save



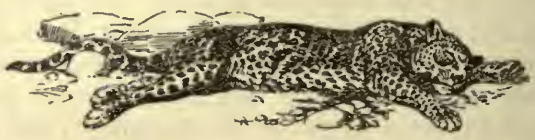
"SCRAMBLING DOWN THE FACE CAME MORE AND MORE BABOONS"

them. Calling was useless: nothing could be heard in the roar and din that the enraged animals still kept up. We watched the other side of the ravine with something more than anxiety, and when Jock's reddish-looking form broke through the bracken near to the tiger's rock, I felt like shutting my eyes till all was over. We saw him move close under the rock and then disappear. We watched for some seconds—it may have been a minute, but it seemed an eternity—and then, feeling the utter futility of waiting there, jumped off the rock and ran down the slope in the hope that the dogs would hear us call from there.

From where the slope was steepest we looked down into the bed of the stream at the bottom of the ravine, and the two dogs were there: they were moving cautiously down the wide stony watercourse just as we had seen them move in the morning, their noses thrown up and heads turning slowly from side to side. We knew what was coming; there was no time to reach them through the bush below; the cries of the baboons made calling useless; and the three of us sat down with rifles levelled ready to fire at the first sight. With gun gripped and breath hard held, watching intently every bush and tree and rock, every spot of light and shade, we sat—not daring to move. Then, over the edge of a big rock overlooking the two dogs, appeared something round; and, smoothly yet swiftly and with a snake-like movement, the long spotted body followed the head and, flattened against the rock, crept stealthily forward until the tiger looked straight down upon Jess and Jock.

The three rifles cracked like one, and with a howl of rage and pain the tiger shot out over the dogs' heads, raced along the stony bed, and suddenly plunging its nose into the ground, pitched over—dead.

It was shot through the heart, and down the ribs on each side were the scraped marks of the trap.



BUFFALO BUSHFIRE & WILD DOGS

The summer slipped away—the full-pulsed ripeness of the year; beauty and passion; sunshine and storm; long spells of peace and gentleness, of springing life and radiant glory; short intervals of reckless tempest and destructive storm! Among the massed evergreens of the woods there stood out here and there bright spots of colour, the careless dabs from Nature's artist hand; yellow and brown, orange and crimson, all vividly distinct, yet all in perfect harmony. The rivers, fed from the replenished mountains' stores, ran full but clear; the days were bright; the nights were cold; the grass was rank and seeding; and it was time to go.

Once more the Bushveld beckoned us away.

We picked a spot where grass and water were good, and waited for the rivers to fall; and it was while loitering there that a small hunting party from the fields making for the Sabi came across us and camped for the night. In the morning two of our party joined them for a few days to try for something big.

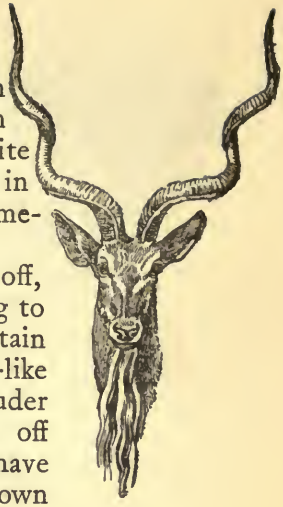
It was too early in the season for really good sport. The rank tropical grass—six to eight feet high in most places, twelve to fourteen in some—was too green to burn yet, and the stout stems and heavy seed heads made walking as difficult as in a field of tangled sugar cane ; for long stretches it was not possible to see five yards, and the dew in the early mornings was so heavy that after a hundred yards of such going one was drenched to the skin.

We were forced into the more open parts—the higher, stonier, more barren ground where just then the bigger game was by no means plentiful.

On the third day two of us started out to try a new quarter in the hilly country rising towards the Berg. My companion, Francis, was an experienced hunter and his idea was that we should find the big game, not on the hot humid flats or the stony rises, but still higher up on the breezy hill tops or in the cool shady kloofs running towards the mountains. We passed a quantity of smaller game that morning, and several times heard the stampede of big animals—wildebeeste and waterbuck, as we found by the spoor—but it was absolutely impossible to see them. The dew was so heavy that even our hats were soaking wet, and times out of number we had to stop to wipe the water out of our eyes in order to see our way ; a complete ducking would not have made the least difference.

Jock fared better than we did, finding openings and game tracks at his own level, which were of no use to us ; he also knew better than we did what was going on ahead, and it was tantalising in the extreme to

see him slow down and stand with his nose thrown up, giving quick soft sniffs and ranging his head from side to side, when he knew there was something quite close, and knew too that a few more toiling steps in that rank grass would be followed by a rush of something which we would never see.



Once we heard a foot stamp not twenty yards off, and stood for a couple of minutes on tip-toe trying to pierce the screen of grass in front, absolutely certain that eyes and ears were turned on us in death-like silence waiting for the last little proof of the intruder that would satisfy their owners and start them off before we could get a glimpse. The silence must have made them suspicious, for at some signal unknown to us the troop broke away and we had the mortification to see something, which we had ignored as a branch, tilt slowly back and disappear : there was no mistaking the koodoo bull's horns once they moved !

After two hours of this we struck a stream, and there we made somewhat better pace and less noise, often taking to the bed of the creek for easier going. There, too, we found plenty of drinking places and plenty of fresh spoor of the bigger game, and as the hills began to rise in view above the bush and trees, we found what Francis was looking for. Something caught his eye on the far side of the stream, and he waded in. I followed and when half way through saw the contented look on his face and caught his words : " Buffalo ! I thought so ! "

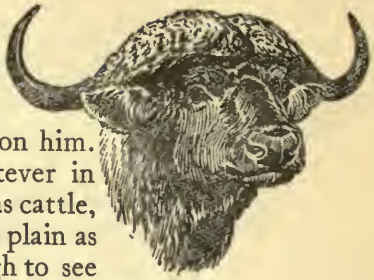
We sat down then to think it out. The spoor told of a troop of a dozen to sixteen animals—bulls, cows,

and calves; and it was that morning's spoor: even in the soft moist ground at the stream's edge the water had not yet oozed into most of the prints. Fortunately there was a light breeze from the hills, and as it seemed probable that in any case they would make that way for the hot part of the day we decided to follow for some distance on the track and then make for the likeliest poort in the hills.

The buffalo had come up from the low country in the night on a course striking the creek diagonally in the drinking place; their departing spoor went off at a slight tangent from the stream—the two trails making a very wide angle at the drinking place and confirming the idea that after their night's feed in the rich grass lower down they were making for the hills again in the morning and had touched at the stream to drink.

Jock seemed to gather from our whispered conversation and silent movements that there was work to hand, and his eyes moved from one face to the other as we talked, much as a child watches the faces in a conversation it cannot quite follow. When we got up and began to move along the trail, he gave one of his little sideways bounds, as if he half thought of throwing a somersault and restrained himself; and then with several approving waggings of his tail settled down at once to business.

Jock went in front: it was best so, and quite safe, for, whilst certain to spot anything long before we could, there was not the least risk of his rushing it or making any noise. The slightest whisper of a "Hst"



from me would have brought him to a breathless standstill at any moment; but even this was not likely to be needed, for he kept as close a watch on my face as I did on him.

There was, of course, no difficulty whatever in following the spoor ; the animals were as big as cattle, and their trail through the rank grass was as plain as a road : our difficulty was to get near enough to see them without being heard. Under the down-trodden grass there were plenty of dry sticks to step on, any of which would have been as fatal to our chances as a pistol shot, and even the unavoidable rustle of the grass might betray us while the buffalo themselves remained hidden. Thus our progress was very slow, a particularly troublesome impediment being the grass stems thrown down across the trail by the animals crossing and re-crossing each others' spoor and stopping to crop a mouthful here and there or perhaps to play. The tambookie grass in these parts has a stem thicker than a lead pencil, more like young bamboo than grass ; and these stems thrown cross-ways by storms or game make an entanglement through which the foot cannot be forced : it means high stepping all the time.

We expected to follow the spoor for several miles before coming on the buffalo—probably right into the kloof towards which it appeared to lead—but were, nevertheless, quite prepared to drop on to them at any moment, knowing well how game will loiter on their way when undisturbed and vary their time and course, instinctively avoiding the too regular habits which would make them an easy prey.

Jock moved steadily along the trodden track, sliding easily through the grass or jumping softly and noiselessly over impediments, and we followed, looking ahead as far as the winding course of the trail permitted.

To right and left of us stood the screen of tall grass, bush and trees. Once Jock stopped, throwing up his nose, and stood for some seconds while we held our breath ; but having satisfied himself that there was nothing of immediate consequence, he moved on again —rather more slowly, as it appeared to us. I looked at Francis's face ; it was pale and set like marble, and his watchful grey eyes were large and wide like an antelope's, as though opened out to take in everything ; and those moments of intense interest and expectation were the best part of a memorable day.

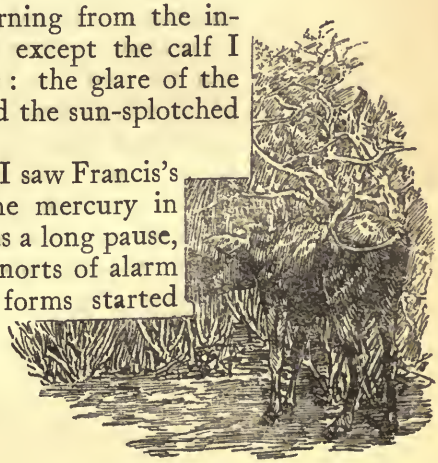
There was something near : we felt it ! Jock was going more carefully than ever, with his head up most of the time ; and the feeling of expectation grew stronger and stronger until it amounted to absolute certainty. Then Jock stopped, stopped in midstride, not with his nose up ranging for scent, but with head erect, ears cocked, and tail poised—dead still : he was looking at something.

We had reached the end of the grass where the bush and trees of the mountain slope had choked it out, and before us there was fairly thick bush mottled with black shadows and patches of bright sunlight in which it was most difficult to see anything. There we stood like statues, the dog in front with the two men abreast behind him, and all peering intently. Twice Jock

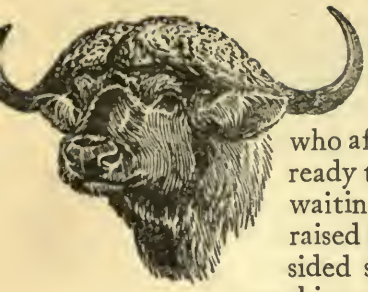
slowly turned his head and looked into my eyes, and I felt keenly the sense of hopeless inferiority. "There it is, what are you going to do?" was what the first look seemed to say; and the second: "Well, what are you waiting for?"

How long we stood thus it is not possible to say: time is no measure of such things, and to me it seemed unending suspense; but we stood our ground scarcely breathing, knowing that something was there, because he saw it and told us so, and knowing that as soon as we moved it would be gone. Then close to the ground there was a movement—something swung, and the full picture flashed upon us. It was a buffalo calf standing in the shade of a big bush with its back towards us, and it was the swishing of the tail that had betrayed it. We dared not breathe a word or pass a look—a face turned might have caught some glint of light and shown us up; so we stood like statues each knowing that the other was looking for the herd and would fire when he got a chance at one of the full-grown animals.

My eyes were strained and burning from the intensity of the effort to see; but except the calf I could not make out a living thing: the glare of the yellow grass in which we stood, and the sun-splotched darkness beyond it beat me.



At last, in the corner of my eye, I saw Francis's rifle rise, as slowly—almost—as the mercury in a warmed thermometer. There was a long pause, and then came the shot and wild snorts of alarm and rage. A dozen huge black forms started



into life for a second and as quickly vanished —scattering and crashing through the jungle.

The first clear impression was that of Jock, who after one swift run forward for a few yards stood ready to spring off in pursuit, looking back at me and waiting for the word to go ; but at the sign of my raised hand, opened with palm towards him, he subsided slowly and lay down flat with his head resting on his paws.

" Did you see ? " asked Francis.

" Not till you fired. I heard it strike. What was it ? "

" Hanged if I know ! I heard it too. It was one of the big uns ; but bull or cow I don't know."

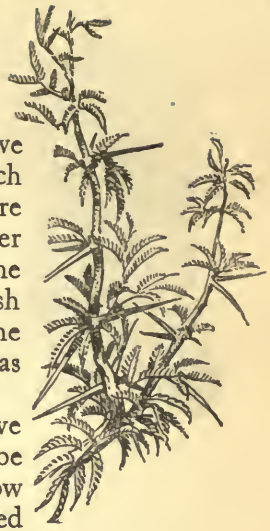
" Where did you get it ? "

" Well, I couldn't make out more than a black patch in the bush. It moved once, but I couldn't see how it was standing—end on or across. It may be hit anywhere. I took for the middle of the patch and let drive. Bit risky, eh ? "

" Seems like taking chances."

" Well, it was no use waiting : we came for this ! " and then he added with a careless laugh, " They always clear from the first shot if you get 'em at close quarters, but the fun'll begin now. Expect he'll lay for us in the track somewhere."

That is the way of the wounded buffalo—we all knew that ; and old Rocky's advice came to mind with a good deal of point : " Keep cool and shoot straight—or stay right home " ; and Jock's expectant watchful look smote me with another memory—" It was my dawg ! "



A few yards from where the buffalo had stood we picked up the blood spoor. There was not very much of it, but we saw from the marks on the bushes here and there, and more distinctly on some grass further on, that the wound was pretty high up and on the right side. Crossing a small stretch of more open bush we reached the dense growth along the banks of the stream, and as this continued up into the kloof it was clear we had a tough job before us.

Animals when badly wounded nearly always leave the herd, and very often go down wind so as to be able to scent and avoid their pursuers. This fellow had followed the herd up wind, and that rather puzzled us.

A wounded buffalo in thick bush is considered to be about as nasty a customer as any one may desire to tackle; for, its vindictive indomitable courage and extraordinary cunning are a very formidable combination, as a long list of fatalities bears witness. Its favourite device—so old hunters will tell you—is to make off down wind when hit, and after going for some distance, come back again in a semi-circle to intersect its own spoor, and there under good cover lie in wait for those who may follow up.

This makes the sport quite as interesting as need be, for the chances are more nearly even than they generally are in hunting. The buffalo chooses the ground that suits its purpose of ambushing its enemy, and naturally selects a spot where concealment is possible; but, making every allowance for this, it seems little short of a miracle that the huge black

beast is able to hide itself so effectually that it can charge from a distance of a dozen yards on to those who are searching for it.

The secret of it seems to lie in two things : first, absolute stillness ; and second, breaking up the colour. No wild animal, except those protected by distance and open country, will stand against a background of light or of uniform colour, nor will it as a rule allow its own shape to form an unbroken patch against its chosen background.

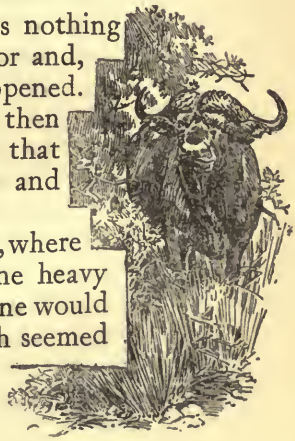
They work on Nature's lines. Look at the ostrich—the cock, black and handsome, so strikingly different from the commonplace grey hen ! Considering that for periods of six weeks at a stretch they are anchored to one spot hatching the eggs, turn and turn about, it seems that one or other must be an easy victim for the beast of prey, since the same background cannot possibly suit both. But they know that too ; so the grey hen sits by day, and the black cock by night ! And the ostrich is not the fool it is thought to be —burying its head in the sand ! Knowing how the long stem of a neck will catch the eye, it lays it flat on the ground, as other birds do, when danger threatens the nest or brood, and concealment is better than flight. That tame chicks will do this in a bare paddock is only a laughable assertion of instinct.

Look at the zebra ! There is nothing more striking, nothing that arrests the eye more sharply—in the Zoo—than this vivid contrast of colour ; yet in the bush the wavy stripes of black and white, are a protection, enabling him to hide at will.

I have seen a wildebeeste effectually hidden by a single blighted branch; a koodoo bull, by a few twisty sticks; a crouching lion, by a wisp of feathery grass no higher than one's knee, no bigger than a vase of flowers! Yet, the marvel of it is always fresh.

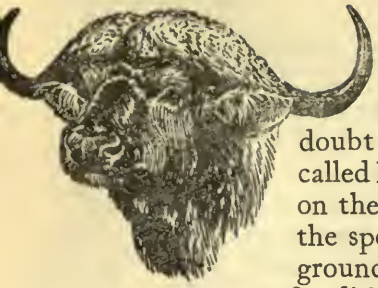
After a couple of hundred yards of that sort of going, we changed our plan, taking to the creek again and making occasional cross-cuts to the trail, to be sure he was still ahead. It was certain then that the buffalo was following the herd and making for the poort, and as he had not stopped once on our account we took to the creek after the fourth cross-cut and made what pace we could to reach the narrow gorge where we reckoned to pick up the spoor again.

There are, however, few short cuts—and no certainties—in hunting; when we reached the poort there was no trace to be found of the wounded buffalo; the rest of the herd had passed in, but we failed to find blood or other trace of the wounded one, and Jock was clearly as much at fault as we were.



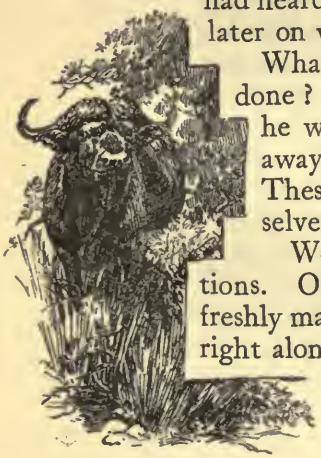
We had overshot the mark and there was nothing for it but to hark back to the last blood spoor and, by following it up, find out what had happened. This took over an hour, for we spoored him then with the utmost caution, being convinced that the buffalo, if not dead, was badly wounded and lying in wait for us.

We came on his 'stand,' in a well-chosen spot, where the game path took a sharp turn round some heavy bushes. The buffalo had stood, not where one would naturally expect it—in the dense cover which seemed



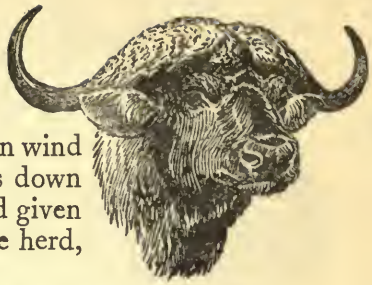
just suited for his purpose—but among lighter bush on the *opposite* side and about twenty yards nearer to us. There was no room for doubt about his hostile intentions ; and when we recalled how we had instantly picked out the thick bush on the left—to the exclusion of everything else—as the spot to be watched, his selection of more open ground on the other side, and nearer to us, seemed so fiendishly clever that it made one feel cold and creepy. One hesitates to say it was deliberately planned ; yet —plan, instinct or accident—there was the fact.

The marks showed us he was badly hit ; but there was no limb broken, and no doubt he was good for some hours yet. We followed along the spoor, more cautiously than ever ; and when we reached the sharp turn beyond the thick bush we found that the path was only a few yards from the stream, so that on our way up the bed of the creek we had passed within twenty yards of where the buffalo was waiting for us. No doubt he had heard us then as we walked past, and had winded us later on when we got ahead of him into the poort.



What had he made of it ? What had he done ? Had he followed up to attack us ? Was he waiting somewhere near ? Or had he broken away into the bush on finding himself headed off ? These were some of the questions we asked ourselves as we crept along.

Well ! what he had done did not answer our questions. On reaching the poort again we found his spoor, freshly made since we had been there, and he had walked right along through the gorge without stopping again,



and gone into the kloof beyond. Whether he had followed us up when we got ahead of him —hoping to stalk us from behind; or had gone ahead, expecting to meet us coming down wind to look for him; or, when he heard us pass down stream again—and, it may be, thought we had given up pursuit—had simply walked on after the herd, were questions never answered.

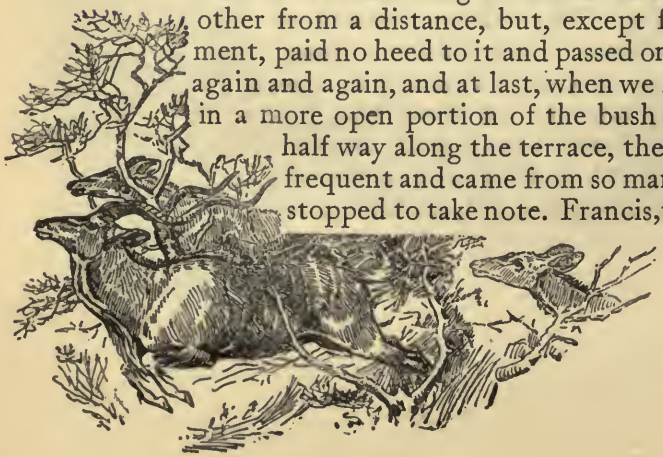
A breeze had risen since morning, and as we approached the hills it grew stronger: in the poort itself it was far too strong for our purpose—the wind coming through the narrow opening like a forced draught. The herd would not stand there, and it was not probable that the wounded animal would stop until he joined the others or reached a more sheltered place. We were keen on the chase, and as he had about an hour's start of us and it was already midday, there was no time to waste.

Inside the poort the kloof opened out into a big valley away to our left—our left being the right bank of the stream—and bordering the valley on that side there were many miles of timbered kloofs and green slopes, with a few kaffir kraals visible in the distance; but to the right the formation was quite different, and rather peculiar. The stream—known to the natives as Hlamba-Nyati, or Buffalo's Bathing Place —had in the course of time shortened its course to the poort by eating into the left bank, thus leaving a high, and in most places, inaccessible terrace above it on the left side and a wide stretch of flat alluvium on the right. This terrace was bounded on one side

by the steep bank of the creek and walled in on the other side by the precipitous kranses of the mountains. At the top end it opened out like a fan which died away in a frayed edge in the numberless small kloofs and spurs fringing the amphitheatre of the hills. The shape was in fact something like the human arm and hand with the fingers outspread. The elbow was the poort, the arm the terrace—except that the terrace was irregularly curved—and the fingers the small kloofs in the mountains. No doubt the haunts of the buffalo were away in the 'fingers,' and we worked steadily along the spoor in that direction.

Game paths were numerous and very irregular, and the place was a perfect jungle of trees, bush, bramble and the tallest rankest grass. I have ridden in that valley many times since then through grass standing several feet above my head. It was desperately hard work, but we did want to get the buffalo; and although the place was full of game and we put up koodoo, wildebeeste, rietbuck, bushbuck, and duiker, we held to the wounded buffalo's spoor, neglecting all else.

Just before ascending the terrace we had heard the curious far-travelling sound of kaffirs calling to each other from a distance, but, except for a passing comment, paid no heed to it and passed on; later we heard it again and again, and at last, when we happened to pause in a more open portion of the bush after we had gone half way along the terrace, the calling became so frequent and came from so many quarters that we stopped to take note. Francis, who spoke Zulu like



one of themselves, at last made out a word or two which gave the clue.

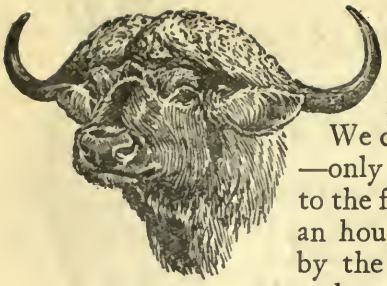
"They're after the wounded buffalo!" he said. "Come on, man, before they get their dogs, or we'll never see him again."

Knowing then that the buffalo was a long way ahead, we scrambled on as fast as we could whilst holding to his track; but it was very hot and very rough and, to add to our troubles, smoke from a grass fire came driving into our faces.

"Niggers burning on the slopes; confound them!" Francis growled.

They habitually fire the grass in patches during the summer and autumn, as soon as it is dry enough to burn, in order to get young grass for the winter or the early spring, and although the smoke worried us there did not seem to be anything unusual about the fire. But ten minutes later we stopped again; the smoke was perceptibly thicker; birds were flying past us down wind, with numbers of locusts and other insects; two or three times we heard buck and other animals break back; and all were going the same way. Then the same thought struck us both—it was stamped in our faces: this was no ordinary mountain grass fire; it was the bush.

Francis was a quiet fellow, one of the sort it is well not to rouse. His grave is in the Bushveld where his unbeaten record among intrepid lion-hunters was made, and where he fell in the war, leaving another and greater record to his name. The blood rose slowly to his face, until it was bricky red, and he looked an ugly customer as he said:



"The black brutes have fired the valley to burn him out. Come on quick. We must get out of this on to the slopes!"

We did not know then that there were no slopes—only a precipitous face of rock with dense jungle to the foot of it; and after we had spent a quarter of an hour in that effort, we found our way blocked by the krans and a tangle of undergrowth much worse than that in the middle of the terrace. The noise made by the wind in the trees and our struggling through the grass and bush had prevented our hearing the fire at first, but now its ever growing roar drowned all sounds. Ordinarily, there would have been no real difficulty in avoiding a bush fire; but, pinned in between the river and the precipice and with miles of dense bush behind us, it was not at all pleasant.

Had we turned back even then and made for the poort it is possible we might have travelled faster than the fire, but it would have been rough work indeed; moreover, that would have been going back—and we did want to get the buffalo—so we decided to make one more try, towards the river this time. It was not much of a try, however, and we had gone no further than the middle of the terrace again when it became alarmingly clear that this fire meant business.

The wind increased greatly, as it always does once a bush fire gets a start; the air was thick with smoke, and full of flying things; in the bush and grass about us there was a constant scurrying; the terror of stampede was in the very atmosphere. A few words

of consultation decided us, and we started to burn a patch for standing room and protection.

The hot sun and strong wind had long evaporated all the dew and moisture from the grass, but the sap was still up, and the fire—our fire—seemed cruelly long in catching on. With bunches of dry grass for brands we started burns in twenty places over a length of a hundred yards, and each little flame licked up, spread a little, and then hesitated or died out: it seemed as if ours would never take, while the other came on with roars and leaps, sweeping clouds of sparks and ash over us in the dense rolling mass of smoke.

At last a fierce rush of wind struck down on us, and in a few seconds each little flame became a living demon of destruction; another minute, and the stretch before us was a field of swaying flame. There was a sudden roar and crackle, as of musketry, and the whole mass seemed lifted into the air in one blazing sheet: it simply leaped into life and swept everything before it.

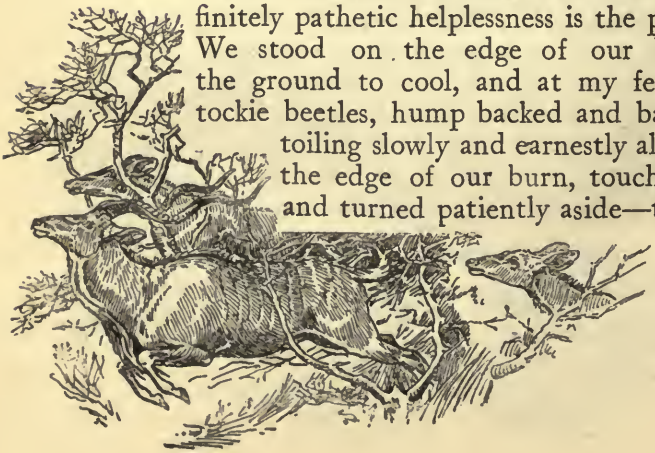
When we opened our scorched eyes the ground in front of us was all black, with only here and there odd lights and torches dotted about—like tapers on a pall; and on ahead, beyond the trellis work of bare scorched trees, the wall of flame swept on.

Then down on the wings of the wind came the other fire; and before it fled every living thing. Heaven only knows what passed us in those few minutes when a broken stream of terrified creatures dashed by, hardly swerving to avoid us. There is no coherent picture left of that scene—just a medley of impressions linked up by flashes of unforgettable vividness.

A herd of koodoo came crashing by ; I know there was a herd, but only the first and last will come to mind—the space between seems blurred. The clear impressions are of the koodoo bull in front, with nose outthrust, eyes shut against the bush, and great horns laid back upon the withers, as he swept along opening the way for his herd ; and then, as they vanished, the big ears, ewe neck, and tilting hindquarters of the last cow —between them nothing but a mass of moving grey !

The wildebeeste went by in Indian file, uniform in shape, colour and horns ; and strangely uniform in their mechanical action, lowered heads, and fiercely determined rush.

A rietbuck ram stopped close to us, looked back wide-eyed and anxious, and whistled shrilly, and then cantered on with head erect and white tail flapping ; but its mate neither answered nor came by. A terrified hare with its ears laid flat scuttled past within a yard of Francis and did not seem to see him. Above us scared birds swept or fluttered down wind ; while others again came up swirling and swinging about, darting boldly through the smoke to catch the insects driven before the fire.



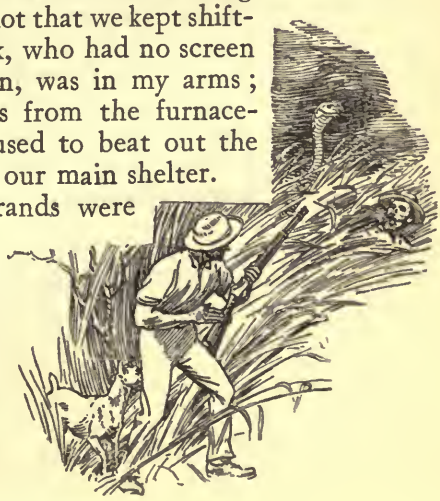
But what comes back with the suggestion of infinitely pathetic helplessness is the picture of a beetle. We stood on the edge of our burn, waiting for the ground to cool, and at my feet a pair of tock-tockie beetles, hump backed and bandy legged, came toiling slowly and earnestly along ; they reached the edge of our burn, touched the warm ash, and turned patiently aside—to walk round it !

A school of chattering monkeys raced out on to the blackened flat, and screamed shrilly with terror as the hot earth and cinders burnt their feet.

Porcupine, antbear, meerkat ! They are vague, so vague that nothing is left but the shadow of their passing ; but there is one other thing—seen in a flash as brief as the others, for a second or two only, but never to be forgotten ! Out of the yellow grass, high up in the waving tops, came sailing down on us the swaying head and glittering eyes of a black mamba—swiftest, most vicious, most deadly of snakes. Francis and I were not five yards apart and it passed between us, giving a quick chilly beady look at each—pitiless, and hateful—and one hiss as the slithering tongue shot out : that was all, and it sailed past with strange effortless movement. How much of the body was on the ground propelling it, I cannot even guess ; but we had to look upwards to see the head as the snake passed between us.

The scorching breath of the fire drove us before it on to the baked ground, inches deep in ashes and glowing cinders, where we kept marking time to ease our blistering feet ; our hats were pulled down to screen our necks as we stood with our backs to the coming flames ; our flannel shirts were so hot that we kept shifting our shoulders for relief. Jock, who had no screen and whose feet had no protection, was in my arms ; and we strove to shield ourselves from the furnace-blast with the branches we had used to beat out the fire round the big tree which was our main shelter.

The heat was awful ! Live brands were



flying past all the time, and some struck us; myriads of sparks fell round and on us, burning numberless small holes in our clothing, and dotting blisters on our backs; great sheets of flame leaped out from the driving glare, and, detached by many yards from their source, were visible for quite a space in front of us. Then, just at its maddest and fiercest there came a gasp and sob, and the fire devil died behind us as it reached the black bare ground. Our burn divided it as an island splits the flood, and it swept along our flanks in two great walls of living leaping roaring flame.

Two hundred yards away there was a bare yellow place in a world of inky black, and to that haven we ran. It was strange to look about and see the naked country all round us, where but a few minutes earlier the tall grass had shut us in; but the big bare ant-heap was untouched, and there we flung ourselves down, utterly done.

Faint from heat and exhaustion—scorched and blistered, face and arms, back and feet; weary and footsore, and with boots burnt through—we reached camp long after dark, glad to be alive.

We had forgotten the wounded buffalo; he seemed part of another life!

* * * * *

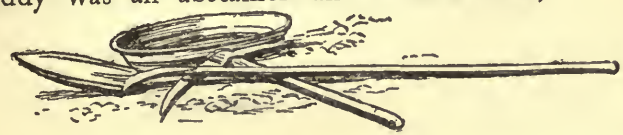
There was no more hunting for us: our feet had 'gone in,' and we were well content to sleep and rest. The burnt stubbly ends of the grass had pierced the baked leather of our boots many times; and Jock, too, had suffered badly and could hardly bear to set foot

to the ground next day. The best we could hope for was to be sound enough to return to our own waggons in two or three days' time.

The camp was under a very large wild fig tree, whose dense canopy gave us shade all through the day. We had burnt the grass for some twenty or thirty yards round as a protection against bush fires; and as the trees and scrub were not thick just there it was possible to see in various directions rather further than one usually can in the Bushveld. The big tree was a fair landmark by day, and at night we made a good fire, which owing to the position of the camp one could see from a considerable distance. These precautions were for the benefit of strayed or belated members of the party; but I mention them because the position of the camp and the fire brought us a strange visitor the last night of our stay there.

There were, I think, seven white men; and the moving spirit of the party—old Teddy Blacklow of Ballarat—was one of the old alluvial diggers, a warm-hearted, impulsive, ever-young old boy, and a rare good sportsman. That was Teddy, the 'man in muddy moleskins,' who stretched out the hand of friendship when the Boy was down, and said "You come along o' me!" one of 'God's sort.'

Teddy's spirits were always up; his presence breathed a cheery optimism on the blankest day; his humour lighted everything; his stories kept us going; and his language was a joy for ever. In a community, in which such things savoured of eccentricity, Teddy was an abstainer and never swore;



but if actual profanity was avoided, the dear old boy all unconsciously afforded strong support to those who hold that a man must find relief in vigorous expression. To do this, without violating his principles, he invented words and phrases, meaningless in themselves but in general outline, so to say, resembling the worst in vogue; and the effect produced by them upon the sensitive was simply horrifying. Teddy himself was blissfully unconscious of this, for his language, being scrupulously innocent, was deemed by him to be suited to all circumstances and to every company. The inevitable consequence was that the first impression produced by him on the few women he ever met was that of an abandoned old reprobate whose scant veil of disguise only made the outrage of his language more marked. Poor old Teddy! Kindest and gentlest and dearest of souls! How he would have stared at this, speechless with surprise; and how we used to laugh at what some one called his 'glittering paro-fanities!' Pity it is that they too must go; for one dare not reproduce the best of them.

It was between eight and nine o'clock on the last day of our stay; Francis and I were fit again, and Jock's feet, thanks to care and washing and plenty of castor oil, no longer troubled him; we were examining our boots—re-soled now with raw hide in the rough but effective veld fashion; Teddy was holding forth about the day's chase whilst he cut away the pith of a koodoo's horns and scraped the skull; others were busy on their trophies too; and the kaffirs round their own fire were keeping up the simultaneous

gabble characteristic of hunting boys after a good day and with plenty of meat in camp.

I was sitting on a small camp stool critically examining a boot and wondering if the dried hide would grip well enough to permit of the top lacings being removed, and Jock was lying in front of me, carefully licking the last sore spot on one fore paw, when I saw his head switch up suddenly and his whole body set hard in a study of intense listening. Then he got up and trotted briskly off some ten or fifteen yards, and stood—a bright spot picked out by the glare of the camp fire—with his back towards me and his uneven ears topping him off.

I walked out to him, and silence fell on the camp; all watched and listened. At first we heard nothing but soon the call of a wild dog explained Jock's movements; the sound, however, did not come from the direction in which he was looking, but a good deal to the right; and as he instantly looked to this new quarter I concluded that this was not the dog he had previously heard, or else it must have moved rapidly. There was another wait, and then there followed calls from other quarters.

There was nothing unusual in the presence of wild dogs: hyenas, jackals, wild dogs and all the smaller beasts of prey were heard nightly; what attracted attention in this case was the regular calling from different points. The boys said the wild dogs were hunting something and calling to each other to indicate the direction of the hunt, so that those in front might turn the buck and by keeping it in a circle

enable fresh or rested dogs to jump in from time to time and so, eventually, wear the poor hunted creature down. This, according to the natives, is the system of the wild pack. When they cannot find easy prey in the young, weak or wounded, and are forced by hunger to hunt hard, they first scatter widely over the chosen area where game is located, and then one buck is chosen—the easiest victim, a ewe with young for choice—and cutting it out from the herd, they follow that one and that alone with remorseless invincible persistency. They begin the hunt knowing that it will last for hours—knowing too that in speed they have no chance against the buck—and when the intended victim is cut out from the herd one or two of the dogs—so the natives say—take up the chase and with long easy gallop keep it going, giving no moment's rest for breath; from time to time they give their weird peculiar call and others of the pack—posted afar—head the buck off to turn it back again; the fresh ones then take up the chase, and the first pair drop out to rest and wait, or follow slowly until their chance and turn come round again. There is something so hateful in the calculated pitiless method that one feels it a duty to kill the cruel brutes whenever a chance occurs.

The hunt went on round us; sometimes near enough to hear the dogs' eager cries quite clearly; sometimes so far away that for a while nothing could be heard; and Jock moved from point to point in the outermost circle of the camp-fire's light nearest to the chase.

When at last hunters and hunted completed their wide circuit round the camp, and passed again the point where we had first heard them, the end seemed near; for there were no longer single calls widely separated, but the voices of the pack in hot close chase. They seemed to be passing half a mile away from us; but in the stillness of the night sound travels far, and one can only guess. Again a little while and the cries sounded nearer and as if coming from one quarter—not moving round us as before; and a few minutes more, and it was certain they were still nearer and coming straight towards us. We took our guns then, and I called Jock back to where we stood under the tree with our backs to the fire.

The growing sounds came on out of the night where all was hidden with the weird crescendo effect of a coming flood; we could pick them out then—the louder harsher cries; the crashing through bush; the rush in grass; the sobbing gasps in front; and the hungry panting after. The hunt came at us like a cyclone out of the stillness, and in the forefront of it there burst into the circle of light an impala ewe with open mouth and haunting hunted despairing eyes and wide spread ears; and the last staggering strides brought her in among us, tumbling at our feet.

A kaffir jumped out with assegai aloft; but Teddy, with the spring of a tiger and a yell of rage, swung his rifle round and down on assegai arm and head, and dropped the boy in his tracks.

"Go-sh!—Da-ll! Cr-r-r-i-miny! What the Hex are you up to?" and the fiery soft-hearted old

boy was down on to his knees in a second, panting with anger and excitement, and threw his arms about the buck.

The foremost of the pack followed hot foot close behind the buck—oblivious of fire and men, seeing nothing but the quarry—and at a distance of five yards a mixed volley of bullets and assegais tumbled it over. Another followed, and again another: both fell where they had stopped, a dozen yards away, puzzled by the fire and the shooting; and still more and more came on, but, warned by the unexpected check in front, they stopped at the clearing's edge, until over twenty pairs of eyes reflecting the fire's light shone out at us in a rough semi-circle. The shot guns came in better then; and more than half the pack went under that night before the others cleared off. Perhaps they did not realise that the shots and flashes were not part of the camp fire from which they seemed to come; perhaps their system of never relinquishing a chase had not been tried against the white man before.

One of the wild dogs, wounded by a shot, seemed to go mad with agony and raced straight into the clearing towards the fire, uttering the strangest maniac-like yaps. Jock had all along been straining to go for them from where I had jammed him between my feet as I sat and fired, and the charge of this dog was more than he could bear: he shot out like a rocket, and the collision sent the two flying apart; but he was on to the wild dog again and had it by the throat before it could recover. Instantly the row of lights went out, as if

switched off—they were no longer looking at us; there was a rustle and a sound of padded feet, and dim grey-looking forms gathered at the edge of the clearing nearest where Jock and the wounded dog fought. I shouted to Jock to come back, and several of us ran out to help, just as another of the pack made a dash in. It seemed certain that Jock, gripping and worrying his enemy's throat, had neither time nor thought for anything else; yet as the fresh dog came at him he let go his grip of the other, and jumped to meet the new-comer; in mid-spring Jock caught the other by the ear and the two spun completely round—their positions being reversed; then, with another wrench as he landed, he flung the attacker behind him and jumped back at the wounded one which had already turned to go.

It looked like the clean and easy movement of a finished gymnast. It was an affair of a few seconds only, for of course the instant we got a chance at the dogs, without the risk to Jock, both were shot; and he, struggling to get at the others, was haled back to the tree.

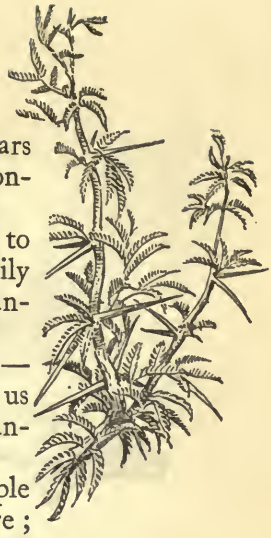
While this was going on the impala stood with wide spread legs, dazed and helpless, between Teddy's feet, just as he had placed it. Its breath came in broken choking sobs; the look of terror and despair had not yet faded from the staring eyes; the head swayed from side to side; the mouth hung open and the tongue lolled out; all told beyond the power of words the tale of desperate struggle and exhaustion. It drank greedily from the dish that Teddy held for it—emptied it,

and five minutes later drank it again and then lay down.

For half an hour it lay there, slowly recovering; sometimes for spells of a few minutes it appeared to breathe normally once more; then the heavy open-mouthed panting would return again; and all the time Teddy kept on stroking or patting it gently and talking to it as if he were comforting a child, and every now and then bursting out with sudden gusty execrations, in his own particular style, of wild dogs and kaffirs. At last it rose briskly, and standing between his knees looked about, taking no notice of Teddy's hands laid on either side and gently patting it. No one moved or spoke. Jock, at my feet, appeared most interested of all, but I am afraid his views differed considerably from ours on that occasion, and he must have been greatly puzzled; he remained watching intently with his head laid on his paws, his ears cocked, and his brown eyes fixed unblinkingly; and at each movement on the buck's part something stirred in him, drawing every muscle tense and ready for the spring—internal grips which were reflected in the twitching and stiffening of his neck and back; but each time as I laid a hand on him he slackened out again and subsided.

We sat like statues as the impala walked out from its stall between Teddy's knees, and stood looking about wonderingly at the faces white and black, at the strange figures, and at the fire. It stepped out quite quietly, much as it might have moved about here and there any peaceful morning in its usual haunts; the

"GOOD-BYE, AND—THANK YOU!"



head swung about briskly, but unalarmed; and ears and eyes were turned this way and that in easy confidence and mild curiosity.

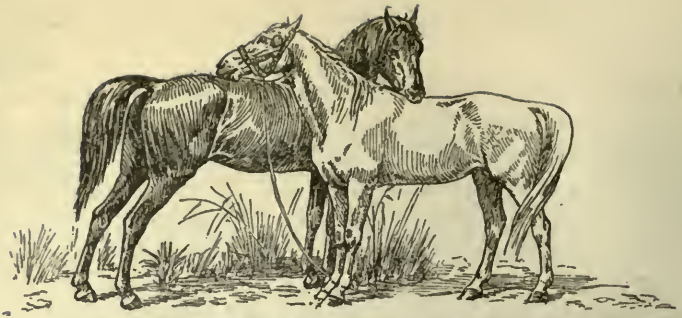
With a few more steps it threaded its way close to one sitting figure and round a bucket; stepped daintily over Teddy's rifle; and passed the koodoo's head unnoticed.

It seemed to us—even to us, and at the moment—like a scene in fairyland in which some spell held us while the beautiful wild thing strolled about unfrightened.

A few yards away it stopped for perhaps a couple of minutes; its back was towards us and the fire; the silence was absolute; and it stood thus with eyes and ears for the bush alone. There was a warning whisk of the white tail and it started off again—this time at a brisk trot—and we thought it had gone; but at the edge of the clearing it once more stood and listened. Now and again the ears flickered and the head turned slightly one way or another, but no sound came from the bush; the out-thrust nose was raised with gentle tosses, but no taint reached it on the gentle breeze.

All was well!

It looked slowly round, giving one long full gaze back at us which seemed to be "Good-bye, and—thank you!" and cantered out into the dark.



SNOWBALL & TSETSE

SNOWBALL was an 'old soldier'—I say it with all respect! He had been through the wars; that is to say, he had seen the ups and downs of life and had learnt the equine equivalent of "God helps those who help themselves." For Snowball was a horse.

Tsetse was also an old soldier, but he was what you might call a gentleman old soldier, with a sense of duty; and in his case the discipline and honour of his calling were not garments for occasion but part of himself. Snowball was no gentleman: he was selfish and unscrupulous, a confirmed shirker, often absent without leave, and upon occasions a rank deserter—for which last he once narrowly escaped being shot.

Tsetse belonged to my friend Hall; but Snowball was mine! What I know about him was learnt with mortification of the spirit and flesh; and what he could not teach in that way was 'over the head' of the most indurated old dodger that ever lived.

Tsetse had his peculiarities and prejudices: like many old soldiers he was a stickler for etiquette and did not like departures from habit and routine; for

instance, he would not under any circumstances permit mounting on the wrong side—a most preposterous stand for an old salted shooting horse to take, and the cause of much inconvenience at times. On the mountains it often happened that the path was too narrow and the slope too steep to permit one to mount on the left side, whereas the sharp rise of the ground made it very easy on the right. But Tsetse made no allowance for this, and if the attempt were made he would stand quite still until the rider was off the ground but not yet in the saddle, and then buck continuously until the offender shot overhead and went skidding down the slope. To one encumbered with a rifle in hand, and a kettle or perhaps a couple of legs of buck slung on the saddle, Tsetse's protest was usually irresistible.

Snowball had no unpractical prejudices: he objected to work—that was all. He was a pure white horse, goodness knows how old, with enormously long teeth; every vestige of grey or other tinge had faded out of him, and his eyes had an aged and resigned look: one warmed to him at sight as a "dear old pet of a Dobbin!" who ought to be passing his last years grazing contentedly in a meadow and giving bare-back rides to little children. The reproach of his venerable look nearly put me off taking him—it seemed such a shame to make the dear old fellow work; but I hardened my heart and, feeling rather a brute, bought him because he was 'salted' and would live in the Bushveld: beside that, all other considerations were trivial. Of course he was said to be a shooting

horse, and he certainly took no notice of a gun fired under his nose or from his back—which was all the test I could apply at the time ; and then his legs were quite sound ; his feet were excellent ; he had lost no teeth yet; and he was in tip top condition. What more could one want ?

" He looks rather a fool of a horse ! " I had remarked dubiously to Joey the Smith, who was ' willin' to let him go,' and I can recall now the peculiar glint in Joey's eye and the way he sort of steadied himself with a little cough before he answered feelingly :

" He's no fool, sonny ! You won't want to get a cleverer horse as long as you live ! "

And no more I did—as we used to say !

Snowball had one disfigurement, consisting of a large black swelling as big as a small orange behind his left eye, which must have annoyed him greatly ; it could easily have been removed, and many suggestions were made on the subject but all of them were firmly declined. Without that lump I should have had no chance against him : it was the weak spot in his defence : it was the only cover under which it was possible to stalk him when he made one of his determined attempts to dodge or desert ; for he could see nothing that came up behind him on the left side without turning his head completely round ; hence one part of the country was always hidden from him, and of course it was from this quarter that we invariably made our approaches to attack.

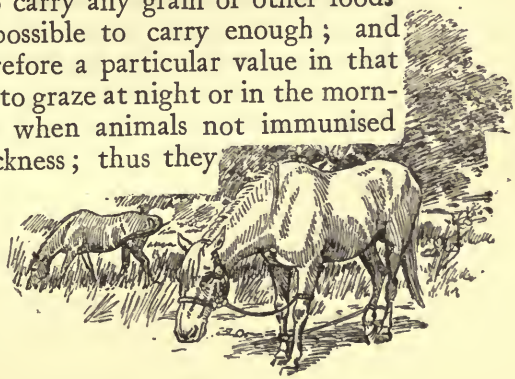
So well did Snowball realise this that when the old villain intended giving trouble he would start off with

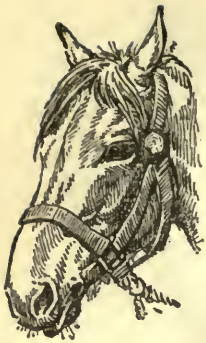
his head swung away to the right, and when far enough away to graze in security—a hundred yards or so was enough—would turn right about and face towards the waggons or camp, or wherever the danger-quarter was; then, keeping us well in view, he would either graze off sideways, or from time to time walk briskly off to occupy a new place, with the right eye swung round on us like a search-light.

Against all this, however, it is only fair to admit that there were times when for days, and even weeks, at a stretch he would behave admirably, giving no more trouble than Jock did. Moreover he had qualities which were not to be despised. he was as sound as a bell, very clever on his feet, never lost his condition, and, although not fast, could last for ever at his own pace.

Experience taught me to take no chances with Snowball. After a hard day he was apt to think that 'enough was as good as a feast,' and then trouble might be expected. But there was really no safe rule with him; he seemed to have moods—to 'get out of bed on the wrong side'—on certain days and, for no reason in the world, behave with a calculated hostility that was simply maddening.

Hunting horses live almost entirely by grazing, as it is seldom possible to carry any grain or other foods for them and never possible to carry enough; and salted horses have therefore a particular value in that they can be turned out to graze at night or in the morning and evening dews when animals not immunised will contract horse-sickness; thus they





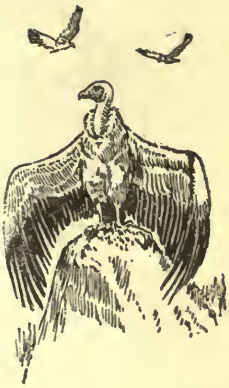
feed during the hours when hunting is not possible and keep their condition when an unsalted horse would fall away from sheer want of food.

According to their training, disposition, and knowledge of good and evil, horses are differently treated when 'offsaddled'; some may be trusted without even a halter, and can be caught and saddled when and where required; others are knee-haltered; others are hobbled by a strap coupling either both fore feet, or one fore and one hind foot, with enough slack to allow walking, but not enough for the greater reach of a trot or gallop; whilst some incorrigibles are both knee-haltered and hobbled; and in this gallery Snowball figured upon occasion—a mournful and injured innocent, if appearances went for anything!

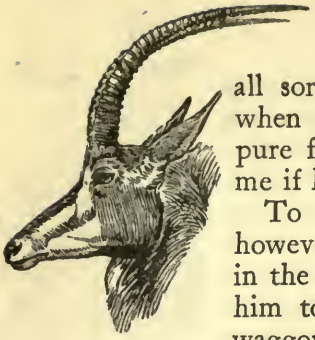
It was not, as a rule, at the outspan, where many hands were available, that Snowball gave trouble, but out hunting when I was alone or with only one companion. A trained shooting horse should stop as soon as his rider lays hand on mane to dismount, and should remain where he is left for any length of time until his master returns; some horses require the reins to be dropped over their heads to remind them of their duty but many can safely be left to themselves and will be found grazing quietly where left.

Snowball knew well what to do, but he pleased himself about doing it; sometimes he would stand; sometimes move off a little way, and keep moving—just out of reach—holding his head well on one side so that he should not tread on the trailing reins or the long weighted reimpje which was attached to his bit

for the purpose of hindering and catching him; sometimes, with a troop of buck moving on ahead or perhaps a wounded one to follow, this old sinner would right-about-face and simply walk off — only a few yards separating us—with his ears laid back, his tail tucked down ominously, and occasional little liftings of his hindquarters to let me know what to expect—and his right eye on me all the while; and, if I ran to head him off, he would break into a trot and leave me a little worse off than before; and sometimes, in familiar country, he would make straight away for the waggons without more ado.



It is demoralising in the extreme to be expecting a jerk when in the act of aiming—and Snowball, who cared no more for shooting than a deaf gunner, would plunge like a two-year-old when he was play-acting—and it is little better, while creeping forward for a shot, to hear your horse strolling off behind and realise that you will have to hunt for him and perhaps walk many miles back to camp without means of carrying anything you may shoot. The result of experience was that I had to choose between two alternatives: either to hook him up to a tree or bush each time or hobble him with his reins, and so lose many good chances of quick shots when coming unexpectedly on game; or to slip an arm through the reins and take chance of being plucked off my aim or jerked violently backwards as I fired. But it was at the 'offsaddles' on long journeys across country or during the rest in a day's hunt that trouble was most to be feared, and although hobbling is dangerous in a country so full of holes, stumps, and



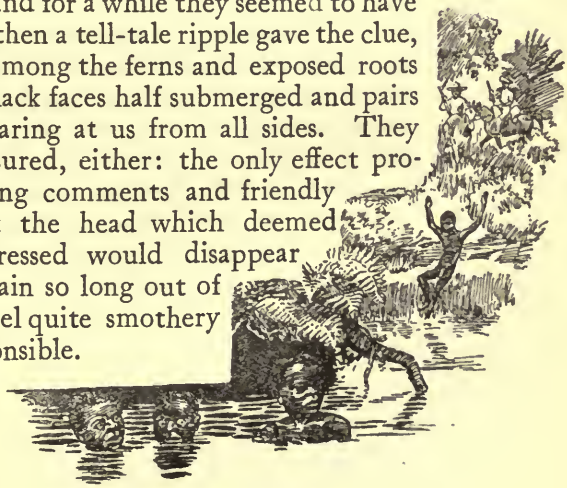
all sorts of grass-hidden obstacles, there were times when consideration for Snowball seemed mighty like pure foolishness, and it would have been no grief to me if he had broken his neck!

To the credit of Snowball stand certain things, however, and it is but justice to say that, when once in the ranks, he played his part well; and it is due to him to say that during one hard season a camp of waggons with their complement of men had to be kept in meat, and it was Snowball who carried—for short and long distances, through dry rough country, at all times of day and night, hot, thirsty and tired, and without a breakdown or a day's sickness—a bag that totalled many thousands of pounds in weight, and the man who made the bag.

"That wall-eyed brute of yours" was launched at me in bitterness of spirit on many occasions when Snowball led the normally well-behaved ones astray; and it is curious to note how strength of character or clear purpose will establish leadership among animals, as among men. Rooiland the restless, when dissatisfied with the grass or in want of water, would cast about up wind for a few minutes and then with his hot eyeballs staring and nostrils well distended choose his line, going resolutely along and only pausing from time to time to give a low moan for signal and allow the straggling string of unquestioning followers to catch up. When Rooiland had 'trek fever' there was no rest for herd boys. So too with old Snowball: he led the well-behaved astray and they followed him blindly. Had Snowball been a schoolboy, a wise

headmaster would have expelled him—for the general good and discipline of the school.

On one long horseback journey through Swaziland to the coast, where few white men and no horses had yet been seen, we learned to know Snowball and Tsetse well, and found out what a horse can do when put to it. It was a curious experience on that trip to see whole villages flee in terror at the first sight of the new strange animals—one brown and one white; in some places not even the grown men would approach, but too proud to show fear, they stood their ground, their bronze faces blanching visibly and setting hard as we rode up; the women fled with half-stifled cries of alarm; and once, when we came unexpectedly upon a party of naked urchins playing on the banks of a stream, the whole pack set off full cry for the water and, jumping in like a school of alarmed frogs, disappeared. Infinitely amused by the stampede we rode up to see what had become of them, but the silence was absolute, and for a while they seemed to have vanished altogether; then a tell-tale ripple gave the clue, and under the banks among the ferns and exposed roots we picked out little black faces half submerged and pairs of frightened eyes staring at us from all sides. They were not to be reassured, either: the only effect produced by our laughing comments and friendly overtures being that the head which deemed itself pointedly addressed would disappear completely and remain so long out of sight as to make us feel quite smothery and criminally responsible.



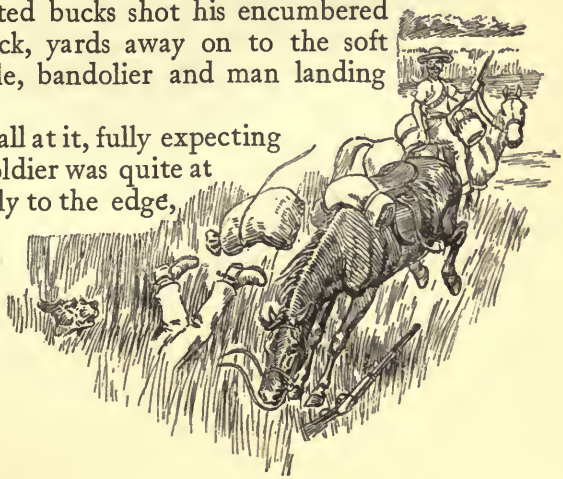
It is in the rivers that a man feels the importance of a good horse with a stout heart, and his dependence on it. There were no roads, and not even known tracks, there; and when we reached the Black Umbelusi we picked a place where there was little current and apparently an easy way out on the opposite side. It was much deeper than it looked; however, we were prepared, and thirty yards of swimming did not trouble us; yet it certainly was a surprise to us when the horses swam right up to the other bank without finding bottom and, turning aside, began to swim up stream. Looking down into the clear depths we saw that there was a sheer wall of rock to within a few inches of the surface. Now, a horse with a man on his back swims low—only the head and half the neck showing above water—and by what instinct or means the horses realised the position I do not know, but, with little hesitation and apparently of one accord, they got back a yard or two from the ledge and, raising first one fore foot and then the other, literally climbed out—exactly as a man or a dog does out of a swimming bath—hoisting their riders out with them without apparent difficulty. That was something which we had not thought possible, and to satisfy ourselves we dismounted and tried the depth; but the ten foot reeds failed to reach bottom.

When it came to crossing the Crocodile River we chose the widest spot in the hope that it would be shallow and free of rocks. We fired some shots into the river to scare the crocodiles, and started to

cross ; but to our surprise Tsetse, the strong-nerved and reliable, who always had the post of honour in front, absolutely refused to enter.

The water of the Crocodile is at its best of amber clearness and we could not see bottom, but the sloping grassy bank promised well enough and no hint reached us of what the horses knew quite well. All we had was on our horses—food, blankets, billy, rifles and ammunition. We were off on a long trip and, to vary or supplement the game diet, carried a small packet of tea, a little sugar, flour, and salt, and some beads with which to trade for native fowls and thick milk ; the guns had to do the rest. Thus there were certain things we could not afford to wet, and these we used to wrap up in a mackintosh and carry high when it came to swimming, but this crossing looked so easy that it seemed sufficient to raise the packs instead of carrying part of them.

Tsetse, who in the ordinary way regarded the spur as part of the accepted discipline, promptly resented it when there seemed to him to be sufficient reason ; and when Hall, astonished at Tsetse's unexpected obstinacy, gave him both heels, the old horse considerately swung round away from the river, and with a couple of neatly executed bucks shot his encumbered rider off the raised pack, yards away on to the soft grass—water-bottle, rifle, bandolier and man landing in a lovely tangle.



I then put old Snowball at it, fully expecting trouble ; but the old soldier was quite at home ; he walked quietly to the edge,

sat down comfortably, and slid into the water —launching himself with scarce a ripple just like an old hippo. That gave us the explanation of Tsetse's tantrum : the water came up to the seat of my saddle and walking was only just possible. I stopped at once, waiting for Tsetse to follow ; and Hall, prepared for another refusal, sat back and again used his spurs. No doubt Tsetse, once he knew the depth, was quite satisfied and meant to go in quietly, and the prick of the spur must have been unexpected, for he gave a plunge forward, landing with his fore feet in deep water and hind quarters still on the bank, and Hall shot out overhead, landing half across old Snowball's back. There was a moment of ludicrous but agonised suspense ! Hall's legs were firmly gripping Tsetse behind the ears while he sprawled on his stomach on Snowball's crupper, with the reins still in one hand and the rifle in the other. Doubled up with suppressed laughter I grabbed a fist full of shirt and held on, every moment expecting Tsetse to hoist his head or pull back and complete the disaster, while Hall was spluttering out directions, entreaties and imprecations ; but good old Tsetse never moved, and Hall handing me the rifle managed to swarm backwards on to Tsetse's withers and scramble on to the pack again.

Then, saddle-deep in the river—duckings and crocodiles forgotten—we sat looking at each other and laughed till we ached.

The river was about three hundred yards wide there with a good sandy bottom and of uniform depth,

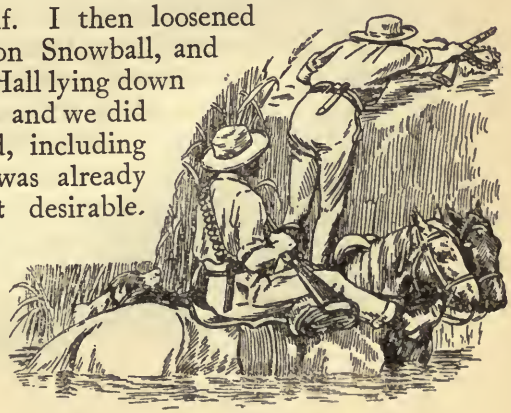
"I GRABBED A FISTFUL OF SHIRT AND HELD ON"

but, to our disappointment, we found that the other bank which had appeared to slope gently to the water edge was in fact a sheer wall standing up several feet above the river level. The beautiful slope which we had seen consisted of water grass and reed tops; the bank itself was of firm moist clay; and the river bottom close under it was soft mud. We tried a little way up and down, but found deeper water, more mud and reeds, and no break in the bank; there was not even a lagavaan slide, a game path, or a drinking-place. There seemed to be nothing for it but to go back again and try somewhere else.

Hall was 'bad to beat' when he started on anything—he did not know how to give in; but when he looked at the bank and said, "We'll have a shot at this," I thought at first he was joking. Later, to my remark that "no horse ever born would face that," he answered that "any way we could try: it would be just as good as hunting for more places of the same sort!"

I do not know the height of the bank, as we were not thinking of records at that time, but there are certain facts which enable one to guess fairly closely.

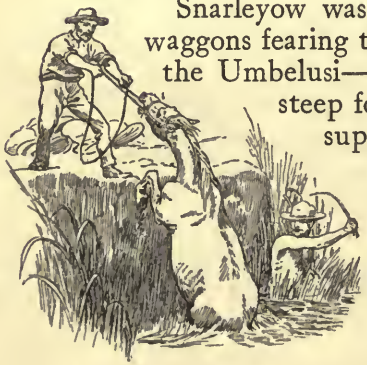
Tsetse was ranged up beside the bank, and Hall standing in the saddle threw his rifle and bandolier up and scrambled out himself. I then loosened Tsetse's girths from my seat on Snowball, and handed up the packed saddle—Hall lying down on the bank to take it from me; and we did the same with Snowball's load, including my own clothes, for, as it was already sundown, a ducking was not desirable.



I loosened one side of Tsetse's reins, and after attaching one of mine in order to give the necessary length to them threw the end up to Hall, and he cut and handed me a long supple rod for a whip to stir Tsetse to his best endeavours. The water there was rather more than half saddle-flap high; I know that because it just left me a good expanse of hindquarters to aim at when the moment came.

"Now!" yelled Hall, "Up, Tsetse! Up!"; and whack went the stick! Tsetse reared up, right on end; he could not reach the top but struck his fore feet into the moist bank near the top, and with a mighty plunge that soused Snowball and me, went out. The tug on the leading rein, on which Hall had thrown all his weight when Tsetse used it to lever himself up, had jerked Hall flat on his face; but he was up in a minute, and releasing Tsetse threw back the rein to get Snowball to face it while the example was fresh.

Then for the first time we thought of the crocodiles—and the river was full of them! But Snowball without some one behind him with a stick would never face that jump, and there was nothing for it but to fire some scaring shots, and slip into the water and get the job over as quickly as possible.



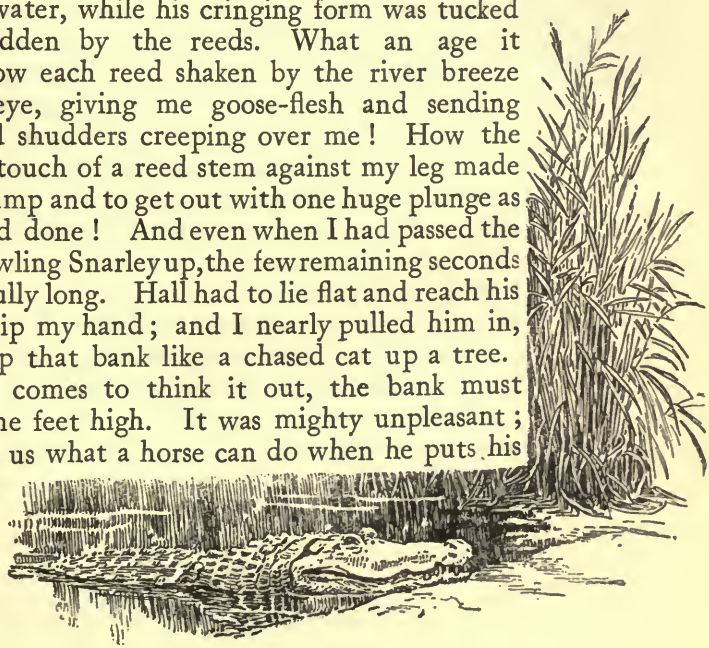
Snarleyow was with us—I had left Jock at the waggons fearing that we would get into fly country on the Umbelusi—and the bank was too high and too steep for him; he huddled up against it half supported by reeds, and whined plaintively.

To our relief Snowball faced the jump quite readily; indeed, the old

sinner did it with much less effort and splash than the bigger Tsetse. But then came an extremely unpleasant spell. Snowball got a scare, because Hall in his anxiety to get me out rushed up to him on the warty side to get the reins off; and the old ruffian waltzed around, dragging Hall through the thorns, while Snarleyow and I waited in the water for help.

At that moment I had a poorer opinion of Snowball and Snarley than at any other I can remember. I wished Snarley dead twenty times in twenty seconds. Crocodiles love dogs; and it seemed to me a million to one that a pair of green eyes and a black snout must slide out of the water any moment, drawn to us by those advertising whines! And the worst of it was, I was outside Snarley with my white legs gleaming in the open water, while his cringing form was tucked away half hidden by the reeds. What an age it seemed! How each reed shaken by the river breeze caught the eye, giving me goose-flesh and sending waves of cold shudders creeping over me! How the cold smooth touch of a reed stem against my leg made me want to jump and to get out with one huge plunge as the horses had done! And even when I had passed the struggling yowling Snarley up, the few remaining seconds seemed painfully long. Hall had to lie flat and reach his furthest to grip my hand; and I nearly pulled him in, scrambling up that bank like a chased cat up a tree.

When one comes to think it out, the bank must have been nine feet high. It was mighty unpleasant; but it taught us what a horse can do when he puts his back into it!



JOCK'S MISTAKE

HALF-WAY between the Crocodile and Komati Rivers, a few miles south of the old road, there are half a dozen or more small kopjes between which lie broad richly grassed depressions, too wide and flat to be called valleys. The fall of the country is slight, yet the rich loamy soil has been washed out in places into dongas of considerable depth. There is no running water there in winter, but there are a few big pools—long narrow irregularly shaped bits of water—with shady trees around them.

I came upon the place by accident one day, and thereafter we kept it dark as our own preserve; for it was full of game, and a most delightful spot. It was there that Snarleyow twice cleaned out the hunter's pot.

Apart from the discovery of this preserve, the day was memorable for the reason that it was my first experience of a big mixed herd; and I learned that day how difficult the work may be when several kinds of game run together. After a dry and warm morning the sight of the big pool had prompted an offsaddle;

Snowball was tethered in a patch of good grass, and Jock and I were lying in the shade.

When he began to sniff and walk up wind I took the rifle and followed, and only a little way off we came into dry vlei ground where there were few trees and the grass stood about waist high. Some two hundred yards away where the ground rose slightly and the bush became thicker there was a fair sized troop of impala, perhaps a hundred or more, and just behind, and mostly to one side of them, were between twenty and thirty tsessebe. We saw them clearly and in time to avoid exposing ourselves : they were neither feeding nor resting, but simply standing about, and individual animals were moving unconcernedly from time to time with an air of idle loitering. I tried to pick out a good tsessebe ram, but the impala were in the way, and it was necessary to crawl for some distance to reach certain cover away on the right.

Crawling is hard work and very rough on both hands and knees in the Bushveld, frequent rests being necessary ; and in one of the pauses I heard a curious sound of soft padded feet jumping behind me, and looking quickly about caught Jock in the act of taking his observations. The grass was too high for him to see over, even when he stood up on his hind legs, and he was giving jumps of slowly increasing strength to get the height which would enable him to see what was on. I shall never forget that first view of Jock's ballooning observations ; it became a regular practice afterwards and I grew accustomed to seeing him stand on his hind legs or jump when his view was shut out—indeed

sometimes when we were having a slow time I used to draw him by pretending to stalk something ; but it is that first view that remains a picture of him. I turned at the instant when he was at the top of his jump ; his legs were all bunched up, his eyes staring eagerly and his ears had flapped out, giving him a look of comic astonishment. It was a most surprisingly unreal sight : he looked like a caricature of Jock shot into the air by a galvanic shock. A sign with my hand brought him flat on the ground, looking distinctly guilty, and we moved along again ; but I was shaking with silent laughter.

At the next stop I had a look back to see how he was behaving, and to my surprise, although he was following carefully close behind me, he was looking steadily away to our immediate right. I subsided gently on to my left side to see what it was that interested him, and to my delight saw a troop of twenty to twenty-five Blue Wildebeeste. They, too, were ' standing any way,' and evidently had not seen us.

I worked myself cautiously round to face them so as to be able to pick my shot and take it kneeling, thus clearing the tops of the grass ; but whilst doing this another surprising development took place. Looking hard and carefully at the wildebeetse two hundred yards away, I became conscious of something else in between us, and only half the distance off, looking at me. It had the effect of a shock ; the disagreeable effect produced by having a book or picture suddenly thrust close to the face ; the feeling of wanting to get further away from it to re-focus one's sight.

What I saw was simply a dozen quagga, all exactly alike, all standing alike, all looking at me, all full face to me, their fore feet together, their ears cocked, and their heads quite motionless—all gazing steadily at me, alive with interest and curiosity. There was something quite ludicrous in it, and something perplexing also : when I looked at the quagga the wildebeeste seemed to get out of focus and were lost to me ; when I looked at the wildebeeste the quagga 'blurred' and faded out of sight. The difference in distance, perhaps as much as the very marked difference in the distinctive colourings, threw me out; and the effect of being watched also told. Of course I wanted to get a wildebeeste, but I was conscious of the watching quagga all the time, and, for the life of me, could not help constantly looking at them to see if they were going to start off and stampede the others.

Whilst trying to pick out the best of the wildebeeste a movement away on the left made me look that way : the impala jumped off like one animal, scaring the tsessebe into a scattering rout; the quagga switched round and thundered off like a stampede of horses ; and the wildebeeste simply vanished. One signal in one troop had sent the whole lot off. Jock and I were left alone, still crouching, looking from side to side, staring at the slowly drifting dust, and listening to the distant dying sound of galloping feet.

It was a great disappointment, but the conviction that we had found a really good spot made some amends, and Snowball was left undisturbed to feed and rest for another two hours. We made for the waggons along

another route taking in some of the newly discovered country in the home sweep, and the promise of the morning was fulfilled. We had not been more than a few minutes on the way when a fine rietbuck ram jumped up within a dozen yards of Snowball's nose. Old Rocky had taught me to imitate the rietbuck's shrill whistle and this one fell to the first shot. He was a fine big fellow, and as Snowball put on airs and pretended to be nervous when it came to packing the meat, I had to blindfold him, and after hoisting the buck up to a horizontal branch lowered it on to his back.

Snowball was villainously slow and bad to lead. He knew that whilst being led neither whip nor spur could touch him, and when loaded up with meat he dragged along at a miserable walk : one had to haul him. Once—but only once—I had tried driving him before me, trusting to about 400 lb. weight of koodoo meat to keep him steady ; but no sooner had I stepped behind with a switch than he went off with a cumbrous plunge and bucked like a frantic mule until he rid himself of his load, saddle and all. The fact is one person could not manage him on foot, it needed one at each end of him, and he knew it : thus it worked out at a compromise : he carried my load, and I went his pace !

We were labouring along in this fashion when we came on the wildebeeste again. A white man on foot seems to be recognised as an enemy ; but if accompanied by animals, either on horseback, driving in a vehicle, leading a horse, or walking among cattle, he

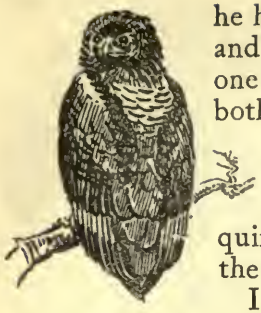
may pass unnoticed for a long while : attention seems to be fixed on the animals rather than the man, and frank curiosity instead of alarm is quite evidently the feeling aroused.

The wildebeeste had allowed me to get close up, and I picked out the big bull and took the shot kneeling, with my toe hooked in the reins to secure Snowball, taking chance of being jerked off my aim rather than let him go ; but he behaved like an angel, and once more that day a single shot was enough.

It was a long and tedious job skinning the big fellow, cutting him up, hauling the heavy limbs and the rest of the meat up into a suitable tree, and making all safe against the robbers of the earth and the air ; and most troublesome of all was packing the head and skin on Snowball, who showed the profoundest mistrust of this dark ferocious-looking monster.

Snowball and I had had enough of it when we reached camp, well after dark ; but Jock I am not so sure of : his invincible keenness seemed at times to have something in it of mute reproach—the tinge of disappointment in those they love which great hearts feel, and strive to hide ! I never outstayed Jock, and never once knew him ' own up ' that he had had enough.

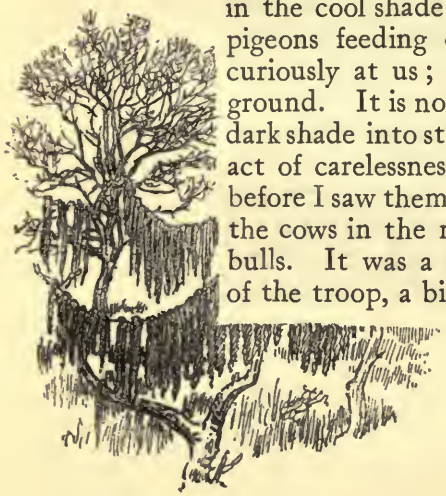
No two days were quite alike ; yet many were alike in the sense that they were successful without hitch and without interest to any but the hunters ; many others were marked by chases in which Jock's part—most essential to success—too closely resembled that of other days to be worth repeating. On that day



he had, as usual, been the one to see the wildebeeste and had 'given the word' in time; the rest was only one straight shot. That was fair partnership in which both were happy; but there was nothing to talk about.

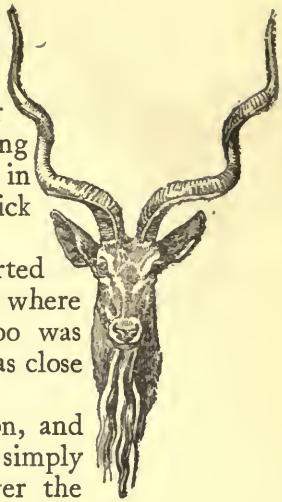
There was very little wanton shooting with us, for when we had more fresh meat than was required, as often happened, it was dried as 'bultong' for the days of shortage which were sure to come.

I started off early next morning with the boys to bring in the meat, and went on foot, giving Snowball a rest, more or less deserved. By nine o'clock the boys were on their way back, and leaving them to take the direct route I struck away eastwards along the line of the pools, not expecting much and least of all dreaming that fate had one of the worst days in store for us: "From cloudless heavens her lightnings glance" did not occur to my mind as we moved silently along in the bright sunshine.



We passed the second pool, loitering a few minutes in the cool shade of the evergreens to watch the green pigeons feeding on the wild figs and peering down curiously at us; then moved briskly into more open ground. It is not wise to step too suddenly out of the dark shade into strong glare, and it may have been that act of carelessness that enabled the koodoo to get off before I saw them. They cantered away in a string with the cows in the rear, between me and two full grown bulls. It was a running shot—end on—and the last of the troop, a big cow, gave a stumble; but catching

herself up again she cantered off slowly. Her body was all bunched up and she was pitching greatly, and her hind legs kept flying out in irregular kicks, much as you may see a horse kick out when a blind fly is biting him.



There was no time for a second shot and we started off in hot pursuit; and fifty yards further on where there was a clear view I saw that the koodoo was going no faster than an easy canter, and Jock was close behind.

Whether he was misled by the curious action, and believed there was a broken leg to grip, or was simply over bold, it is impossible to know. Whatever the reason, he jumped for one of the hind legs, and at the same moment the koodoo lashed out viciously. One foot struck him under the jaw close to the throat, 'whipped' his head and neck back like a bent switch, and hurled him somersaulting backwards.

I have the impression—as one sees oneself in a nightmare—of a person throwing up his arms and calling the name of his child as a train passed over it.

Jock lay limp and motionless, with the blood oozing from mouth, nose, and eyes. I recollect feeling for his heart-beat and breath, and shaking him roughly and calling him by name; then, remembering the pool near by, I left him in the shade of a tree, filled my hat with water, ran back again and poured it over him and into his mouth, shaking him again to rouse him, and several times pressing his sides—bellows fashion—in a ridiculous effort to restore breathing.

The old hat was leaky and I had to grip the rough-cut ventilations to make it hold any water at all, and I was returning with a second supply when with a great big heart-jump, I saw Jock heel over from his side and with his forelegs flat on the ground raise himself to a resting position, his head wagging groggily and his eyes blinking in a very dazed way.

He took no notice when I called his name, but at the touch of my hand his ears moved up and the stumpy tail scraped feebly in the dead leaves. He was stone deaf; but I did not know it then. He lapped a little of the water, sneezed the blood away and licked his chops; and then, with evident effort, stood up.

But this is the picture which it is impossible to forget. The dog was still so dazed and shaken that he reeled slightly, steadying himself by spreading his legs well apart, and there followed a few seconds' pause in which he stood thus; and then he began to walk forward with the uncertain staggery walk of a toddling child. His jaws were set close; his eyes were beady black, and he looked 'fight' all over. He took no notice of me; and I, never dreaming that he was after the koodoo, watched the walk quicken to a laboured trot before I moved or called; but he paid no heed to the call. For the first time in his life there was rank open defiance of orders, and he trotted slowly along with his nose to the ground. Then I understood; and, thinking he was maddened by the kick and not quite responsible for himself, and—more than that—admiring his pluck far too much to be angry, I ran to bring him back; but at a turn in

his course he saw me coming, and this time he obeyed the call and signal instantly, and with a limp air of disappointment followed quietly back to the tree.

The reason for Jock's persistent disobedience that day was not even suspected then ; I put everything down to the kick ; and he seemed to me to be 'all wrong,' but indeed there was excuse enough for him. Nevertheless it was puzzling that at times he should ignore me in positively contemptuous fashion, and at others obey with all his old readiness : I neither knew he was deaf, nor realised that the habit of using certain signs and gestures when I spoke to him—and even of using them in place of orders when silence was imperative—had made him almost independent of the word of mouth. From that day he depended wholly upon signs ; for he never heard another sound.

Jock came back with me and lay down ; but he was not content. Presently he rose again and remained standing with his back to me, looking steadily in the direction taken by the koodoo. It was fine to see the indomitable spirit, but I did not mean to let him try again ; the koodoo was as good as dead no doubt, yet a hundred koodoo would not have tempted me to risk taking him out : to rest him and get him back to the camp was the only thought. I was feeling very soft about the dog then. And while I sat thus watching him and waiting for him to rest and recover, once more and almost within reach of me he started off again. But it was not as he had done before : this time he went with a spring and a rush, and with head lowered and meaning business. In vain I called

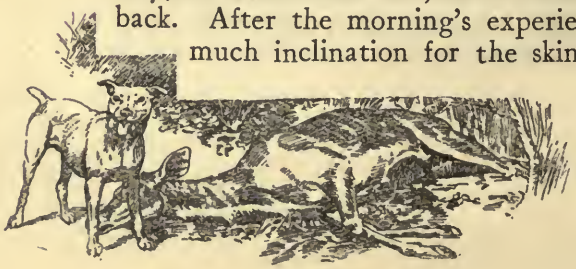
and followed : he outpaced me and left me in a few strides.

The koodoo had gone along the right bank of the donga which, commencing just below the pool, extended half a mile or more down the flat valley. Jock's rush was magnificent, but it was puzzling, and his direction was even more so ; for he made straight for the donga.

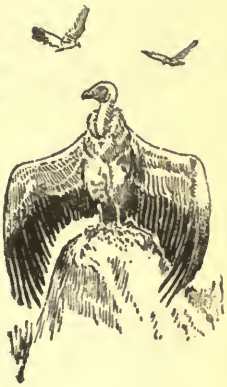
I ran back for the rifle and followed, and he had already disappeared down the steep bank of the donga when, through the trees on the opposite side, I saw a koodoo cow moving along at a slow cramped walk. The donga was a deep one with perpendicular sides, and in places even overhanging crumbling banks, and I reached it as Jock, slipping and struggling, worked his way up the other wall writhing and climbing through the tree roots exposed by the floods. As he rushed out the koodoo saw him and turned ; there was just a chance—a second of time : a foot of space—before he got in the line of fire ; and I took it. One hind leg gave way, and in the short sidelong stagger that followed Jock jumped at the koodoo's throat and they went down together.

It took me several minutes to get through the donga, and by that time the koodoo was dead and Jock was standing, wide-mouthed and panting, on guard at its head : the second shot had been enough.

It was an unexpected and puzzling end ; and, in a way, not a welcome one, as it meant delay in getting back. After the morning's experience there was not much inclination for the skinning and cutting



up of a big animal and I set to work gathering branches and grass to hide the carcase, meaning to send the boys back for it.



But the day's experiences were not over yet: a low growl from Jock made me look sharply round, to see half a dozen kaffirs coming through the bush with a string of mongrel hounds at their heels.

So that was the explanation of the koodoo's return to us! The natives, a hunting party, had heard the shot and coming along in hopes of meat had met and headed off the wounded koodoo, turning her back almost on her own tracks. There was satisfaction in having the puzzle solved, but the more practical point was that here was all the help I wanted; and the boys readily agreed to skin the animal and carry the four quarters to the camp for the gift of the rest.

Then my trouble began with Jock. He flew at the first of the kaffir dogs that sneaked up to sniff at the koodoo. Shouting at him produced no effect whatever, and before I could get hold of him he had mauled the animal pretty badly. After hauling him off I sat down in the shade, with him beside me; but there were many dogs, and a succession of affairs, and I, knowing nothing of his deafness, became thoroughly exasperated and surprised by poor old Jock's behaviour.

His instinct to defend our kills, which was always strong, was roused that day beyond control, and his hatred of kaffir dogs—an implacable one in any case—made a perfect fury of him; still, the sickening awful feeling that came over me as he lay limp and lifeless was too fresh, and it was not possible to be really angry;

and after half a dozen of the dogs had been badly handled there was something so comical in the way they sheered off and eyed Jock that I could only laugh. They sneaked behind bushes and tried to circumvent him in all sorts of ways, but fled precipitately as soon as he moved a step or lowered his head and humped his shoulders threateningly. Even the kaffir owners, who had begun to look glum, broke into appreciative laughter and shouts of admiration for the white man's dog.

Jock kept up an unbroken string of growls, not loud, of course, but I could feel them going all the while like a volcano's rumbling as my restraining hand rested on him, and when the boys came up to skin the koodoo I had to hold him down and shake him sharply. The dog was mad with fight; he bristled all over; and no patting or talking produced more than a flicker of his ears. The growling went on; the hair stood up; the tail was quite unresponsive; his jaws were set like a vice; and his eyes shone like two black diamonds. He had actually struggled to get free of my hand when the boys began to skin, and they were so scared by his resolute attempt that they would not start until I put him down between my knees and held him.

I was sitting against a tree only three or four yards from the koodoo, and the boys, who had lighted a fire in anticipation of early tit-bits which would grill while they worked, were getting along well with the skinning, when one of them saw fit to pause in order to hold forth in the native fashion on the glories of the chase and the might of the white man. Jock's

head lay on his paws and his mouth was shut like a rat-trap ; his growling grew louder as the bombastic nigger, all unconscious of the wicked watching eyes behind him, waved his blood-stained knife and warmed to his theme.

" Great you thought yourself," proclaimed the orator, addressing the dead koodoo in a long rigmarole which was only partly understood by me but evidently much approved by the other boys as they stooped to their work, " Swift of foot and strong of limb. But the white man came, and—there ! " I could not make out the words with any certainty ; but whatever the last word was, it was intended as a dramatic climax, and to lend additional force to his point the orator let fly a resounding kick on the koodoo's stomach.

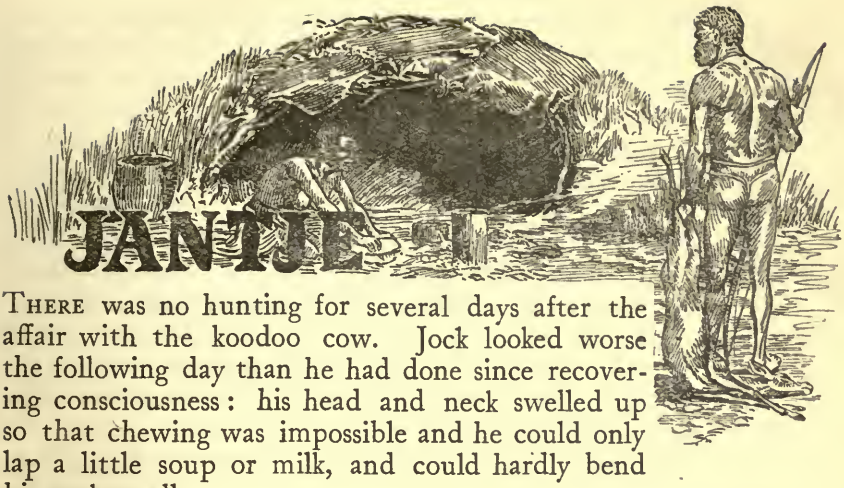
The effect was quite electrical ! Like an arrow from the bow Jock flew at him ! The warning shout came too late, and as Jock's teeth fastened in him behind the terrified boy gave a wild bound over the koodoo, carrying Jock like a streaming coat-tail behind him.

The work was stopped and the natives drew off in grave consultation. I thought that they had had enough of Jock for one day and that they would strike work and leave me, probably returning later on to steal the meat while I went for help from the waggons. But it turned out that the consultation was purely medical, and in a few minutes I had an interesting exhibition of native doctoring. They laid the late orator out face downwards, and one burly ' brother ' straddled him across the small of the back ; then after a little preliminary examination of the four

slits left by Jock's fangs, he proceeded to cauterise them with the glowing ends of sundry sticks which an assistant took from the fire and handed to him as required. The victim flapped his hands on the ground and hallooed out "My babo! My babo!" but he did not struggle; and the operator toasted away with methodical indifference.

The orator stood it well!

I took Jock away to the big tree near the pool: it was evident that he, too, had had enough of it for one day.



THERE was no hunting for several days after the affair with the koodoo cow. Jock looked worse the following day than he had done since recovering consciousness: his head and neck swelled up so that chewing was impossible and he could only lap a little soup or milk, and could hardly bend his neck at all.

On the morning of the second day Jim Makokel' came up with his hostile-looking swagger and a cross worried look on his face, and in a half-angry and wholly disgusted tone jerked out at me, "The dog is deaf. I say so! Me! Makokela! Jock is deaf. He does not hear when you speak. Deaf! yes, deaf!"

Jim's tone grew fiercer as he warmed up; he seemed to hold me responsible. The moment the boy spoke I knew it was true—it was the only possible explanation of many little things; nevertheless I jumped up hurriedly to try him in a dozen ways, hoping to find that he could hear something. Jim was right; he was really stone deaf. It was pathetic to find how each little subterfuge that drew his eyes from me left

him out of reach : it seemed as if a link had broken between us and I had lost my hold. That was wrong, however ! In a few days he began to realise the loss of hearing ; and after that, feeling so much greater dependence on sight, his watchfulness increased so that nothing escaped him. None of those who saw him in that year, when he was at his very best, could bring themselves to believe that he was deaf. With me it made differences both ways : something lost, and something gained. If he could hear nothing, he saw more ; the language of signs developed ; and taking it all round I believe the sense of mutual dependence for success and of mutual understanding was greater than ever.

Snowball went on to the retired list at the end of the next trip.

Joey the Smith stood at the forge one day, trimming a red-hot horse-shoe, when I rode up and dropping the reins over Snowball's head, sang out " Morning, Joey ! "

Joey placed the chisel on the shoe with nice calculation of the amount he wanted to snip off ; his assistant boy swung the big hammer, and an inch cube of red-hot iron dropped off. Then Joey looked up with, what seemed to me, a conflict of innocent surprise and stifled amusement in his face. The boy also turned to look, and —the insignificant incident is curiously unforgettable —trod upon the piece of hot iron. " Look where you're standing," said Joey reproachfully, as the smoke and smell of burning skin-welt rose up ; and the boy with a grunt of disgust, such as we might give at a

burned boot, looked to see what damage had been done to his 'unders.' It gave me an even better idea of a nigger's feet than those thorn digging operations when we had to cut through a solid whitish welt a third of an inch thick.

Joey grinned openly at the boy; but he was thinking of Snowball.

"I wonder you had the heart, Joey, I do indeed!" I said, shaking my head at him.

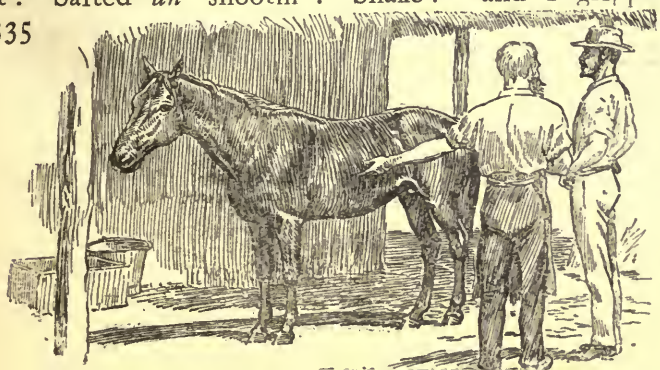
"You would have him, lad, there was no refusin' you! You arst so nice and wanted him so bad!"

"But how could you bear to part with him, Joey? It must have been like selling one of the family."

"'Es, Boy, 'es! We are a bit stoopid—our lot! Is he still such a fool, or has he improved any with you?"

"Joey, I've learned him—full up to the teeth. If he stops longer he will become wicked, like me; and you would not be the ruin of an innocent young thing trying to earn a living honestly, if he can?"

"Come round behind the shop, Boy. I got a pony 'll suit you proper!" He gave a hearty laugh, and added "You can always get what you arsk for—if it ain't worth having. Moril! Don't arsk! I never offered you Snowball. This one's different. You can have him at cost price; and that's an old twelve month account! Ten pounds. He's worth four of it! Salted *an'* shootin'! Shake!" and I gripped

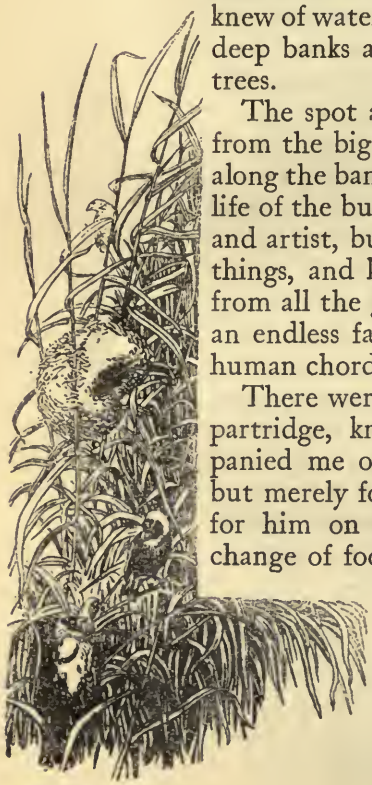


his grimy old fist gladly, knowing it was jonnick and 'a square deal.'

That was Mungo Park—the long, strong, low-built, half-bred Basuto pony—well-trained and without guile.

I left Snowball with his previous owner, to use as required, and never called back for him; and if this should meet the eye of Joey the Smith he will know that I no longer hope his future life will be spent in stalking a wart-eyed white horse in a phantom Bush-veld. Mungo made amends.

There was a spot between the Komati and Crocodile rivers on the north side of the road where the white man seldom passed and nature was undisturbed; few knew of water there; it was too well concealed between deep banks and the dense growth of thorns and large trees.



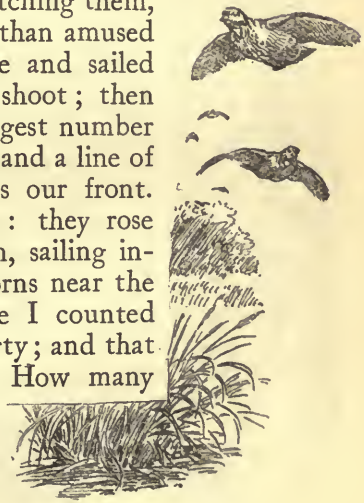
The spot always had great attractions for me apart from the big game to be found there. I used to steal along the banks of this lone water and watch the smaller life of the bush. It was a delightful field for naturalist and artist, but unfortunately we thought little of such things, and knew even less; and now nothing is left from all the glorious opportunities but the memory of an endless fascination and a few facts that touch the human chord and will not submit to be forgotten.

There were plenty of birds—guinea-fowl, pheasant, partridge, knoorhaan and bush pauw. Jock accompanied me of course when I took the fowling-piece, but merely for companionship; for there was no need for him on these occasions. I shot birds to get a change of food and trusted to walking them up along

the river banks and near drinking pools; but one evening Jock came forward of his own accord to help me—a sort of amused volunteer; and after that I always used him.

He had been at my heels, apparently taking little interest in the proceedings from the moment the first bird fell and he saw what the game was; probably he was intelligently interested all the time but considered it nothing to get excited about. After a time I saw him turn aside from the line we had been taking and stroll off at a walking pace, sniffing softly the while. When he had gone a dozen yards he stopped and looked back at me; then he looked in front again with his head slightly on one side, much as he would have done examining a beetle rolling his ball.

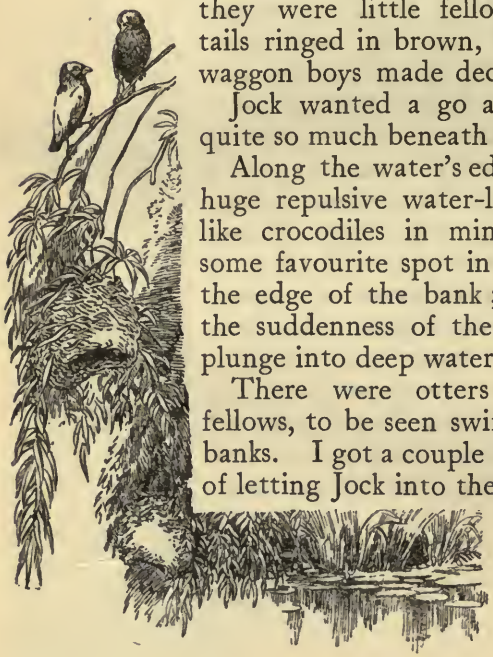
There were no signs of anything, yet the grass was short for those parts, scarce a foot high, and close, soft and curly. A brace of partridges rose a few feet from Jock, and he stood at ease calmly watching them, without a sign or move to indicate more than amused interest. The birds were absurdly tame and sailed so quietly along that I hesitated at first to shoot; then the noise of the two shots put up the largest number of partridges I have ever seen in one lot, and a line of birds rose for perhaps sixty yards across our front. There was no wild whirr and confusion: they rose in leisurely fashion as if told to move on, sailing infinitely slowly down the slope to the thorns near the donga. Running my eye along the line I counted them in twos up to between thirty and forty; and that could not have been more than half. How many



coveys had packed there, and for what purpose, and whether they came every evening, were questions which one would like answered now; but they were not of sufficient interest then to encourage a second visit another evening. The birds sailed quietly into the little wood, and many of them alighted on branches of the larger trees. It is the only time I have seen a partridge in a tree; but when one comes to think it out, it seems common-sense that, in a country teeming with vermin and night-prowlers, all birds should sleep off the ground. Perhaps they do!

There were numbers of little squirrel-like creatures there too. Our fellows used to call them ground-squirrels and "tree-rats"; because they live underground, yet climb trees readily in search of food; they were little fellows like meerkats, with bushy tails ringed in brown, black and white, of which the waggon boys made decorations for their slouch hats.

Jock wanted a go at them: they did not appear quite so much beneath notice as the birds.



Along the water's edge one came on the lagavaans, huge repulsive water-lizards three to four feet long, like crocodiles in miniature, sunning themselves in some favourite spot in the margin of the reeds or on the edge of the bank; they give one the jumps by the suddenness of their rush through the reeds and plunge into deep water.

There were otters too, big black-brown fierce fellows, to be seen swimming silently close under the banks. I got a couple of them, but was always nervous of letting Jock into the water after things, as one never

knew where the crocodile lurked. He got an ugly bite from one old dog-otter which I shot in shallow water; and, mortally wounded as he was, the otter put up a rare good fight before Jock finally hauled him out.

Then there were the cane-rats, considered by some most excellent and delicate of meats, as big and tender as small sucking-pigs. The cane-rat, living and dead, was one of the stock surprises, and the subject of jokes and tricks upon the unsuspecting: there seems to be no sort of ground for associating the extraordinary fat thing, gliding among the reeds or swimming silently under the banks, with either its live capacity of rat or its more attractive dead *rôle* of roast sucking-pig.

The hardened ones enjoyed setting this treat before the hungry and unsuspecting, and, after a hearty meal, announcing—"That was roast rat: good, isn't it?" The memory of one experience gives me water in the gills now! It was unpleasant, but not equal to the nausea and upheaval which supervened when, after a very savoury stew of delicate white meat, we were shown the fresh skin of a monkey hanging from the end of the buck-rails, with the head drooping forward, eyes closed, arms dangling lifeless, and limp open hands—a ghastly caricature of some hanged human, shrivelled and shrunk within its clothes of skin. I felt like a cannibal.

The water tortoises in the silent pools, grotesque muddy fellows, were full of interest to the quiet watcher, and better that way than as the "turtle soup" which once or twice we ventured on and tried to think was good!

There were certain hours of the day when it was more pleasant and profitable to lie in the shade and rest. It is the time of rest for the Bushveld—that spell about middle-day ; and yet if one remains quiet, there is generally something to see and something worth watching. There were the insects on the ground about one which would not otherwise be seen at all ; there were caterpillars clad in spiky armour made of tiny fragments of grass—fair defence no doubt against some enemies and a most marvellous disguise ; other caterpillars clad in bark, impossible to detect until they moved ; there were grasshoppers like leaves, and irregularly shaped stick insects, with legs as bulky as the body, and all jointed by knots like irregular twigs —wonderful mimetic creatures.

Jock often found these things for me. Something would move and interest him ; and when I saw him stand up and examine a thing at his feet, turning it over with his nose or giving it a scrape with his paw, it was usually worth joining in the inspection. The Hottentot-gods always attracted him as they reared up and 'prayed' before him ; quaint things, with tiny heads and thin necks and enormous eyes, that sat up with forelegs raised to pray, as a pet dog sits up and begs.

One day I was watching the ants as they travelled along their route—sometimes stopping to hobnob with those they met, sometimes hurrying past, and sometimes turning as though sent back on a message or reminded of something forgotten—when a little dry brown bean lying in a spot of sunlight gave a jump

of an inch or two. At first it seemed that I must have unknowingly moved some twig or grass stem that flicked it; but as I watched it there was another vigorous jump. I took it up and examined it but there was nothing unusual about it, it was just a common light brown bean with no peculiarities or marks; it was a real puzzle, a most surprising and ridiculous one. I found half a dozen more in the same place; but it was some days before we discovered the secret. Domiciled in each of them was a very small but very energetic worm, with a trap-door or stopper on his one end, so artfully contrived that it was almost impossible with the naked eye to locate the spot where the hole was. The worm objected to too much heat and if the beans were placed in the sun or near the fire the weird astonishing jumping would commence.

The beans were good for jumping for several months, and once in Delagoa, one of our party put some on a plate in the sun beside a fellow who had been doing himself too well for some time previously: he had become a perfect nuisance to us and we could not get rid of him. He had a mouth full of bread, and a mug of coffee on the way to help it down, when the first bean jumped. He gave a sort of peck, blinked several times to clear his eyes, and then with his left hand pulled slightly at his collar, as though to ease it. Then came another jump, and his mouth opened slowly and his eyes got big. The plate being hollow and glazed was not a fair field for the jumpers—they could not escape; and in about half a minute eight or ten beans were having a rough and tumble.

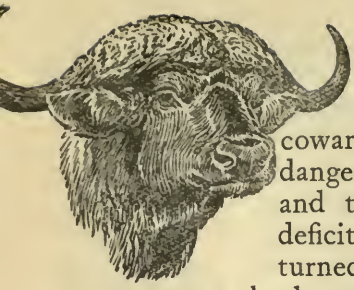
With a white scared face our guest slowly lowered his mug, screened his eyes with the other hand, and after fighting down the mouthful of bread, got up and walked off without a word.

We tried to smother our laughter, but some one's choking made him look back and he saw the whole lot of us in various stages of convulsions. He made one rude remark, and went on ; but every one he met that day made some allusion to beans, and he took the Durban steamer next morning.

The insect life was prodigious in its numbers and variety ; and the birds, the beasts, and the reptiles were all interesting. There is a goodness-knows-what-will-turn-up-next atmosphere about the Bushveld which is, I fancy, unique. The story of the curate, armed with a butterfly net, coming face to face with a black-maned lion may or may not be true—in fact; but it is true enough as an illustration; and it is no more absurd or unlikely than the meeting at five yards of a lioness and a fever-stricken lad carrying a white green-lined umbrella—which is true ! The boy stood and looked : the lioness did the same. " She seemed to think I was not worth eating, so she walked off," he used to say—and he was Trooper 242 of the Imperial Light Horse who went back under fire for wounded comrades and was killed as he brought the last one out.

I had an old cross-bred Hottentot-Bushman boy once—one could not tell

which lot he favoured—who was full of the folklore stories and superstitions of his strange and dying race, which he half humorously and half seriously blended with his own knowledge and hunting experiences. Jantje had the ugly wrinkled dry-leather face of his breed, with hollow cheeks, high cheek-bones, and little pinched eyes, so small and so deeply set that no one ever saw the colour of them ; the pepper-corns of tight wiry wool that did duty for hair were sparsely scattered over his head like the stunted bushes in the desert ; and his face and head were seamed with scars too numerous to count, the souvenirs of his drunken brawls. He resembled a tame monkey rather than a human creature, being, like so many of his kind without the moral side or qualities of human nature which go to mark the distinction between man and monkey. He was normally most cheery and obliging ; but it meant nothing, for in a moment the monkey would peep out, vicious, treacherous and unrestrained. Honesty, sobriety, gratitude, truth, fidelity, and humanity were impossible to him : it seemed as if even the germs were not there to cultivate, and the material with which to work did not exist. He had certain make-believe substitutes, which had in a sense been grafted on to his nature, and appeared to work, while there was no real use for them ; they made a show, until they were tested ; one took them for granted, as long as they were not disproved : it was a skin graft only, and there seemed to be no real ' union ' possible between them and the tough alien stock. He differed in character and nature from the Zulu as much as he did from the



white man ; he was as void of principle as—well, as his next of kin, the monkey ; yet, while without either shame of, or contempt for, cowardice ; he was wholly without fear of physical danger, having a sort of fatalist's indifference to it ; and that was something to set off against his moral deficit. I put Jantje on to wash clothes the day he turned up at the waggons to look for work, and as he knelt on the rocks stripped to the waist I noticed a very curious knotted line running up his right side from the lowest rib into the armpit. The line was whiter than his yellow skin ; over each rib there was a knot or widening in the line ; and under the arm there was a big splotchy star—all markings of some curious wound.

He laughed almost hysterically, his eyes disappearing altogether and every tooth showing, as I lifted his arm to investigate ; and then in high-pitched falsetto tones he shouted in a sort of ecstasy of delight, " Die ouw buffels, Baas ! Die buffels bull, Baas ! "

" Buffalo ! Did he toss you ? " I asked.

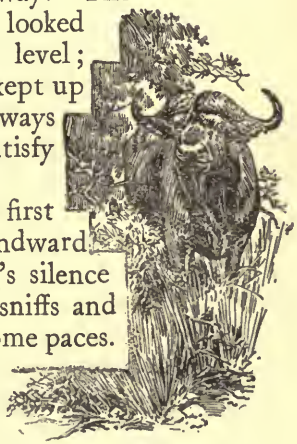
Jantje seemed to think it the best joke in the world and with constant squeals of laughter and graphic gestures gabbled off his account.

His master, it appears, had shot at and slightly wounded the buffalo, and Jantje had been placed at one exit from the bush to prevent the herd from breaking away. As they came towards him he fired at the foremost one ; but before he could reload the wounded bull made for him and he ran for dear life to the only tree near—one of the flat-topped thorns. He heard the thundering hoofs and the snorting breath behind,

"With one toss right on top of the thorn tree"

but raced on hoping to reach the tree and dodge behind it; a few yards short, however, the bull caught him, in spite of a jump aside, and flung him with one toss right on top of the thorn tree.

When he recovered consciousness he was lying face upwards in the sun, with nothing to rest his head on and only sticks and thorns around him. He did not know where he was or what had happened; he tried to move, but one arm was useless and the effort made him slip and sag, and he thought he was falling through the earth. Presently he heard regular tramping underneath him and the breath of a big animal: and the whole incident came back to him. By feeling about cautiously he at last located the biggest branch under him, and getting a grip on this he managed to turn over and ease his right side. He could then see the buffalo: it had tramped a circle round the tree and was doing sentry over him. Now and again the huge creature stopped to sniff, snort and stamp, and then resumed the round, perhaps the reverse way. The buffalo could not see him and never once looked up, but glared about at its own accustomed level; and, relying entirely on its sense of smell, it kept up the relentless vengeful watch for hours, always stopping in the same place, to leeward, to satisfy itself that the enemy had not escaped.



Late in the afternoon the buffalo, for the first time, suddenly came to a stand on the windward side of the tree, and after a good minute's silence turned its tail on Jantje and with angry sniffs and tosses stepped swiftly and resolutely forward some paces.

There was nothing to be seen; but Jantje judged the position and yelled out a warning to his master whom he guessed to be coming through the bush to look for him, and at the same time he made what noise he could in the tree top to make the buffalo think he was coming down. The animal looked round from time to time with swings and tosses of the head and threatening angry sneezes, much as one sees a cow do when standing between her young calf and threatened danger: it was defending Jantje, for his own purposes, and facing the danger.

For many minutes there was dead silence: no answer came to Jantje's call, and the bull stood its ground glaring and sniffing towards the bush. At last there was a heavy thud below, instantly followed by the report of the rifle—the bullet came faster than the sound; the buffalo gave a heavy plunge and with a grunting sob slid forward on its chest.

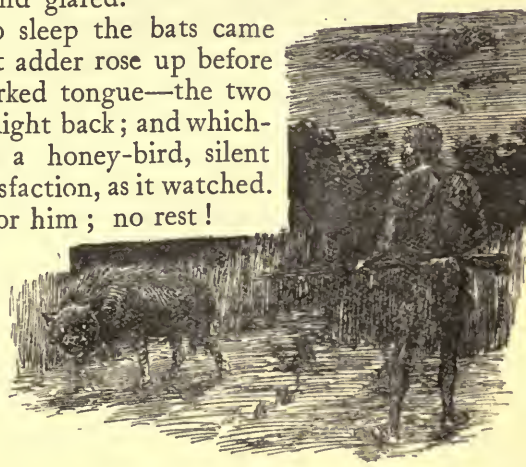
Round the camp fire at night Jantje used to tell tales in which fact, fancy, and superstition were curiously mingled; and Jantje when not out of humour was free with his stories. The boys, for whose benefit they were told, listened open-mouthed; and I often stood outside the ring of gaping boys at their fire, an interested listener.

The tale of his experiences with the honey-bird which he had cheated of its share was the first I heard him tell. Who could say how much was fact, how much fancy, and how much the superstitions of his race? Not even Jantje knew that! He believed it all.

The Honey-bird met him one day with cheery cheep-cheep, and as he whistled in reply it led him to an old tree where the beehive was: it was a small hive, and Jantje was hungry; so he ate it all. All the time he was eating, the bird kept fluttering about, calling anxiously, and expecting some honey or fat young bees to be thrown out for it; and when he had finished, the bird came down and searched in vain for its share. As he walked away the guilty Jantje noticed that the indignant bird followed him with angry cries and threats.

All day long he failed to find game; whenever there seemed to be a chance an angry honey-bird would appear ahead of him and cry a warning to the game; and that night as he came back, empty-handed and hungry, all the portents of bad luck came to him in turn. An owl screeched three times over his head; a goat-sucker with its long wavy wings and tail flitted before him in swoops and rings in most ghostly silence—and there is nothing more ghostly than that flappy wavy soundless flitting of the goat-sucker; a jackal trotted persistently in front looking back at him; and a striped hyena, humpbacked, savage, and solitary, stalked by in silence, and glared.

At night as he lay unable to sleep the bats came and made faces at him; a night adder rose up before his face and slithered out its forked tongue—the two black beady eyes glinting the firelight back; and whichever way he looked there was a honey-bird, silent and angry, yet with a look of satisfaction, as it watched. So it went all night: no sleep for him; no rest!



In the morning he rose early and taking his gun and chopper set out in search of hives : he would give all to the honey-bird he had cheated, and thus make amends.

He had not gone far before, to his great delight, there came a welcome chattering in answer to his low whistle, and the busy little fellow flew up to show himself and promptly led the way, going ahead ten to twenty yards at a flight. Jantje followed eagerly until they came to a small donga with a sandy bottom, and then the honey-bird calling briskly, fluttered from tree to tree on either bank, leading him on.

Jantje, thinking the hive must be near by, was walking slowly along the sandy bed and looking upwards in the trees, when something on the ground caught his eye and he sprang back just as the head of a big puff-adder struck where his bare foot had been a moment before. With one swing of his chopper he killed it; he took the skin off for an ornament, the poison-glands for medicine, and the fangs for charms, and then whistled and looked about for the honey-bird ; but it had gone.

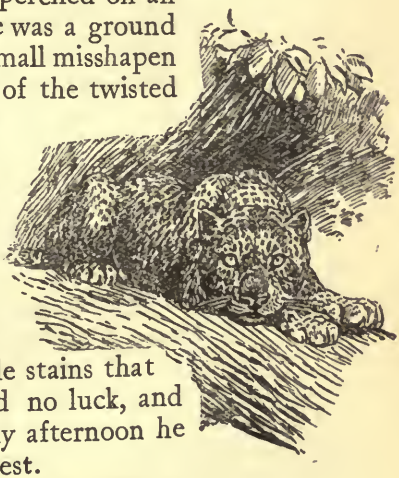
A little later on, however, he came upon another, and it led him to a big and shady wild fig-tree. The honey-bird flew to the trunk itself and cheeped and chattered there, and Jantje put down his gun and looked about for an easy place to climb. As he peered through the foliage he met a pair of large green eyes looking full into his : on a big limb of the tree lay a tiger, still as death, with its head resting on its paws, watching him with a cat-like

eagerness for its prey. Jantje hooked his toe in the reim sling of his old gun and slowly gathered it up without moving his eyes from the tiger's, and backing away slowly, foot by foot, he got out into the sunshine and made off as fast as he could.

It was the honey-bird's revenge : he knew it then !

He sat down on some bare ground to think what next to do ; for he knew he must die if he did not find honey and make good a hundred times what he had cheated.

All day long he kept meeting honey-birds and following them ; but he would no longer follow them into the bad places, for he could not tell whether they were new birds or the one he had robbed ! Once he had nearly been caught ; the bird had perched on an old ant-heap, and Jantje, thinking there was a ground hive there, walked boldly forward. A small misshapen tree grew out of the ant-heap, and one of the twisted branches caught his eye because of the thick ring around it : it was the coil of a long green mamba; and far below that, half hidden by the leaves, hung the snake's head with the neck gathered in half-loop coils ready to strike at him.



After that Jantje kept in the open, searching for himself among rocks and in all the old dead trees for the tell-tale stains that mark the hive's entrance; but he had no luck, and when he reached the river in the early afternoon he was glad of a cool drink and a place to rest.

For a couple of hours he had seen no honey-birds,

and it seemed that at last his pursuer had given him up, for that day at least. As he sat in the shade of the high bank, however, with the river only a few yards from his feet he heard again a faint chattering : it came from the river-side beyond a turn in the bank, and it was too far away for the bird to have seen Jantje from where it called, so he had no doubt about this being a new bird. It seemed to him a glorious piece of luck that he should find honey by the aid of a strange bird and be able to take half of it back to the hive he had emptied the day before and leave it there for the cheated bird.

There was a beach of pebbles and rocks between the high bank and the river, and as Jantje walked along it on the keen look-out for the bird, he spotted it sitting on a root half-way down the bank some twenty yards ahead. Close to where the chattering bird perched there was a break in the pebbly beach, and there shallow water extended up to the perpendicular bank. In the middle of this little stretch of water, and conveniently placed as a stepping-stone, there was a black rock, and the bare-footed Jantje stepped noiselessly from stone to stone towards it.

An alarmed cane-rat, cut off by Jantje from the river, ran along the foot of the bank to avoid him ; but when it reached the little patch of shallow water it suddenly doubled back in fright and raced under the boy's feet into the river.

Jantje stopped! He did not know why; but there seemed to be something wrong. Something had

frightened the cane-rat back on to him, and he stared hard at the bank and the stretch of beach ahead of him. Then the rock he meant to step on to gave a heave, and a long blackish thing curved towards him ; he sprang into the air as high as he could, and the crocodile's tail swept under his feet !

Jantje fled back like a buck—the rattle on the stones behind him and crash of reeds putting yards into every bound.

For four days he stayed in camp waiting for some one to find a hive and give him honey enough to make his peace ; and then, for an old snuff-box and a little powder, he bought a huge basket full of comb, young and old, from a kaffir woman at one of the kraals some miles away, and put it all at the foot of the tree he had cleaned out.

Then he had peace.

The boys believed every word of that story : so, I am sure, did Jantje himself. The buffalo story was obviously true, and Jantje thought nothing of it : the honey-bird story was not, yet he gloried in it ; it touched his superstitious nature, and it was impossible for him to tell the truth or to separate fact from fancy and superstition.

How much of fact there may have been in it I cannot say : honey-birds gave me many a wild goose chase, but when they led to anything at all it was to hives, and not to snakes, tigers and crocodiles. Perhaps it is right to own up that I never cheated a honey-bird ! We pretended to laugh at the superstition, but we left some honey all the same—just for luck ! After

all, as we used to say, the bird earned its share and deserved encouragement.

Round the camp fire at nights it was no uncommon thing to see some one jump up and let out with whatever was handiest at some poisonous intruder. There was always plenty of dead wood about and we piled on big branches and logs freely, and as the ends burnt to ashes in the heart of the fire we kept pushing the logs further in. Of course, dead trees are the home of all sorts of ' creepy-crawly ' things, and as the log warmed up and the fire eat into the decayed heart and drove thick hot smoke through the cracks and corridors and secret places in the logs the occupants would come scuttling out at the butt ends. Small snakes were common—the big ones usually clearing when the log was first disturbed—and they slipped away into the darkness giving hard quick glances about them ; but scorpions, centipedes and all sorts of spiders were by far the most numerous.

Occasionally in the mornings we found snakes under our blankets, where they had worked in during the night for the warmth of the human body ; but no one was bitten, and one made a practice of getting up at once, and with one movement, so that unwelcome visitors should not be warned or provoked by any preliminary rolling. The scorpions, centipedes and tarantulas seemed to be more objectionable ; but they were quite as anxious to get away as we were, and it is wonderful how little damage is done.

One night when we had been watching them coming out of a big honeycombed log like the animals from the

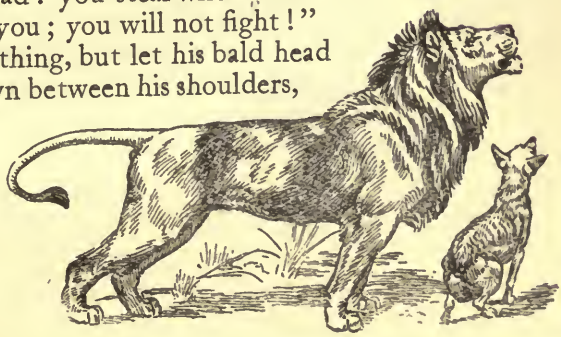
Ark, and were commenting on the astonishing number and variety of these things, I heard Jantje conveying in high-pitched tones fanciful bits of information to the credulous waggon boys. When he found that we too were listening—and Jantje had the storyteller's love for a 'gallery'—he turned our way and dropped into a jargon of broken English, helped out with Hottentot-Dutch, which it is impossible to reproduce in intelligible form.

He had made some allusion to 'the great battle,' and when I asked for an explanation he told us the story. It is well enough known in South Africa, and similar stories are to be found in the folklore of other countries, but it had a special interest for us in that Jantje gave it as having come to him from his own people. He called it "The Great Battle between the Things of the Earth and the Things of the Air."

For a long time there had been jealousy between the Things of the Earth and the Things of the Air, each claiming superiority for themselves; each could do something the others could not do; and each thought their powers greater and their qualities superior. One day a number of them happened to meet on an open plain near the river's bank, and the game of brag began again as usual. At last the Lion, who was very cross, turned to the old Black Aasvogel, as he sat half asleep on a dead tree, and challenged him.

"You only eat the dead: you steal where others kill. It is all talk with you; you will not fight!"

The Aasvogel said nothing, but let his bald head and bare neck settle down between his shoulders, and closed his eyes.



" He wakes up soon enough when we find him squatting above the carcase," said the Jackal. " See him flop along then."

" When *we* find him ! " the Aasvogel said, opening his eyes wide. " Sneaking prowler of the night ! Little bastard of the Striped Thief ! "

" Come down and fight," snarled the Hyena angrily. " Thief and scavenger yourself ! "

So the Things of the Air gathered about and joined in backing the Black Aasvogel ; and the Things of the Earth kept on challenging them to come down and have it out ; but nobody could hear anything because the Jackal yapped incessantly and the Go'way bird, with its feathers all on end and its neck craned out, screamed itself drunk with passion.

Then the Eagle spoke out :

" You have talked enough. Strike—strike for the eyes ! " and he swept down close to the Lion's head, but swerving to avoid the big paw that darted out at him, he struck in passing at the Jackal, and took off part of his ear.

" I am killed ! I am killed ! " screamed the Jackal, racing for a hole to hide in. But the other beasts laughed at him ; and when the Lion called them up and bade them take their places in the field for the great battle, the Jackal walked close behind him holding his head on one side and showing each one what the Eagle had done.

" Where is my place ? " asked the Crocodile, in a soft voice, from the bank where no one had noticed him come up.

The Things of the Earth that were near him moved quietly away.

"Your place is in the water," the Lion answered. "Coward and traitor whom no one trusts! Who would fight with his back to you?"

The Crocodile laughed softly and rolled his green eyes from one to another; and they moved still further away.

"What am I?" asked the Ostrich. "Kindred of the Birds, I am of the winged ones; yet I cannot fight with them!"

"Let him fly!" said the Jackal, grinning, "and we shall then see to whom he belongs! Fly, old Three Sticks! Fly!"

The Ostrich ran at him, waltzing and darting with wings outspread, but the Jackal dodged away under the Lion and squealed out, "Take your feet off the ground, Clumsy, and fly!"

Then it was arranged that there should be two Umpires, one for each party, and that the Umpires should stand on two high hills where all could see them. The Ostrich was made Umpire for the Things of the Air, and as long as the fight went well with his party he was to hold his head high so that the Things of the Air might see the long thin neck upright and, knowing that all was well, fight on.

The Jackal asked that he might be Umpire for the Things of the Earth.

"You are too small to be seen!" objected the Lion gruffly.

"No! No!" urged the Jackal, "I will stand on

a big ant-heap and hold my bushy tail on high where all will see it shining silver and gold in the sunlight."

"Good!" said the Lion. "It is better so, perhaps, for you would never fight; and as soon as one begins to run, others follow!"

The Things of the Air gathered in their numbers, and the Eagle led them, showing them how to make up for their weakness by coming swiftly down in numbers where they found their enemies alone or weak; how to keep the sun behind them so that it would shine in their enemies' eyes and blind them; and how the loud-voiced ones should attack on the rear and scream suddenly, while those with bill and claw swooped down in front and struck at the eyes.

And for a time it went well with the Things of the Air. The little birds and locusts and butterflies came in clouds about the Lion and he could see nothing as he moved from place to place; and the Things of the Earth were confused by these sudden attacks; and, giving up the fight, began to flee from their places.

Then the Jackal, believing that he would not be found out, cheated: he kept his tail up to make them think they were not beaten. The Lion roared to them, so that all could hear, to watch the hill where the Jackal stood and see the sign of victory; and the Things of the Earth, being strong, gathered together again and withstood the enemy and drove them off.

The battle was going against the Things of the Air when the Go'way bird came to the Eagle and said:

"It is the Jackal who has done this. Long ago we had won; but, Cheat and Coward, he kept his tail

aloft and his people have returned and are winning now."

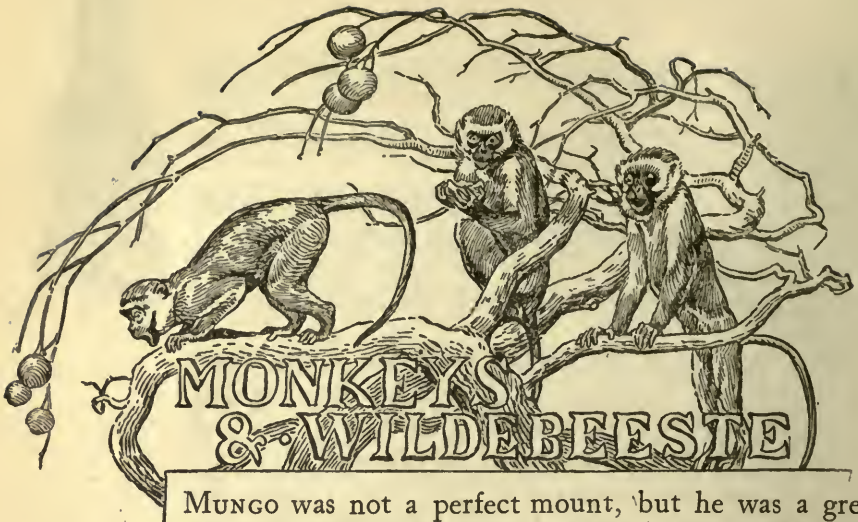
Then the Eagle, looking round the field, said, "Send me the Bee."

And when the Bee came the Eagle told him what to do; and setting quietly about his work, as his habit is, he made a circuit through the trees that brought him to the hill where the Jackal watched from the ant-heap.

While the Jackal stood there with his mouth open and tongue out, laughing to see how his cheating had succeeded, the Bee came up quietly behind and, as Jantje put it, "stuck him from hereafter!"

The Jackal gave a scream of pain and, tucking his tail down, jumped from the ant-heap and ran away into the bush; and when the Things of the Earth saw the signal go down they thought that all was lost, and fled.

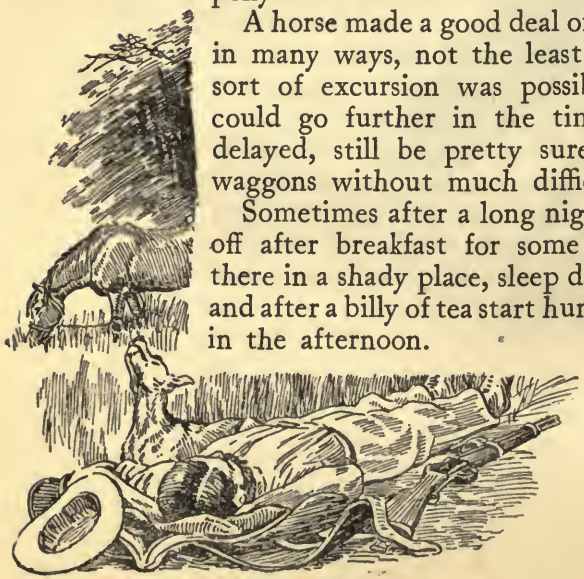
So was the Great Battle won!



Mungo was not a perfect mount, but he was a great improvement on Snowball; he had a wretched walk, and led almost as badly as his predecessor; but this did not matter so much because he could be driven like a pack donkey and relied on not to play pranks. In a gallop after game he was much faster than Snowball, having a wonderfully long stride for so low a pony.

A horse made a good deal of difference in the hunting in many ways, not the least of which was that some sort of excursion was possible on most days. One could go further in the time available and, even if delayed, still be pretty sure of catching up to the waggons without much difficulty.

Sometimes after a long night's trekking I would start off after breakfast for some 'likely' spot, off-saddle there in a shady place, sleep during the heat of the day, and after a billy of tea start hunting towards the waggons in the afternoon.



It was in such a spot on the Komati River, a couple of hundred yards from the bank, that on one occasion I settled down to make up lost ground in the matter of sleep, and with Mungo knee-haltered in good grass and Jock beside me, I lay flat on my back with hat covering my eyes and was soon comfortably asleep.

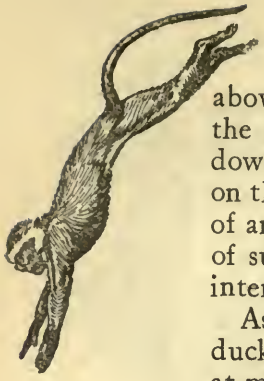
The sleep had lasted a couple of hours when I began to dream that it was raining and woke up in the belief that a hail storm—following the rain—was just breaking over me. I started up to find all just as it had been, and the sunlight beyond the big tree so glaring as to make the eyes ache. Through half-closed lids I saw Mungo lying down asleep and made out Jock standing some yards away quietly watching me.

With a yawn and stretch I lay back again; sleep was over but a good lazy rest was welcome: it had been earned, and, most comforting of all, there was nothing else to be done. In the doze that followed I was surprised to feel quite distinctly something like a drop of rain strike my leg, and then another on my hat.

"Hang it all, it is raining," I said, sitting up again and quite wide awake this time. There was Jock still looking at me, but only for the moment of moving, it appears; for, a minute later he looked up into the tree above me with ears cocked, head on one side, and tail held lazily on the horizontal and moving slowly from time to time.

It was his look of interested amusement.

A couple of leaves fluttered down, and then the half-eaten pip of a 'wooden orange' struck me in the face as I lay back again to see what was going on



above. The pip gave me the line, and away up among the thick dark foliage I saw a little old face looking down at me ; the quick restless eyes were watchfully on the move, and the mouth partly opened in the shape of an O—face and attitude together a vivid expression of surprise and indignation combined with breathless interest.

As my eyes fairly met those above me, the monkey ducked its head forward and promptly ' made a face ' at me without uttering a sound. Then others showed up in different places, and whole figures became visible now as the monkeys stole softly along the branches to get a better look at Jock and me : there were a couple of dozen of them of all sizes.

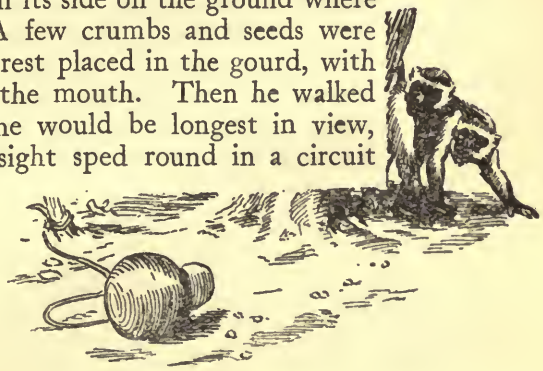
They are the liveliest, most restless, and most inquisitive of creatures ; ludicrously nervous and excitable ; quick to chattering anger and bursts of hysterical passion, which are intensely comical, especially when they have been scared. They are creatures whose method of progress most readily betrays them by the swaying of a branch or quivering of leaves, yet they can steal about and melt away at will, like small grey ghosts, silent as the grave.

I had often tried to trap them, but never succeeded : Jantje caught them, as he caught everything, with cunning that out-matched his wilder kindred ; pitfalls, nooses, whip-traps, fall-traps, foot-snares, drags, slip-knots of all kinds, and tricks that I cannot now remember, were in his repertory ; but he disliked showing his traps, and when told to explain he would half sulkily show one of the common kind.

The day he caught the monkey he was well pleased, and may possibly have told the truth. Baboons and monkeys, he said, can count just like men, but they can only count two! If one man goes into a mealie field and waits for them with a gun, their sentry will see him, and he may wait for ever; if two go and one remains, it is useless, for they realise that only one has come out where two went in; but if three go in, one may remain behind to lie in wait for them, for the monkeys, seeing more than one return, will invade the mealie field as soon as the two are safely out of the way. That was only Jantje's explanation of the well-known fact that monkeys and baboons know the difference between one and more than one.

But, as Jantje explained, their cleverness helped him to catch them. He went alone and came away alone, leaving his trap behind, knowing that they were watching his every movement, but knowing also that their intense curiosity would draw them to it the moment it seemed safe. The trap he used was an old calabash or gourd with a round hole in it about an inch in diameter; and a few pumpkin seeds and mealies and a hard crust of bread, just small enough to get into the calabash, formed the bait.

After fastening the gourd by a cord to a small stump, he left it lying on its side on the ground where he had been sitting. A few crumbs and seeds were dropped near it and the rest placed in the gourd, with one or two showing in the mouth. Then he walked off on the side where he would be longest in view, and when well out of sight sped round in a circuit

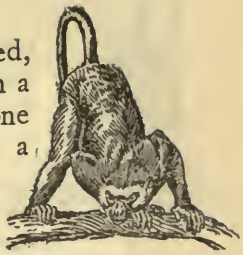


to a previously selected spot where he could get close up again and watch.

The foremost monkey was already on the ground when he got back and others were hanging from low branches or clinging to the stems, ready to drop or retreat. Then began the grunts and careful timid approaches, such as one sees in a party of children hunting for the hidden 'ghost' who is expected to appear suddenly and chase them; next, the chattering garrulous warnings and protests from the timid ones—the females—in the upper branches; the sudden start and scurry of one of the youngsters; and the scare communicated to all, making even the leader jump back a pace; then his angry grunt and loud scolding of the frightened ones—angry because they had given him a fright, and loud because he was reassuring himself.

After a pause they began the careful roundabout approach and the squatting and waiting, making pretences of not being particularly interested, while their quick eyes watched everything; then the deft picking up of one thing—instantly dropped again, as one picks up a roasted chestnut and drops it in the same movement, in case it should be hot; and finally the greedy scramble and chatter.

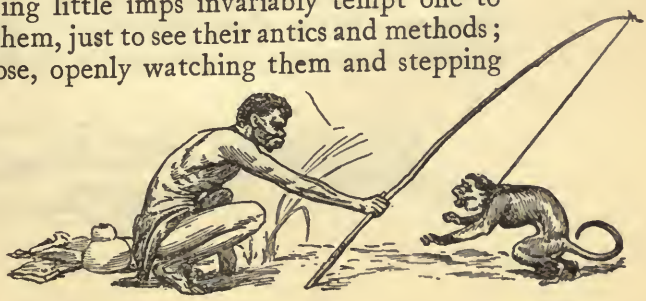
I have seen all that, but not, alas, the successful ending, when trying to imitate Jantje's methods. Jantje waited until the tugs at the gourd became serious, and then, knowing that the smaller things had been taken out or shaken out and eaten and that some enterprising monkey had put its arm into the hole and grabbed the crust, he ran out.

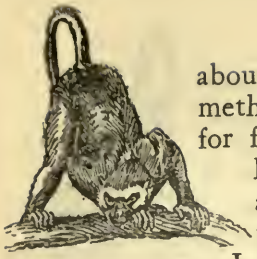


A monkey rarely lets go any food it has grabbed, and when, as in this case, the hand is jammed in a narrow neck, the letting go cannot easily be done instinctively or inadvertently; the act requires a deliberate effort. So Jantje caught his monkey, and flinging his ragged coat over the captive sat down to make it safe. By pushing the monkey's arm deeper into the gourd the crust became released and the hand freed; he then gradually shifted the monkey about until he got the head into the shoulders of the loose old coat, and thence into the sleeve; and worked away at this until he had the creature as helpless as a mummy with the head appearing at the cuff-opening and the body jammed in the sleeve like a bulging over-stuffed sausage. The monkey struggled, screamed, chattered, made faces, and cried like a child; but Jantje gripping it between his knees worked away unmoved.

He next took the cord from the calabash and tied one end securely round the monkey's neck, to the shrinking horror of that individual, and the other end to a stout bush stick about seven or eight feet long; and then slipped monkey cord and stick back through the sleeve and had his captive safe; the cord prevented it from getting away, and the stick from getting too close and biting him. When they sat opposite and pulled faces at each other the family likeness was surprising.

The grimacing little imps invariably tempt one to tease or chase them, just to see their antics and methods; and when I rose, openly watching them and stepping

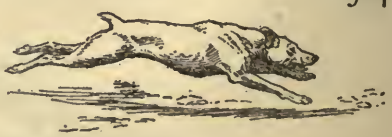




about for a better view, they abandoned the silent methods and bounded freely from branch to branch for fresh cover, always ducking behind something if I pointed the gun or a stick or even my arm at them, and getting into paroxysms of rage and leaning over to slang and cheek me whenever it seemed safe.

Jock was full of excitement, thoroughly warmed up and anxious to be at them, running about from place to place to watch them, tacking and turning and jumping for better views, and now and then running to the trunk and scraping at it. Whenever he did this there was a moment's silence; the idea of playing a trick on them struck me and I caught Jock up and put him in the fork of a big main branch about six feet from the ground. The effect was magical: the whole of the top of the tree seemed to whip and rustle at once, and in two seconds there was not a monkey left.

Then a wave in the top of a small tree some distance off betrayed them and we gave chase—a useless romping school-boy chase. They were in the small trees away from the river and it was easy to see and follow them; and to add to the fun and excitement I threw stones at the branches behind them. Their excitement and alarm then became hysterical, and as we darted about to head them off they were several times obliged to scamper a few yards along the ground to avoid me and gain other trees. It was then that Jock enjoyed himself most: he ran at them and made flying leaps and snaps as they sprang up the trees out of reach. It was like a caricature of children in one of their make-believe chases; the screams, grimaces,



and actions were so human that it would have seemed like a tragedy had one of them been hurt. They got away into the big trees once more, to Jock's disappointment but greatly to my relief; for I was quite pumped from the romp and laughter.

The river at this point was broken into several sluices by islands formed of piles of rocks on which there were a few stunted trees and dense growths of tall reeds, and here and there little spits and fringes of white sand were visible. There was plenty of small game in that part, and it was a great place for crocodiles. As we were then about half a mile below where Mungo had been left I strolled along the bank on the look out for a shot, frequently stopping to examine suspicious-looking rocks on the sand spits or at the borders of the reed fringes on the little islands.

The shooting of crocodiles was an act of war: it was enmity and not sport or a desire for trophies that prompted it, and when it did not interfere with other chances we never missed a practice shot at these fellows. I picked out several 'rocks,' so suspicious looking that I would have had a shot at them had there been a clear chance, and twice, while I was trying to make them out, they slid silently into the water before there was time to fire.

However, further on there came a better chance than any: there was something so peculiar about the look of this 'rock' that I picked a good spot and sat down to watch it; and presently the part nearest me turned slightly, just enough to show that it was a crocodile lying on the flat sand with his nose towards me and his

tail hidden in the reeds. It was fifty yards away, and from where I sat there was not much to aim at, as a Martini bullet would glance from almost any part of that polished hard case if it struck at such an angle.

I was sitting on the bank above the shelving beach of the river on which a dense mass of reeds grew, and the waving feathery tops partly obscured the sight. I know the bullet hit him somewhere, because he bounded with astonishing strength and activity several feet in the air and his tail slashed through the reeds like a mighty scythe. The huge jaws opened and he gave a horrible angry bellow—something between a roar and a snarl—as he plunged into the river, sending masses of spray and water flying every way. He made straight across, apparently at me, swimming on top of the water at amazing speed and throwing up a wave on either side and a white swirl of foam from the propelling tail.

It was certainly a most surprising and unheard-of proceeding, and as he reached my side of the stream, and because hidden from me by the screen of reeds at my feet, I turned and bolted. It may be that he came at me with murderous intent; or it may be that, blinded by rage or pain, he came towards me simply because he happened to be facing that way; but, whatever the reason, it was painfully clear that if he meant business he would be on to me before it was possible to see him in the reeds. That was enough for me. It had never occurred to me that there was going to be any fun in this for the crocodile; but one's sense of humour and justice was always being stimulated in the Bushveld.

With twenty yards of open ground between us I turned and waited; but no crocodile appeared, nor was there a sound to be heard in the reeds. A few minutes wait; a cautious return; a careful scrutiny; and then resort to sticks and stones; but all to no purpose: there was neither sign nor sound of the crocodile; and not being disposed to go into the reeds to look for something which I did not want, but might want me, I returned to Mungo—a little wiser, it is true, but not unduly 'heady' on that account.

Half an hour's jogging along the bank having failed to propose anything, I struck away from the river taking a line through the bush towards camp, and eventually came across a small herd of blue wildebeeste. Mungo's pricked ears and raised head warned me; but the grass being high it was not easy to see enough of them from the ground to place an effective shot, and before a chance offered they moved off slowly. I walked after them, leading Mungo and trying to get a fair opening on slightly higher ground.

Presently half a dozen blackish things appeared above the tall grass; they were the heads of the wildebeeste—all turned one way, and all looking at us with ears wide spread. Only the upper halves of the heads were visible through the thinner tops of the grass, and even an ordinary standing shot was not possible. I had to go to a tree for support in order to tip-toe for the shot, and whilst in the act of raising my rifle the heads disappeared; but I took chance and fired just below where the last one had shown up.

The wildebeeste were out of sight, hidden by grass six feet high, but a branch of the tree beside me served as a horizontal bar and hoisting myself chin high I was able to see them again. In front of us there was a dry vlei quite free of bush, some two hundred yards across and four hundred yards long, and the wildebeeste had gone away to the right and were skirting the vlei, apparently meaning to get round to the opposite side, avoiding the direct cut across the vlei for reasons of their own. It occurred to me that there must be a deep donga or perhaps a mud hole in front which they were avoiding; but that it might be possible for me to get across, or even half way across, in time to have another shot at them the next time they stopped to look back, as they were almost certain to do; so I ran straight on.

One does not have to reason things out like that in actual practice: the conclusion comes instantly, as if by instinct, and no time is lost. To drop from the branch, pick up the rifle, and start running were all parts of one movement. Stooping slightly to prevent my bobbing hat from showing up in the grass tops, and holding the rifle obliquely before me as a sort of snowplough to clear the grass from my eyes, I made as good pace as the ground would allow.

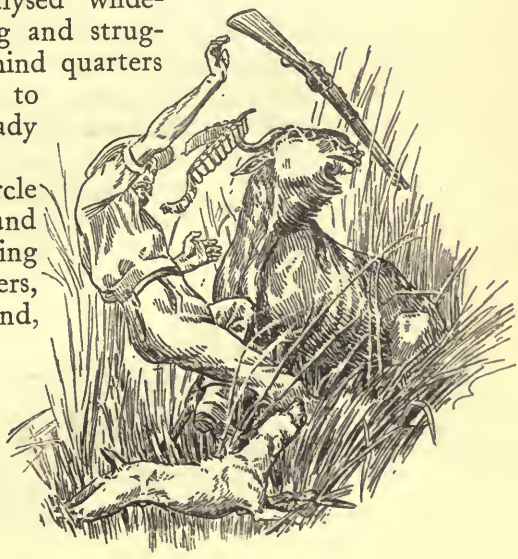
No doubt the rifle held in front of me made it difficult to notice anything on the ground; but the concentrated stare across the vlei in the direction of the galloping wildebeeste was quite as much the cause of what followed. Going fast and stooping low, with all my weight thrown forward, I ran right into a wildebeeste cow. My shot had wounded her through the

kidneys, completely paralysing the hind quarters, and she had instantly dropped out of sight in the grass. The only warning I got was a furious snort, and the black looking monster with great blazing blood-shot eyes rose up on its front legs as I ran into it.

To charge into a wounded wildebeeste ready to go for you, just when your whole attention is concentrated upon others two hundred yards beyond, is nearly as unpleasant as it is unexpected; it becomes a question of what will happen to you, rather than of what you will do. That at any rate was my experience. The rifle, if it had hindered me, also helped: held out at arms length it struck the wildebeeste across the forehead and the collision saved my chest from the horns. There was an angry toss of the big head and the rifle was twirled out of my hand, as one might flip a match away.

I do not know exactly what happened: the impression is of a breathless second's whirl and scramble, and then finding myself standing untouched five yards away, with the half-paralysed wildebeeste squatting like a dog and struggling to drag the useless hind quarters along in its furious efforts to get at Jock who had already intervened to help me.

The rifle lay within the circle of the big hooked horns; and the squatting animal, making a pivot of its hind quarters, slewed round and round,



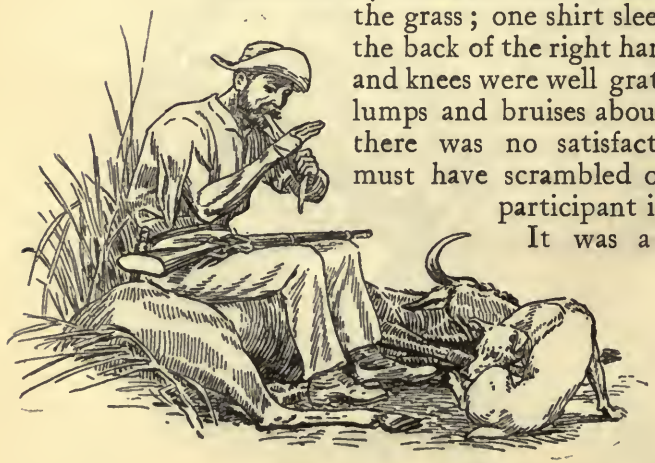
making savage lunges at Jock and great heaves at me each time I tried to get the rifle.

It often happens that shots touching the kidneys produce a paralysis, temporarily severe, which passes off to a great extent after some minutes and leaves the wounded animal well able to charge : it happened to me some years later while trying to photograph a wounded sable.

I tried to hook the gun out with a stick but the wildebeeste swung round and faced me at once, snapping the sticks and twirling them out of my hands with surprising ease and quickness. I then tried another game, and by making feint attacks from the other side at last got the animal gradually worked away from my gun ; and the next attempt at raking was successful.

When the excitement was over and there was a chance of taking stock of the position, I found that Jock had a pretty good ' gravel rash ' on one hip and a nasty cut down one leg ; he had caught the wildebeeste by the nose the instant I ran into it, and it had ' wiped the floor ' with him and flung him aside.

I found my bandolier with a broken buckle lying on the grass ; one shirt sleeve was ripped open ; the back of the right hand cut across ; hands and knees were well grated ; and there were lumps and bruises about the legs for which there was no satisfactory explanation. I must have scrambled out like an unwilling participant in a dog fight.



It was a long job skinning,

cutting up, and packing the wildebeeste, and when we reached the outspan the waggons had already started and we had a long tramp before us to catch them.

I drove Mungo before me, keeping him at an easy jog. We had been going for possibly an hour and it was quite dark, except for the stars and the young moon low down on our right ; the road was soft and Mungo's jogging paces sounded like floppy pats ; there was no other sound at all, not even a distant rumble from the waggons to cheer us ; Mungo must have been sick of it and one might have thought him jogging in his sleep but for the occasional pricking of his ears—a trick that always makes me wonder how much more do horses see in the dark than we do. I walked like a machine, with rifle on shoulder and glad to be rid of the broken bandolier, then transferred to Mungo; and Jock trotted at my heels.

This tired monotonous progress was disturbed by Mungo : his ears pricked ; his head went up ; and he stopped, looking hard at a big low bush on our left. I gave him a tap with the switch, and without an instant hesitation he dashed off to the right making a half circle through the veld and coming into the road again fifty yards ahead, and galloped away leaving a rising column of dust behind him.

I stood and faced the bush that Mungo had shied at, and the first thing that occurred to me was that my bandolier and cartridges were with the pony. Then Jock growled low and moved a few steps forward and slightly to the right, also sheering off from that

bush. I felt that he was bristling all over, but there was neither time nor light to watch him. I stepped slowly sideways after him gripping the rifle and looking hard at the bush.

Our line was much the same as Mungo's and would take us some seven or eight paces off the road—more than that was not possible owing to the barrier of thorns on that side. When we got abreast of the bush two large spots of pale light appeared in the middle of it, apparently waist high from the ground.

It is impossible to forget the tense creepy feeling caused by the dead stillness, the soft light, and the pale expressionless glow of those eyes—the haunting mystery of eyes and nothing more!

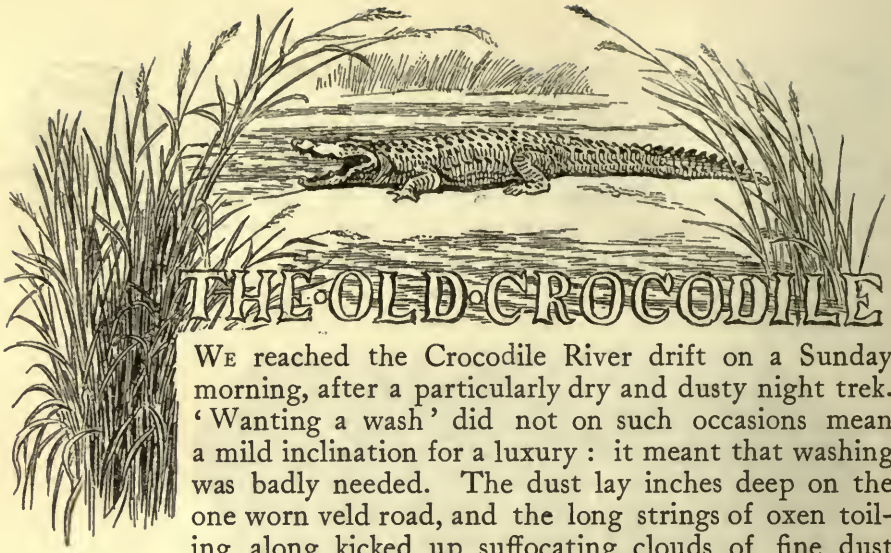
It is not unusual to see eyes in the night; but this was a 'nervy' occasion, and there is no other that comes back with all the vividness and reality of the experience itself, as this one does. And I was not the only nervous one. Mungo incontinently bolted—probably what he saw warranted it; Jock, as ever, faced it; but when my foot touched his hind leg as we sidled away he flew round with a convulsive jump. He too was strung to concert pitch.

As we moved on and passed the reflecting angle of the moon, the light of the eyes went out as suddenly and silently as it had appeared. There was nothing then to show me where danger lay; but Jock knew, and I kept a watch on him. He jogged beside me, lagging slightly as if to cover our retreat, always looking back. A couple of times he stopped entirely and stood in the road, facing straight back and

"THE HAUNTING MYSTERY OF EYES AND NOTHING MORE"

growling; and I followed suit. He was in command; he knew!

There was nothing more. Gradually Jock's subdued purring growl died down and the glances back became fewer. I found Mungo a long way on, brought to a standstill by the slipping of his load; and we caught up to the waggons at the next outspan.



THE OLD CROCODILE

We reached the Crocodile River drift on a Sunday morning, after a particularly dry and dusty night trek. 'Wanting a wash' did not on such occasions mean a mild inclination for a luxury: it meant that washing was badly needed. The dust lay inches deep on the one worn veld road, and the long strings of oxen toiling along kicked up suffocating clouds of fine dust which there was seldom any breeze to carry off: it powdered white man and black to an equal level of yellowy red. The waggons were a couple of hundred yards from the river; and, taking a complete change, I went off for a real clean up.

We generally managed to get in a couple of bathes at the rivers—real swims—but that was only done in the regular drifts and when there were people about or waggons crossing. In such conditions crocodiles rarely appeared; they prefer solitude and silence. The swims were very delightful but somewhat different from ordinary bathes; however remote may have been the risk of meeting a crocodile when you dived, or of being grabbed by one as you swam, the idea was always there and made it more interesting.

Being alone that day I had no intention of having a swim or of going into the open river, and I took a little trouble to pick a suitable pool with a rock on which to stand and dress. The water was clear and I could see the bottom of the pool. It was quite shallow—three feet deep at most—made by a scour in the sandy bed and divided from the main stream by a narrow spit of sand a couple of yards wide and twenty long. At the top end of the sand spit was a flat rock—my dressing table.

After a dip in the pool I stood on to the sand spit to scrub off the brown dust, keeping one unsoaped eye roving round for intrusive crocodiles, and the loaded rifle lying beside me. The brutes slide out so silently and unexpectedly that in that exposed position, with water all round, one could not afford to turn one's back on any quarter for long. There is something laughable—it seemed faintly humorous even then—in the idea of a naked man hastily washing soap out of his eyes and squeezing away the water to take a hurried look behind him, and then after careful survey, doing an ' altogether ' dowse just as hastily—blowing and spluttering all the time like a boy after his first dive.

The bath was successful and ended without incident —not a sign of a crocodile the whole time ! Breakfast was ready when I reached the waggons, and feeling very fit and clean in a fresh flannel shirt and white moleskins, I sat down to it. Jim Makokel' brought the kettle of coffee from the fire and was in the act of pouring some into a big mug when he stopped with

a grunt of surprise and, looking towards the river, called out sharply, " What is it ? "

One of the herd boys was coming at a trot towards us, and the drivers, thinking something had happened to the oxen, called a question to him. He did not answer until he reached them and even then spoke in so quiet a tone that I could not catch what he said. But Jim, putting down the kettle, ran to his waggon and grabbing his sticks and assegais called to me in a husky shouting whisper—which imperfectly describes Jim's way of relieving his feelings, without making the whole world echo: " Ingwenye, Inkos ! Ingwenye Umkulu ! Big Clocodile ! Groot Krokodil, Baas ! "

Then abandoning his excited polyglot he gabbled off in pure Zulu and at incredible speed a long account of the big Crocodile: it had carried off four boys going to the gold-fields that year; it had taken a woman and a baby from the kraal near by, but a white man had beaten it off with a bucket; it had taken all the dogs, and even calves and goats, at the drinking place; and goodness knows how much more. How Jim got his news, and when he made his friends, were puzzles never solved.

Hunting stories, like travellers tales, are proverbially dangerous to reputations, however literally true they may be; and this is necessarily so, partly because only exceptional things are worth telling, and partly because the conditions of the country or the life referred to are unfamiliar and cannot be grasped. It is a depressing but accepted fact that the ideal, lurid—and, I

suppose, convincing—pictures of wild life are done in London, where the author is unhampered by fact or experience.

"Stick to the impossible, and you will be believed: keep clear of fact and commonplace, and you cannot be checked."

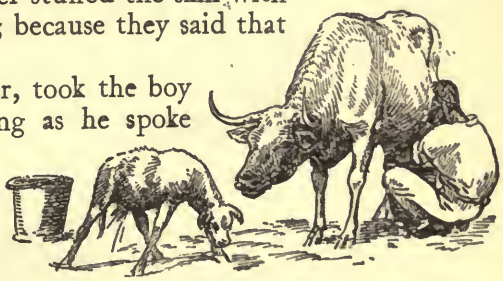
Such was the cynical advice given many years ago by one who had bought his experience in childhood and could not forget it. Sent home as a small boy from a mission station in Zululand to be educated by his grandparents, he found the demand for marvels among his simple country relatives so great that his small experience of snakes and wild animals was soon used up; but the eager suggestive questions of the good people, old and young, led him on, and he shyly crossed the border. The Fields of Fancy were fair and free; there were no fences there; and he stepped out gaily into the Little People's country—The Land of Let's Pretendia! He became very popular.

One day, however, whilst looking at the cows, he remarked that in Zululand a cow would not yield her milk unless the calf stood by.

The old farmer stopped in his walk, gave him one suspicious look, and asked coldly, "What do they do when a calf is killed or dies?"

"They never kill the calves there;" the boy answered, "but once when one died father stuffed the skin with grass and showed it to the cow; because they said that would do."

The old man, red with anger, took the boy to his room, saying that as long as he spoke



of the lions, tigers and snakes that he knew about, they believed him ; but when it came to farming ! No ! Downright lying he would not have ; and there was nothing for it but larruping.

" It was the only piece of solid truth they had allowed me to tell for months," he added thoughtfully, " and I got a first-class hiding for it."

And was there no one who doubted Du Chaillu and Stanley and others ? Did no one question Gordon Cumming's story of the herd of elephants caught and killed in a little kloof ? and did not we of Barberton many years later locate the spot by the enormous pile of bones, and name it " Elephants' Kloof " ?

There are two crocodile incidents well known to those whom time has now made old hands, but believed by no one else ; even in the day of their happening they divided men into believers and unbelievers. The one was of ' Mad ' Owen—only mad, because utterly reckless—riding through Komati Drift one moonlight night alone and unarmed, who, riding, found his horse brought to a stop, plunging, kicking and struggling on the sand bank in mid-stream where the water was not waist deep. Owen looking back saw that a crocodile had his horse by the leg. All he had was a leaded hunting crop, but, jumping into the water he laid on so vigorously that the crocodile made off, and Owen remounted and rode out.

There are many who say that it is not true—that it cannot be true ; for no man would do it. But there are others who have an open mind, because they knew Owen—Mad Owen, who for a wager bandaged

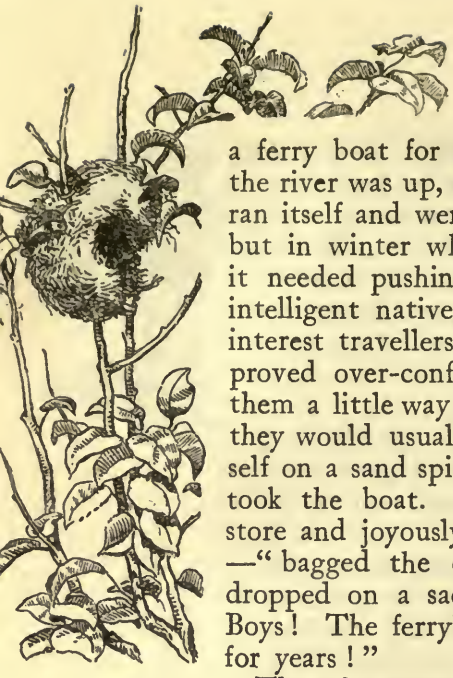
his horse's eyes and galloped him over a twenty foot bank headlong into the Jew's Hole in Lydenburg; Owen, who when driving four young horses in a Cape cart flung the reins away and whipped up the team, bellowing with laughter, because his nervous companion said he had never been upset and did not want to be; Owen, who—— But too many things rise up that earned him his title and blow the 'impossible' to the winds.

Mad Owen deserves a book to himself; but here is my little testimony on his behalf, given shamefaced at the thought of how he would roar to think it needed.

I crossed that same drift one evening and on riding up the bank to Furley's store saw a horse standing in a dejected attitude with one hind leg clothed in 'trowsers' made of sacking and held up by a suspender ingeniously fastened across his back.

During the evening something reminded me of the horse, and I asked a question; and the end of Furley's answer was, "They say it's all a yarn about 'horse-whipping' a crocodile: all we know is that one night, a week ago, he turned up here dripping wet, and after having a drink told us the yarn. He had the leaded hunting-crop in his hand; and that's the horse he was riding. You can make what you like of it. We've been doctoring the horse ever since, but I doubt if it will pull through!"

I have no doubt about the incident. Owen did not invent: he had no need to; and Furley himself was no mean judge of crocodiles and men. Furley kept



a ferry boat for the use of natives and others when the river was up, at half a crown a trip. The business ran itself and went strong during the summer floods, but in winter when the river was low and fordable it needed pushing; and then Furley's boatman, an intelligent native, would loiter about the drift and interest travellers in his crocodile stories, and if they proved over-confident or sceptical, would manœuvre them a little way down stream where, from the bank, they would usually see a big crocodile sunning himself on a sand spit below the drift. The boys always took the boat. One day some police entered the store and joyously announced that they had got him —" bagged the old villain at last!"; and Furley dropped on a sack of mealies groaning out " Glory, Boys! The ferry's ruined. Why, I've preserved him for years!"

The other crocodile incident concerns " Lying Tom " —brave merry-faced blue-eyed Tom; bubbling with good humour; overflowing with kindness; and full of the wildest yarns, always good and amusing, but so steep that they made the most case-hardened draw a long breath.

The name Lying Tom was understood and accepted by every one in the place, barring Tom himself; for, oddly enough, there was another Tom of the same surname, but no relation, and once when his name cropped up I heard the real Simon Pure refer to him as " my namesake—the chap they call Lying Tom." To the day of his death Tom believed that it was the other Tom who was esteemed the liar.

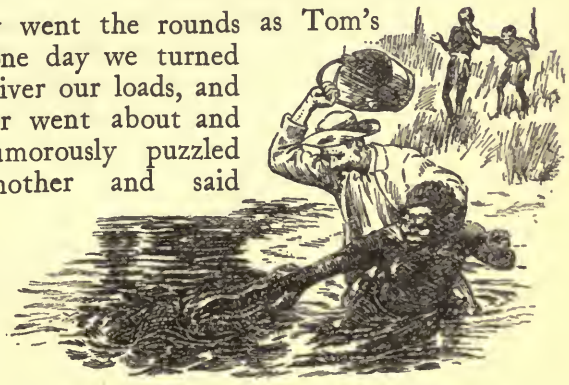
Tom was a prospector who 'came in' occasionally for supplies or licenses; and there came a day when Barberton was convulsed by Lying Tom's latest.

He had been walking along the bank of the Crocodile River, and on hearing screams ran down just in time to see a kaffir woman with a child on her back dragged off through the shallow water by a crocodile. Tom ran in to help—"I kicked the dashed thing on the head and in the eyes," he said, "and punched its ribs and then grabbed the bucket that the woman had in her hand and hammered the blamed thing over the head till it let go. By Jimminy, Boys, the woman was in a mess: never saw any one in such a fright!"

Poor Tom suffered from consumption in the throat and talked in husky jerks broken by coughs and laughter. Is there one among them who knew him who does not remember the breezy cheeriness, the indomitable pluck, the merry blue eyes, so limpidly clear, the expressive bushy eyebrows, and the teeth, too perfect to be wasted on a man, and ever flashing with his unfailing smiles?

Tom would end up with—"Niggers said I was 'takati': asked for some of my medicine! Blamed niggers; got no pluck: would've let the woman go!"

Of course this story went the rounds as Tom's latest and best; but one day we turned up in Barberton to deliver our loads, and that evening a whisper went about and men with faces humorously puzzled looked at one another and said



"Lying Tom's a fraud: the crocodile story is true!"

For our party, shooting guinea-fowl in the kaffir lands along the river, came upon a kraal where there sat a woman with an arm so scarred and marked that we could not but ask what had caused it. There was no difference in the stories, except that the kaffirs after saying that the white man had kicked the crocodile and beaten it with the bucket, added "and he kicked and beat with the bucket the two men who were there, saying that they were not men but dogs, who would not go in and help the woman. But he was bewitched: the crocodile could not touch him!"

Some of Tom's stories were truly incredible, but not those in which he figured to advantage: he was too brave a man to have consciously gained credit he did not deserve. He died, slowly starved to death by the cruel disease—the brave, kindly, cheery spirit, smiling unbeaten to the end.

That was what Jim referred to when he called me to kill the murderer of women and children. It pleased him and others to say that this was the same crocodile; and I believe it was. The locality was the same, and the kraal boys said that it was in the old place from which all its murderous raids had been made; and that was all we knew.

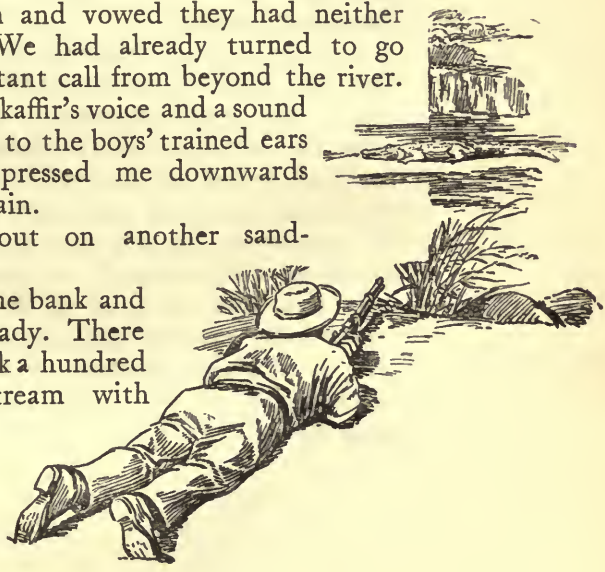
I took the rifle and went with the herd boy; Jim followed close behind, walking on his toes with the waltzy springy movement of an ostrich, eager to get ahead and repeatedly silenced and driven back by me in the few hundred yards' walk to the river.

A queer premonitory feeling came over me as I saw we were making straight for the bathing pool; but before reaching the bank the herd boy squatted down, indicating that somewhere in front and below us the enemy would be found. An easy crawl brought me to the river bank and, sure enough, on the very spot where I had stood to wash, only fifty yards from us, there was an enormous crocodile. He was lying along the sand-spit with his full length exposed to me. Such a shot would have been a moral certainty, but as I brought the rifle slowly up it may have glinted in the sun, or perhaps the crocodile had been watching us all the time, for with one easy turn and no splash at all he slid into the river and was gone.

It was very disgusting and I pitched into Jim and the other boys behind for having made a noise and shown themselves; but they were still squatting when I reached them and vowed they had neither moved nor spoken. We had already turned to go when there came a distant call from beyond the river. To me it was merely a kaffir's voice and a sound quite meaningless: but to the boys' trained ears it spoke clearly. Jim pressed me downwards and we all squatted again.

"He is coming out on another sand-bank," Jim explained.

Again I crawled to the bank and lay flat, with the rifle ready. There was another sand streak a hundred yards out in the stream with two out-croppings of



black rock at the upper end of it—they were rocks right enough, for I had examined them carefully when bathing. This was the only other sandbank in sight : it was higher than it appeared to be from a distance and the crocodile whilst hidden from us was visible to the natives on the opposite bank as it lay in the shallow water and emerged inch by inch to resume its morning sun bath. The crocodile was so slow in showing up that I quite thought it had been scared off again, and I turned to examine other objects and spots up and down the stream ; but presently glancing back at the bank again I saw what appeared to be a third rock, no bigger than a loaf of bread. This object I watched until my eyes ached and swam ; it was the only possible crocodile ; yet it was so small, so motionless, so permanent looking, it seemed absurd to doubt that it really was a stone which had passed unnoticed before.

As I watched unblinkingly it seemed to grow bigger and again contract with regular swing, as if it swelled and shrank with breathing ; and knowing that this must be merely an optical delusion caused by staring too long, I shut my eyes for a minute. The effect was excellent : the rock was much bigger ; and after that it was easy to lie still and wait for the cunning old reptile to show himself.

It took half an hour of this cautious manœuvring and edging on the part of the crocodile before he was comfortably settled on the sand with the sun warming all his back. In the meantime the waggon boys behind me had not stirred ; on the opposite side

of the river kaffirs from the neighbouring kraal had gathered to the number of thirty or forty, men, women and children, and they stood loosely grouped, instinctively still silent and watchful, like a little scattered herd of deer. All on both sides were watching me and waiting for the shot. It seemed useless to delay longer; the whole length of the body was showing, but it looked so wanting in thickness, so shallow in fact, that it was evident the crocodile was lying, not on the top, but on the other slope of the sand spit; and probably not more than six or eight inches—in depth—of body was visible.

It was little enough to aim at, and the bullet seemed to strike the top of the bank first, sending up a column of sand, and then, probably knocked all out of shape, ploughed into the body with a tremendous thump.

The crocodile threw a back somersault—that is, it seemed to rear up on its tail and spring backwards; the jaws divided into a huge fork as, for a second, it stood up on end; and it let out an enraged roar, seemingly aimed at the heavens. It was a very sudden and dramatic effect, following on the long silence.

Then the whole world seemed to burst into indescribable turmoil; shouts and yells burst out on all sides; the kaffirs rushed down to the banks—the men armed with sticks and assegais, and the women and children with nothing more formidable than their voices; the crocodile was alive—very much alive—and in the water; the waggon boys, headed by Jim, were all round me and all yelling

out together what should or should not be done, and what would happen if we did or did not do it. It was Babel and Bedlam let loose.

With the first plunge the crocodile disappeared, but it came up again ten yards away thrashing the water into foam and going up stream like a paddle-boat gone reeling roaring mad—if one can imagine such a thing! I had another shot at him the instant he reappeared, but one could neither see nor hear where it struck; and again and again I fired whenever he showed up for a second. He appeared to be shot through the lungs; at any rate the kaffirs on the other bank, who were then quite close enough to see, said that it was so. The waggon boys had run down the bank out on to the first sand spit and I followed them, shouting to the kaffirs opposite to get out of the line of fire, as I could no longer shoot without risk of hitting them.

The crocodile after his first straight dash up stream had tacked about in all directions during the next few minutes, disappearing for short spells and plunging out again in unexpected places. One of these sudden reappearances brought him once more abreast, and quite near to us, and Jim with a fierce yell and with his assegai held high in his right hand dashed into the water, going through the shallows in wild leaps. I called to him to come back but against his yells and the excited shouts of the ever-increasing crowd my voice could not live; and Jim, mad with excitement, went on. Twenty yards out, where increasing depth steadied him, he turned for a moment and seeing himself

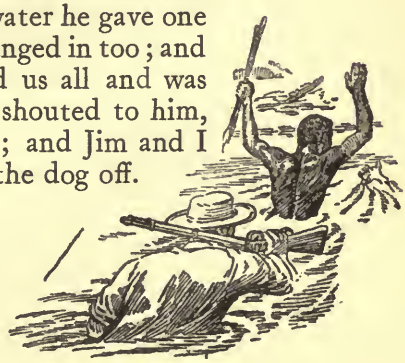
alone in the water called to me with eager confidence, " Come on, Baas."

It had never occurred to me that any one would be such an idiot as to go into water after a wounded crocodile. There was no need to finish off this one, for it was bound to die, and no one wanted the meat or skin. Who, then, would be so mad as to think of such a thing? Five minutes earlier I would have answered very confidently for myself; but there are times when one cannot afford to be sensible. There was a world of unconscious irony in Jim's choice of words " *Come* on ! " and " *Baas !* "

The boy giving the lead to his master was too much for me ; and in I went !

I cannot say that there was much enjoyment in it for the first few moments—not until the excitement took hold and all else was forgotten. The first thing that struck me was that in the deep water my rifle was worth no more than a walking-stick, and not nearly as useful as an assegai ; but what drove this and many other thoughts from my mind in a second was the appearance of Jock on the stage and his sudden jump into the leading place.

In the first confusion he had passed unnoticed, probably at my heels as usual, but the instant I answered Jim's challenge by jumping into the water he gave one whimpering yelp of excitement and plunged in too ; and in a few seconds he had outdistanced us all and was leading straight for the crocodile. I shouted to him, of course in vain—he heard nothing ; and Jim and I plunged and struggled along to head the dog off.



As the crocodile came up Jock went straight for him—his eyes gleaming, his shoulders up, his nose out, his neck stretched to the utmost in his eagerness—and he ploughed along straining every muscle to catch up. When the crocodile went under he slackened and looked anxiously about, but each fresh rise was greeted by the whimpering yelps of intense suppressed excitement as he fairly hoisted himself out of the water with the vigour of his swimming.

The water was now breast-high for us, and we were far out in the stream, beyond the sand spit where the crocodile had lain, when the kaffirs on the bank got their first chance and a flight of assegais went at the enemy as he rose. Several struck and two remained in him; he rose again a few yards from Jim, and that sportsman let fly one that struck well home. Jock, who had been toiling close behind for some time and gaining slowly, was not five yards off then; the floundering and lashing of the crocodile were bewildering, but on he went as grimly and eagerly as ever. I fired again—not more than eight yards away—but the water was then up to my arms, and it was impossible to pick a vital part; the brain and neck were the only spots to finish him, but one could see nothing beyond a great upheaval of water and clouds of spray and blood-stained foam.

The crocodile turned from the shot and dived up stream, heading straight for Jock: the din of yelling voices stopped instantly as the huge open mouthed thing plunged towards the dog; and for one sick horrified moment I stood and watched—helpless.

"THE LASHING TAIL SENT THE DOG UP WITH A COLUMN OF WATER"

Had the crocodile risen in front of Jock that would have been the end—one snap would have done it; but it passed clear underneath, and, coming up just beyond him, the great lashing tail sent the dog up with the column of water a couple of feet in the air. He did as he had done when the koodoo bull tossed him: his head was round straining to get at the crocodile before he was able to turn his body in the water; and the silence was broken by a yell of wild delight and approval from the bank.

Before us the water was too deep and the stream too strong to stand in; Jim in his eagerness had gone in shoulder high, and my rifle when aimed only just cleared the water. The crocodile was the mark for more assegais from the bank as it charged up stream again, with Jock tailing behind, and it was then easy enough to follow its movements by the shafts that were never all submerged. The struggles became perceptibly weaker, and as it turned again to go with the stream every effort was concentrated on killing and landing it before it reached the rocks and rapids.

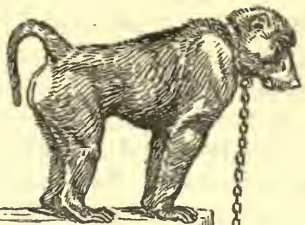
I moved back for higher ground and, finding that the bed shelved up rapidly down stream, made for a position where there would be enough elevation to put in a brain shot. The water was not more than waist high then, and as the crocodile came rolling and thrashing down I waited for his head to show up clearly. My right foot touched a sloping rock which rose almost to the surface of the water close above the rapids, and anxious to get the best possible position for a last shot, I took my stand there. The rock was

the ordinary shelving bedrock, uptilted at an easy angle and cut off sheer on the exposed side, and the wave in the current would have shown this to any one not wholly occupied with other things ; but I had eyes for nothing except the crocodile which was then less than a dozen yards off, and in my anxiety to secure a firm footing for the shot I moved the right foot again a few inches—over the edge of the rock. The result was as complete a spill as if one unthinkingly stepped backwards off a diving board : I disappeared in deep water, with the knowledge that the crocodile would join me there in a few seconds.

One never knows how these things are done or how long they take : I was back on the rock—without the rifle—and had the water out of my eyes in time to see the crocodile roll helplessly by, six feet away, with Jock behind making excited but ridiculously futile attempts to get hold of the tail ; Jim—swimming, plunging and blowing like a maddened hippo—formed the tail of the procession, which was headed by my water-logged hat floating heavily a yard or so in front of the crocodile.

While a crowd of yelling niggers under the generalship of Jim were landing the crocodile, I had time to do some diving, and managed to fish out my rifle.

My Sunday change was wasted. But we got the old crocodile ; and that was something, after all.



THE FIGHTING BABOON

On the way to Lydenburg, not many treks from Paradise Camp, we were outspanned for the day. Those were the settled parts; on the hills and in the valleys about us were the widely scattered workings of the gold diggers or the white tents of occasional prospectors.

The place was a well-known and much-frequented public outspan, and a fair sized wayside store marked its importance. After breakfast we went to the store to 'swap' news with the men on the spot and a couple of horsemen who had offsaddled there.

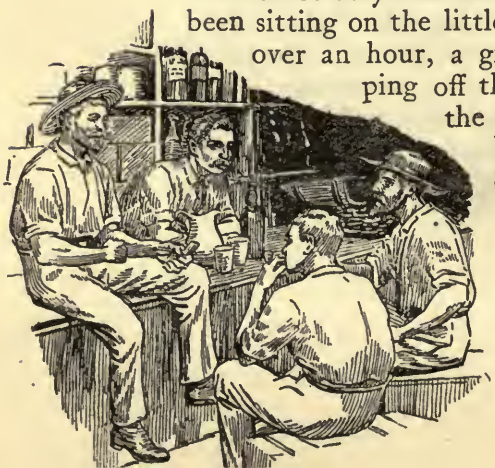
There were several other houses of sorts; they were rough wattle and daub erections which were called houses, as an acknowledgment of pretensions expressed in the rectangular shape and corrugated iron roof. One of these belonged to Seedling, the Field Cornet and only official in the district. He was the petty local Justice who was supposed to administer minor laws, collect certain revenues and taxes, and issue passes. The salary was nominal, but the position bristled with opportunities for one who was not very particular;

and the then occupant of the office seemed well enough pleased with the arrangement, whatever the public may have thought of it.

He was neither popular nor trusted : many tales of great harshness and injustice to the natives, and of corruption and favouritism in dealing with the whites, added to habitual drunkenness and uncertain temper, made a formidable tally in the account against him ; he was also a bully and a coward, and all knew it ; but unfortunately he was the law—as it stood for us !

Seedling, although an official of the Boer Government, was an Englishman ; there were several of them on the goldfields in those days, and for the most part, they were good fellows and good officials—this one was an exception. We all knew him personally : he was effusively friendly ; and we suffered him and—paid for the drinks. That was in his public capacity : in his private capacity he was the owner of the fighting baboon of evil and cruel repute.

If ever fate's instruments moved unconscious of their mission and the part they were to play, it is certain that Jock and Jim Makokel' did so that day—the day that was the beginning of Seedling's fall and end.



It is not very clear how the trouble began. We had been sitting on the little store-counter and talking for over an hour, a group of half a dozen, swapping off the news of the goldfields and the big world against that from Delagoa and the Bushveld ; Seedling had joined us early

and, as usual, began the morning with drinks. We were not used to that on the road or out hunting; indeed, we rarely took any drink, and most of us never touched a drop except in the towns. The transport rider had opportunities which might easily become temptations—the load often consisting of liquor, easy to broach and only to be paid for at the end of the trip ; but we had always before us the lesson of the failures. Apart from this, however, we did not take liquor, because we could not work as well or last as long, run as fast or shoot as straight, if we did. And that was reason enough !

We had one round of drinks which was 'called' by one of the horsemen, and then, to return the compliment, another round called by one of us. A few minutes later Seedling announced effusively that it was his 'shout.' But it was only ten in the morning, and those who had taken spirits had had enough, indeed, several had only taken a sip of the second round in order to comply with a stupid and vicious custom ; I would not and could not attack another bottle of sour gingerbeer; and thus Seedling's round was reduced to himself and the proprietor. No man however thirsty would drink alone in those days—it was taken a mark of meanness or evidence of 'soaking' —and the proprietor had to be ready at any time to 'take one for the good of the house.'

A quarter of an hour passed, and Seedling, who had said nothing since his 'shout' was declined, turned away and strolled out, with hands thrust deep in the pockets of his riding breeches and a long heavy sjambok dangling

from one wrist. There was silence as he moved through the doorway, and when the square patch of sunlight on the earth floor was again unbroken the man behind the counter remarked,

"Too long between drinks for him! Gone for a pull at the private bottle."

"Is that how it's going?"

"Yah! all day long. Drinks here as long as any one'll call, but don't do much shoutin' on his own, I tell you! That's the first time I seen him call for a week. He wanted to get you chaps on the go, I reckon. He'll be wrong all day to-day. I know him!"

"Cost him two bob for nothing, eh!"

"Well, it ain't so much that; ye see, he reckoned you'd all shout your turns, and drinks 'd come regular; but he sees you're not on. Twig? I'm not complainin' mind you—Lord no! He don't pay any way! It's all 'chalked up' for him, an' I got to wipe it off the slate when the next loads comes and he collects my customs' duties. His liquor's took him wrong to-day—you'll see!"

We did see; and that before very long. We had forgotten Seedling, and were hearing all about the new finds reported from Barberton district, when one of the waggon boys came running into the store calling to me by my kaffir name and shouting excitedly, "Baas, Baas! come quickly! The baboon has got Jock: it will kill him!"

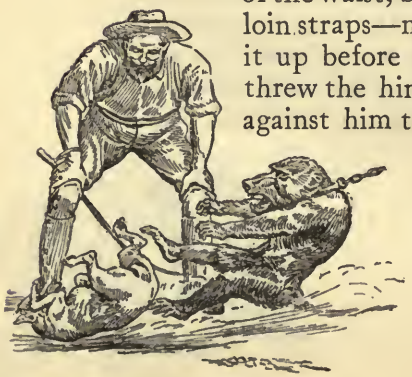
I had known all about the vicious brute, and had often heard of Seedling's fiendish delight in arranging fights or enticing dogs up to attack it for the pleasure

of seeing the beast kill the over-matched dogs. The dog had no chance at all, for the baboon remained out of reach in his house on the pole as long as it chose, if the dog was too big or the opening not a good one, and made its rush when it would tell best. But apart from this the baboon was an exceptionally big and powerful one, and it is very doubtful if any dog could have tackled it successfully in an open fight. The creature was as clever as even they can be ; its enormous jaws and teeth were quite equal to the biggest dog's, and it had the advantage of four ' hands.' Its tactics in a fight were quite simple and most effective : with its front feet it caught the dog by the ears or neck, holding the head so that there was no risk of being bitten, and then gripping the body lower down with the hind feet, it tore lumps out of the throat, breast, and stomach—pushing with all four feet and tearing with the terrible teeth. The poor dogs were hopelessly outmatched.

I did not see the beginning of Jock's encounter, but the boys' stories pieced together told everything. It appears that when Seedling left the store he went in to his own hut and remained there some little time ; on coming out again he strolled over to the baboon's pole about half way between the two houses and began teasing it, throwing pebbles at it to see it dodge and duck behind the pole, and then flicking at it with the sjambok, amused by its frightened and angry protests. While he was doing this, Jock, who had followed me to the store, strolled out again making his way towards the waggons. He was not interested in our talk ; he

had twice been accidentally trodden on by men stepping back as he lay stretched out on the floor behind them ; and doubtless he felt that it was no place for him : his deafness prevented him from hearing movements, except such as caused vibration in the ground, and, poor old fellow, he was always at a disadvantage in houses and towns.

The baboon had then taken refuge in its box on top of the pole to escape the sjambok, and when Seedling saw Jock come out he commenced whistling and calling softly to him. Jock, of course, heard nothing : he may have responded mildly to the friendly overtures conveyed by the extended hand and patting of legs, or more probably simply took the nearest way to the waggon where he might sleep in peace, since there was nothing else to do. What the boys agree on is that as Jock passed the pole Seedling patted and held him, at the same time calling the baboon, and then gave the dog a push which did not quite roll him over but upset his balance ; and Jock, recovering himself, naturally jumped round and faced Seedling, standing almost directly between him and the baboon. He could not hear the rattle of the chain on the box and pole, and saw nothing of the charging brute, and it was the purest accident that the dog stood a few inches out of reach. The baboon—chained by the neck instead of the waist, because it used to bite through all loin straps—made its rush, but the chain brought it up before its hands could reach Jock and threw the hind-quarters round with such force against him that he was sent rolling yards away.



I can well believe that this second attack from a different and wholly unexpected quarter thoroughly roused him, and can picture how he turned to face it.

It was at this moment that Jim first noticed what was going on. The other boys had not expected anything when Seedling called the dog, and they were taken completely by surprise by what followed. Jim would have known what to expect : his kraal was in the neighbourhood ; he knew Seedling well, and had already suffered in fines and confiscations at his hands ; he also knew about the baboon ; but he was ignorant, just as I was, of the fact that Seedling had left his old place across the river and come to live in the new hut, bringing his pet with him.

It was the hoarse threatening shout of the baboon as it jumped at Jock, as much as the exclamations of the boys, that roused Jim. He knew instantly what was on, and grabbing a stick made a dash to save the dog, with the other boys following him.

When Jock was sent spinning in the dust the baboon recovered itself first, and standing up on its hind legs reached out its long ungainly arms towards him, and let out a shout of defiance. Jock regaining his feet dashed in, jumped aside, feinted again and again, as he had learnt to do when big horns swished at him ; and he kept out of reach just as he had done ever since the duiker taught him the use of its hoofs. He knew what to do, just as he had known how to swing the porcupine : the dog—for all the fighting fury that possessed him—took the measure of the chain and kept

outside it. Round and round he flew, darting in, jumping back, snapping and dodging, but never getting right home. The baboon was as clever as he was: at times it jumped several feet in the air, straight up, in the hope that Jock would run underneath; at others, it would make a sudden lunge with the long arms, or a more surprising reach out with the hind legs to grab him. Then the baboon began gradually to reduce its circle, leaving behind it slack chain enough for a spring; but Jock was not to be drawn. In cleverness they were well-matched—neither scored in attack; neither made or lost a point.

When Jim rushed up to save Jock, it was with eager anxious shouts of the dog's name that warned Seedling and made him turn; and as the boy ran forward the white man stepped out to stop him.

"Leave the dog alone!" he shouted, pale with anger.

"Baas, Baas, the dog will be killed," Jim called excitedly, as he tried to get round; but the white man made a jump towards him, and with a backhand slash of the sjambok struck him across the face, shouting at him again:

"Leave him, I tell you."

Jim jumped back, thrusting out his stick to guard another vicious cut; and so it went on with alternate slash and guard, and the big Zulu danced round with nimble bounds, guarding, dodging, or bearing the sjambok cuts, to save the dog. Seedling was mad with rage; for who had ever heard of a nigger standing up to a Field Cornet? Still Jim would not give way;

"Let him fight, Baas! You said it!"

he kept trying to get in front of Jock, to head him off the fight, and all the while shouting to the other boys to call me. But Seedling was the Field Cornet, and not one of them dared to move against him.

At last the baboon, finding that Jock would not come on, tried other tactics; it made a sudden retreat and, rushing for the pole, hid behind it as for protection. Jock made a jump and the baboon leaped out to meet him, but the dog stopped at the chain's limit, and the baboon—just as in the first dash of all—overshot the mark; it was brought up by the jerk of the collar, and for one second sprawled on its back. That was the first chance for Jock, and he took it. With one spring he was in; his head shot between the baboon's hind legs, and with his teeth buried in the soft stomach he lay back and pulled—pulled for dear life, as he had pulled and dragged on the legs of wounded game; tugged as he had tugged at the porcupine; held on, as he had held when the koodoo bull wrenched and strained every bone and muscle in his body.

Then came the sudden turn! As Jock fastened on to the baboon, dragging the chain taut while the screaming brute struggled on its back, Seedling stood for a second irresolute, and then with a stride forward raised his sjambok to strike the dog. That was too much for Jim; he made a spring in and grasping the raised sjambok with his left hand held Seedling powerless, while in his right the boy raised his stick on guard.

"Let him fight, Baas! You said it! Let the dog fight!" he panted, hoarse with excitement.

The white man, livid with fury, struggled and

kicked, but the wrist loop of his sjambok held him prisoner and he could do nothing.

That was the moment when a panic-stricken boy plucked up courage enough to call me ; and that was the scene we saw as we ran out of the little shop. Jim would not strike the white man : but his face was a muddy grey, and it was written there that he would rather die than give up the dog.

Before I reached them it was clear to us all what had happened ; Jim was protesting to Seedling and at the same time calling to me ; it was a jumble, but a jumble eloquent enough for us, and all intelligible. Jim's excited gabble was addressed with reckless incoherence to Seedling, to me, and to Jock !

" You threw him in ; you tried to kill him. He did it. It was not the dog. Kill him, Jock, kill him. Leave him, let him fight. You said it—Let him fight ! Kill him, Jock ! Kill ! Kill ! Kill ! "

Then Seedling did the worst thing possible ; he turned on me with,

" Call off your dog, I tell you, or I'll shoot him and your —— nigger too ! "

" We'll see about that ! They can fight it out now," and I took the sjambok from Jim's hand and cut it from the white man's wrist.

" Now ! Stand back ! "

And he stood back.

The baboon was quite helpless. Powerful as the brute was, and formidable as were the arms and gripping feet, it had no chance while Jock could keep his feet and had strength to drag and hold the chain

tight. The collar was choking it, and the grip on the stomach—the baboon's own favourite and most successful device—was fatal.

I set my teeth, and thought of the poor helpless dogs that had been decoyed in and treated the same way. Jim danced about, the white seam of froth on his lips, hoarse gusts of encouragement bursting from him as he leant over Jock, and his whole body vibrating like an over-heated boiler. And Jock hung on in grim earnest, the silence on his side broken only by grunting efforts as the deadly tug—tug—tug went on. Each pull caused his feet to slip a little on the smooth worn ground; but each time he set them back again, and the grunting tugs went on.

* * * * *

It was not justice to call Jock off; but I did it. The cruel brute deserved killing, but the human look and cries and behaviour of the baboon were too sickening; and Seedling went into his hut without even a look at his stricken champion.

Jock stood off, with his mouth open from ear to ear and his red tongue dangling, blood-stained and panting, but with eager feet ever on the move shifting from spot to spot, ears going back and forward, and eyes—now on the baboon and now on me—pleading for the sign to go in again.

Before evening the baboon was dead.

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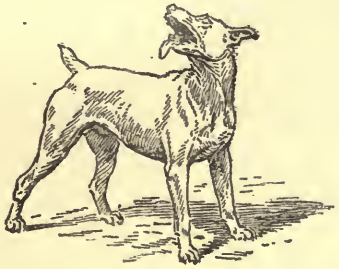
The day's excitement was too much for Jim. After singing and dancing himself into a frenzy round Jock, after shouting the whole story of the fight in violent

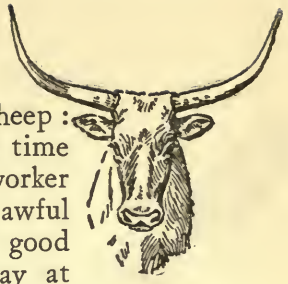


and incessant gabble over and over again to those who had witnessed it, after making every ear ring and every head swim with his mad din, he grabbed his sticks once more and made off for one of the kraals, there to find drink for which he thirsted body and soul.

In the afternoon the sudden scattering of the inhabitants of a small kraal on the hillside opposite, and some lusty shouting, drew attention that way. At distances of from two to five hundred yards from the huts there stood figures, singly or grouped in twos and threes, up to the highest slopes ; they formed a sort of crescent above the kraal ; and on the lower side of it, hiding under the bank of the river, were a dozen or more whose heads only were visible. They were all looking towards the kraal like a startled herd of buck. Now and then a burly figure would dart out from the huts with wild bounds and blood-curdling yells, and the watchers on that side would scatter like chaff and flee for dear life up the mountain side or duck instantly and disappear in the river. Then he would stalk back again and disappear, to repeat the performance on another side a little later on.

It was all painfully clear to me. Jim had broken out.

We were loaded for Lydenburg—another week's trekking through and over the mountains—and as we intended coming back the same way a fortnight later I decided at once to leave Jim at his kraal, which was only a little further on, and pick him up on the return journey.



I nearly always paid him off in live stock or sheep : he had good wages, and for many months at a time would draw no money ; the boy was a splendid worker and as true as steel ; so that, in spite of all the awful worry I had a soft spot for Jim and had taken a good deal of trouble on his account. He got his pay at the end of the trip or the season, but not in cash. It was invested for him—greatly to his disgust at the time, I am bound to say—in live stock, so that he would not be able to squander it in drink or be robbed of it while incapable.

Jim's gloomy dignity was colossal when it came to squaring up and I invited him to state what he wished me to buy for him. To be treated like an irresponsible child ; to be chaffed and cheerfully warned by me ; to be met by the giggles and squirts of laughter of the other boys, for whom he had the most profound contempt ; to see the respectable Sam counting out with awkward eager hands and gleaming eyes the good red gold, while he, Makokela the Zulu, was treated like a piccanin—Ugh ! It was horrible ! Intolerable !

Jim would hold aloof in injured gloomy silence, not once looking at me, but standing sideways and staring stonily past me into the far distance, and not relaxing for a second the expression of profound displeasure on his weather-beaten face. No joke or chaff, no question or reason, would move him to even look my way. All he would do was, now and again, give a click of disgust, a quick shake of the head, and say : " Aug ! Ang-a-funa ! " (" I do not desire it ! ")

We had the same fight over and over again, but I always won in the end. Once, when he would not make up his mind what to buy, I offered him instead of cash two of the worst oxen in his span at the highest possible valuation, and the effect was excellent; but the usual lever was to announce that if he could not make his choice and bargain for himself I would do it for him. In the end he invariably gave way and bargained with his kaffir friends for a deal, venting on them by his hard driving and brow-beating some of the accumulated indignation which ought to have gone elsewhere.

When it was all over Jim recovered rapidly, and at parting time there was the broadest of grins and a stentorian shout of "Hlala Kahle! Inkos!" and Jim went off with his springy walk, swinging his sticks and jabbering his thoughts aloud, evidently about me, for every now and again he would spring lightly into the air, twirl the stick, and shout a deep throated "Inkos!" full of the joy of living. A boy going home for his holiday!

This time Jim was too fully wound up to be dealt with as before, and I simply turned him off, telling him to come to the camp in a fortnight's time.

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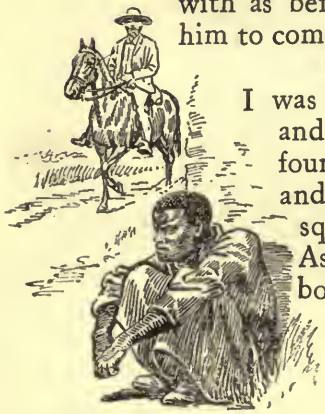


I was a day behind the waggons returning, and riding up to the camp towards midday found Jim waiting for me. He looked ill and shrunken, wrapped in an old coat and squatting against the wall of the little hut. As I passed he rose slowly and gave his "Sakubona! Inkos!" with that curious controlled

air by which the kaffir manages to suggest a kind of fatalist resignation or indifference touched with disgust. There was something wrong ; so I rode past without stopping—one learns from them to find out how the land lies before doing anything.

It was a bad story, almost as bad as one would think possible where civilised beings are concerned. Jim's own story lacked certain details of which he was necessarily ignorant, it also omitted the fact that he had been drunk ; but in the main it was quite true.

This is what happened, as gleaned from several sources : several days after our departure Jim went down to the store again and raised some liquor ; he was not fighting, but he was noisy, and was the centre of a small knot of shouting, arguing boys near the store when Seedling returned after a two days' absence. No doubt it was unfortunate that the very first thing he saw on his return was the boy who had defied him and who was the cause of his humiliation ; and that that boy should by his behaviour give the slenderest excuse for interference was in the last degree unlucky. Seedling's mind was made up from the moment he set eyes on Jim. Throwing the reins over his horse's head he walked into the excited gabbling knot, all unconscious of his advent, and laid about him with the sjambok, scattering and silencing them instantly ; he then took Jim by the wrist saying, "I want you" ; he called to one of his own boys to bring a reim, and leading Jim over to the side of the store tied him up to the horse rail with arms at full stretch. Taking out his knife he cut the boy's

clothing down the back so that it fell away in two halves in front of him ; then he took off his own coat and flogged the boy with his sjambok.

I would like to tell all that happened for one reason : it would explain the murderous man-hunting feeling that possessed us when we heard it ! But it was too cruel : let it be ! Only one thing to show the spirit : twice during the flogging Seedling stopped to go into the store for a drink.

Jim crawled home to find his kraal ransacked and deserted, and his wives and children driven off in panic. In addition to the flogging Seedling had, in accordance with his practice, imposed fines far beyond the boy's means in cash, so as to provide an excuse for seizing what he wanted. The police boys had raided the kraal ; and the cattle and goats—his only property—were gone.

He told it all in a dull monotone : for the time the life and fire were gone out of him ; but he was not cowed, not broken. There was a curl of contempt on his mouth and in his tone that whipped the white skin on my own back and made it all a disgrace unbearable. That this should be the reward for his courageous defence of Jock seemed too awful.

We went inside to talk it over and make our plans. The waggons should go on next day as if nothing had happened, Jim remaining in one of the half tents or elsewhere out of sight of passers-by. I was to ride into Lydenburg and lodge information—for in such a case the

authorities would surely act. That was the best, or at any rate the first, course to be tried.

There was no difficulty about the warrant, for there were many counts in the indictment against Seedling; but even so worthless a brute as that seemed to have one friend, or perhaps an accomplice, to give him warning, and before we reached his quarters with the police he had cleared on horseback for Portuguese territory, taking with him a led horse.

We got most of Jim's cattle back for him—which he seemed to consider the main thing—but we were sorely disgusted at the man's escape.

That was the year of the 'rush.' Thousands of new comers poured into the country on the strength of the gold discoveries; materials and provisions of all kinds were almost unprocurable and stood at famine prices; and consequently we—the transport riders—reaped a golden harvest. Never had there been such times; waggons and spans were paid for in single trips; and so great was the demand for supplies that some refused transport and bought their own goods, which they re-sold on the goldfields at prices twice as profitable as the highest rates of transport.

Thus the days lost in the attempt to catch Seedling were valuable days. The season was limited, and as early rains might cut us off, a few days thrown away might mean the loss of a whole trip. We hurried down, therefore, for the Bay, doing little hunting that time.

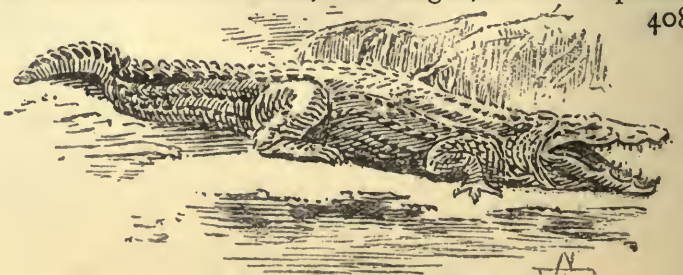
Near the Crocodile on our way down we heard from men coming up that Seedling had been there some days before but that, hearing we were on the way

down and had sworn to shoot him, he had ridden on to Komati, leaving one horse behind bad with horse-sickness. The report about shooting him was, of course, ridiculous—probably his own imagination—but it was some comfort to know that he was in such a state of terror that his own fancies were hunting him down.

At Komati we learned that he had stayed three days at the store of that Goanese murderer, Antonio—the same Antonio who on one occasion had tried to drug and hand over to the enemy two of our men who had got into trouble defending themselves against raiding natives; the same Antonio who afterwards made an ill-judged attempt to stab one Mickey O'Connor in a Barberton canteen and happily got brained with a bottle of his own doctored spirit for his pains.

Antonio suspecting something wrong about a white man who came on horseback and dawdled aimlessly three days at Komati Drift, going indoors whenever a stranger appeared, wormed the secret out with liquor and sympathy; and when he had got most of Seedling's money out of him, by pretence of bribing the Portuguese officials and getting news, made a bold bid for the rest by saying that a warrant was out for him in Delagoa and he must on no account go on. The evil-looking half-caste no doubt hoped to get the horse saddle and bridle, as well as the cash, and was quite prepared to drug Seedling when the time came, and slip him quietly into the Komati at night where the crocodiles would take care of the evidence.

Antonio, however, overshot the mark; Seedling who knew all about him, took fright, saddled up and



bolted up the river meaning to make for the Lebombo, near the Tembe Drift, where Bob McNab and his merry comrades ran free of Governments and were a law unto themselves. It was no place for a nervous man, but Seedling had no choice, and he went on. He had liquor in his saddle bags and food for several days; but he was not used to the bush, and at the end of the first day he had lost his way and was beyond the river district where the kaffirs lived.

So much is believed, though not positively known; at any rate he left the last kraal in those parts about noon, and was next heard of two days later at a kraal under the Lebombo. There he learnt that the Black Umbelusi, which it would be necessary to swim—as Snowball and Tsetse had done—lay before him, and that it was yet a great distance to Sebougwaans, and even then he would be only half way to Bob's. Seedling could not face it alone, and turned back for the nearest store.

The natives said that before leaving the kraal he bought beer from them, but did not want food; for he looked sick; he was red and swollen in the face; and his eyes were wild; the horse was weak and also looked sick, being very thin and empty; but they showed him the foot-path over the hills which would take him to Tom's—a white man's store on the road to Delagoa—and he left them! That was Tom Barnett's at Piscene, where we always stopped; for Tom was a good friend of ours.

That was how we came to meet Seedling again. He had made a loop of a hundred and fifty miles in four days in his efforts to avoid us; but he was waiting for

us when we arrived at Tom Barnett's. We who had hurried on to catch him, believing that the vengeance of justice depended on us, forgot that it has been otherwise decreed.

Tom stood in the doorway of his store as we walked up—five feet one in his boots, but every inch of it a man—with his hands resting idly on his hips and a queer smile on his face as he nodded welcome.

"Did a white man come here on horseback during the last few days from the Drift?"

"No!"

"On foot?"

"No, not the whole way."

"Is he here now?"

Tom nodded.

"You know about him, Tom?"

"Seedling! the chap you're after, isn't it?'

"Yes," we answered, lowering our voices.

Tom looked from one to the other with the same queer smile, and then making a move to let us into the store said quietly: "He won't clear, boys; he's dead!"

Some kaffirs coming along the footpath from the 'Bombo had found the horse dead of horse-sickness half a day away, and further on—only a mile or so from the store—the rider lying on his back in the sun, dying of thirst. He died before they got him in.

He was buried under a big fig-tree where another and more honoured grave was made later on.

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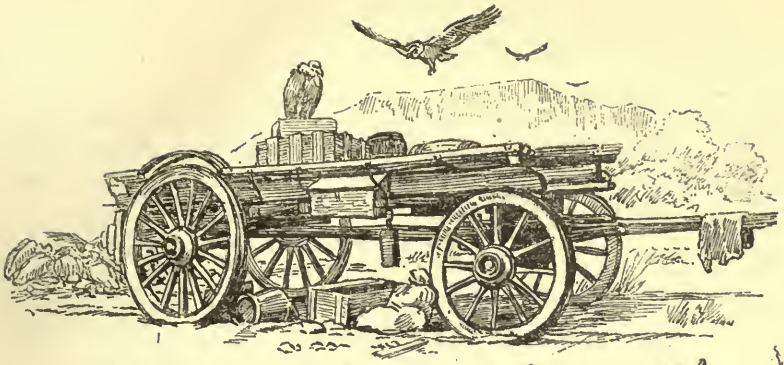
Jim sat by himself the whole evening and never spoke a word.



THE·LAST·TREK

It was Pettigrew's Road that brought home to me, and to others, the wisdom of the old transport riders' maxim: 'Take no risks.' We all knew that there were 'fly' belts on the old main road but we rushed these at night, for we knew enough of the tsetse fly to avoid it; however the discovery of the new road to Barberton, a short cut with plenty of water and grass, which offered the chance of working an extra trip into the short Delagoa season, tempted me, among others, to take a risk. We had seen no 'fly' when riding through to spy out the land, and again on the trip down with empty waggons all had seemed to be well; but I had good reason afterwards to recall that hurried trip down and the night spent at Low's Creek. It was a lovely moonlight night, cool and still, and the grass was splendid; after many weeks of poor feeding and drought the cattle revelled in the land of plenty. We had timed our treks so as to get through the suspected parts of the road at night, believing that the fly did not trouble after dark, and thus we were that night outspanned in the worst spot

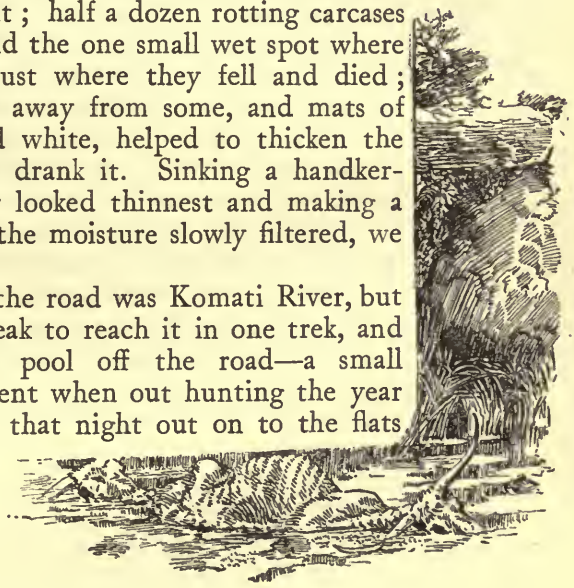
of all—a tropical garden of clear streams, tree ferns, foliage plants, mosses, maidenhair, and sweet grass! I moved among the cattle myself, watching them feed greedily and waiting to see them satisfied before inspanning again to trek through the night to some higher and more open ground. I noticed then that their tails were rather busy. At first it seemed the usual accompaniment of a good feed, an expression of satisfaction; after a while, however, the swishing became too vigorous for this, and when heads began to swing round and legs also were made use of, it seemed clear that something was worrying them. The older hands were so positive that at night cattle were safe from fly, that it did not even then occur to me to suspect anything seriously wrong. Weeks passed by, and although the cattle became poorer, it was reasonable enough to put it down to the exceptional drought.

It was late in the season when we loaded up for the last time in Delagoa and ploughed our way through the Matolla swamp and the heavy sands at Piscene; but late as it was, there was no sign of rain, and the rain that we usually wanted to avoid would have been very welcome then. The roads were all blistering stones or powdery dust, and it was cruel work for man and beast. The heat was intense, and there was no breeze; the dust moved along slowly apace with us in a dense cloud—men, waggons, and animals, all toned to the same hue; and the poor oxen toiling slowly along drew in the finely-powdered stuff at every breath. At the outspan they stood about exhausted and panting, with rings and lines of brown marking where the

moisture from nostrils, eyes and mouths had caught the dust and turned it into mud. At Matolla Poort, where the Lebombo Range runs low, where the polished black rocks shone like anvils, where the stones and baked earth scorched the feet of man and beast to aching, the world was like an oven ; the heat came from above, below, around—a thousand glistening surfaces flashing back with intensity the sun's fierce rays. And there, at Matolla Poort, the big pool had given out !

Our stand-by was gone ! There, in the deep cleft in the rocks where the feeding spring, cool and constant, had trickled down a smooth black rock beneath another overhanging slab, and where ferns and mosses had clustered in one little spot in all the miles of blistering rocks, there was nothing left but mud and slime. The water was as green and thick as pea-soup ; filth of all kinds lay in it and on it ; half a dozen rotting carcases stuck in the mud round the one small wet spot where the pool had been—just where they fell and died ; the coat had dropped away from some, and mats of hair, black brown and white, helped to thicken the green water. But we drank it. Sinking a handkerchief where the water looked thinnest and making a little well into which the moisture slowly filtered, we drank it greedily.

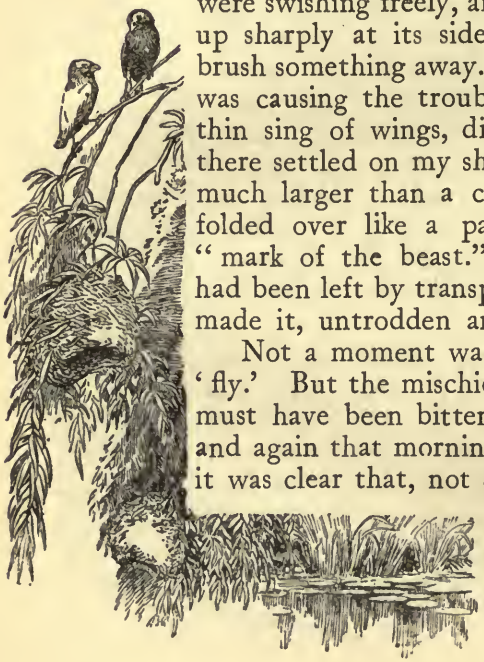
The next water on the road was Komati River, but the cattle were too weak to reach it in one trek, and remembering another pool off the road—a small lagoon found by accident when out hunting the year before—we moved on that night out on to the flats



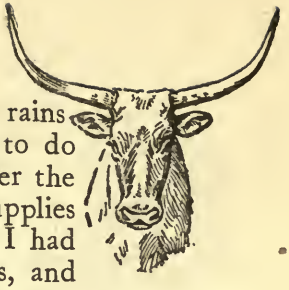
and made through the bush for several miles to loo for water and grass.

We found the place just after dawn. There was a string of half a dozen pools ringed with yellow-plumed reeds—like a bracelet of sapphires set in gold—deep deep pools of beautiful water in the midst of acres and acres of rich buffalo grass. It was too incredibly good!

I was trekking alone that trip, the only white man there, and—tired out by the all-night's work, the long ride, and the searching in the bush for the lagoon—I had gone to sleep after seeing the cattle to the water and grass. Before midday I was back among them again; some odd movements struck a chord of memory, and the night at Low's Creek flashed back. Tails were swishing freely, and the bullock nearest me kicked up sharply at its side and swung its head round to brush something away. I moved closer up to see what was causing the trouble: in a few minutes I heard a thin sing of wings, different from a mosquito's, and there settled on my shirt a grey fly, very like and not much larger than a common house-fly, whose wings folded over like a pair of scissors. That was the "mark of the beast." I knew then why this oasis had been left by transport-rider and trekker, as nature made it, untrodden and untouched.



Not a moment was lost in getting away from the 'fly.' But the mischief was already done; the cattle must have been bitten at Low's Creek weeks before, and again that morning during the time I slept; and it was clear that, not drought and poverty, but 'fly'



was the cause of their weakness. After the first rains they would begin to die, and the right thing to do now was to press on as fast as possible and deliver the loads. Barberton was booming and short of supplies and the rates were the highest ever paid; but I had done better still, having bought my own goods, and the certain profit looked a fortune to me. Even if all the cattle became unfit for use or died, the loads would pay for everything and the right course therefore was to press on; for delay would mean losing both cattle and loads—all I had in the world—and starting again penniless with the years of hard work thrown away.

So the last hard struggle began. And it was work and puzzle day and night, without peace or rest; trying to nurse the cattle in their daily failing strength, and yet to push them for all they could do; watching the sky cloud over every afternoon, promising rain that never came, and not knowing whether to call it promise or threat; for although rain would bring grass and water to save the cattle, it also meant death to the fly-bitten.

We crossed the Komati with three spans—forty-four oxen—to a waggon, for the drift was deep in two places and the weakened cattle could not keep their feet. It was a hard day, and by nightfall it was easy to pick out the oxen who would not last out a week. That night Zole lay down and did not get up again—Zole the little fat schoolboy, always out of breath, always good-tempered and quiet, as tame as a pet dog.

He was only the first to go; day by day others followed. Some were only cattle: others were old friends and comrades on many a trek. The two big after-oxen Achmoed and Bakir went down early; the Komati Drift had over-tried them, and the weight and jolting of the heavy disselboom on the bad roads finished them off. These were the two inseparables who worked and grazed, walked and slept, side by side—never more than a few yards apart day or night since the day they became yoke-fellows. They died on consecutive days.

But the living wonder of that last trek was still old Zwaartland the front ox! With his steady sober air, perfect understanding of his work, and firm clean buck-like tread, he still led the front span. Before we reached the Crocodile his mate gave in—worn to death by the ebbing of his own strength and by the steady indomitable courage of his comrade. Old Zwaartland pulled on; but my heart sank as I looked at him and noted the slightly 'staring' coat, the falling flanks, the tread less sure and brisk, and a look in his eyes that made me think he knew what was coming but would do his best.

The gallant-hearted old fellow held on. One after another we tried with him in the lead, half a dozen or more; but he wore them all down. In the dongas and spruits, where the crossings were often very bad and steep, the waggons would stick for hours, and the wear and strain on the exhausted cattle was killing: it was bad enough for the man who drove them. To see old Zwaartland then holding his ground, never for

one moment turning or wavering while the others backed jibbed and swayed and dragged him staggering backwards, made one's heart ache. The end was sure: flesh and blood will not last for ever; the stoutest heart can be broken.

The worst of it was that with all the work and strain we accomplished less than we used to do before in a quarter of the time. Distances formerly covered in one trek took three, four, and even five now. Water, never too plentiful in certain parts, was sadly diminished by the drought, and it sometimes took us three or even four treks to get from water to water. Thus we had at times to drive the oxen back to the last place or on to the next one for their drinks, and by the time the poor beasts got back to the waggons to begin their trek they had done nearly as much as they were able to do.

And trouble begot trouble, as usual! Sam the respectable, who had drawn all his pay in Delagoa, gave up after one hard day and deserted me. He said that the hand of the Lord had smitten me and mine, and great misfortune would come to all; so he left in the dark at Crocodile Drift, taking one of the leaders with him, and joined some waggons making for Lydenburg. The work was too hard for him; it was late in the season; he feared the rains and fever; and he had no pluck or loyalty, and cared for no one but himself.

I was left with three leaders and two drivers to manage four waggons. It was Jim who told me of Sam's desertion. He had the cross, defiant, pre-

occupied look of old; but there was also something of satisfaction in his air as he walked up to me and stood to deliver the great vindication of his own unerring judgment :

" Sam has deserted you and taken his voorlooper." He jerked the words out at me, speaking in Zulu.

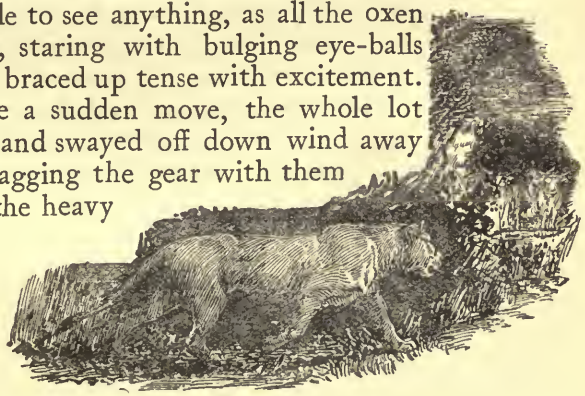
I said nothing. It was just about Sam's form; it annoyed but did not surprise me. Jim favoured me with a hard searching look, a subdued grunt, and a click expressive of things he could not put into words, and without another word he turned and walked back towards his waggon. But half-way to it he broke silence : facing me once more, he thumped his chest and hurled at me in mixed Zulu and English : " I said so ! Sam lead a Bible. Sam no good. Umph ! M'Shangaan ! I said so ! I always said so ! "

When Jim helped me to inspan Sam's waggon, he did it to an accompaniment of Zulu imprecations which only a Zulu could properly appreciate. They were quite ' above my head,' but every now and then I caught one sentence repeated like the responses in a litany : " I'll kill that Shangaan when I see him again !"

At Lion Spruit there was more bad luck. Lions had been troublesome there in former years, but for a couple of seasons nothing had been seen of them. Their return was probably due to the fact that, because of the drought and consequent failure of other waters, the game on which they preyed had moved down towards the river. At any rate, they returned unexpectedly and we had one bad night when the cattle were unmanageable, and their nerves all on edge.

The herd-boys had seen spoor in the afternoon; at dusk we heard the distant roaring, and later on, the nearer and more ominous grunting. I fastened Jock up in the tent waggon lest the sight of him should prove too tempting; he was bristling like a hedgehog and constantly working out beyond the cattle, glaring and growling incessantly towards the bush. We had four big fires at the four corners of the outspan, and no doubt this saved a bad stampede, for in the morning we found a circle of spoor where the lions had walked round and round the outspan. There were scores of footprints—the tracks of at least four or five animals.

In the Bushveld the oxen were invariably tied up at night, picketed to the trek-chain, each pair at its yoke ready to be inspanned for the early morning trek. Ordinarily the weight of the chain and yokes was sufficient to keep them in place, but when there were lions about, and the cattle liable to be scared and all to sway off together in the same direction, we took the extra precaution of pegging down the chain and anchoring the front yoke to a tree or stake. We had a lot of trouble that night, as one of the lions persistently took his stand to windward of the cattle to scare them with his scent. We knew well enough when he was there, although unable to see anything, as all the oxen would face up-wind, staring with bulging eye-balls in that direction and braced up tense with excitement. If one of them made a sudden move, the whole lot jumped in response and swayed off down wind away from the danger, dragging the gear with them and straining until the heavy



waggons yielded to the tug. We had to run out and then drive them up again to stay the stampede. It is a favourite device of lions, when tackling camps and outspans, for one of them to go to windward so that the terrified animals on winding him may stampede in the opposite direction where the other lions are lying in wait.

Two oxen broke away that night and were never seen again. Once I saw a low light-coloured form steal across the road, and took a shot at it; but rifle-shooting at night is a gamble, and there was no sign of a hit.

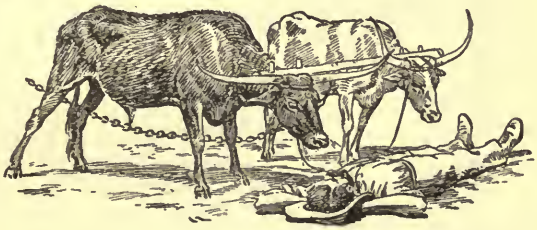
I was too short-handed and too pressed for time to make a real try for the lions next day, and after a morning spent in fruitless search for the lost bullocks we went on again.

Instead of fifteen to eighteen miles a day, as we should have done, we were then making between four and eight—and sometimes not one. The heat and the drought were awful; but at last we reached the Crocodile and struck up the right bank for the short cut—Pettigrew's Road—to Barberton, and there we had good water and some pickings of grass and young reeds along the river bank.

The clouds piled up every afternoon; the air grew still and sultry; the thunder growled and rumbled; a few drops of rain pitted the dusty road and pattered on the dry leaves; and that was all. Anything seemed preferable to the intolerable heat and dust and drought, and each day I hoped the rain would come, cost what it might to the fly-bitten cattle; but the days dragged on, and still the rain held off.

Then came one black day as we crawled slowly along the river bank, which is not to be forgotten. In one of the cross-spruits cutting sharply down to the river the second waggon stuck: the poor tired-out cattle were too weak and dispirited to pull it out. Being short of drivers and leaders it was necessary to do the work in turns, that is, after getting one waggon through a bad place, to go back for another. We had to double-span this waggon, taking the span from the front waggon back to hook on in front of the other; and on this occasion I led the span while Jim drove. We were all tired out by the work and heat, and I lay down in the dusty road in front of the oxen to rest while the chains were being coupled up. I looked up into old Zwaartland's eyes, deep, placid, constant, dark grey eyes—the ox-eyes of which so many speak and write and so few really know. There was trouble in them; he looked anxious and hunted; and it made me heart-sick to see it.

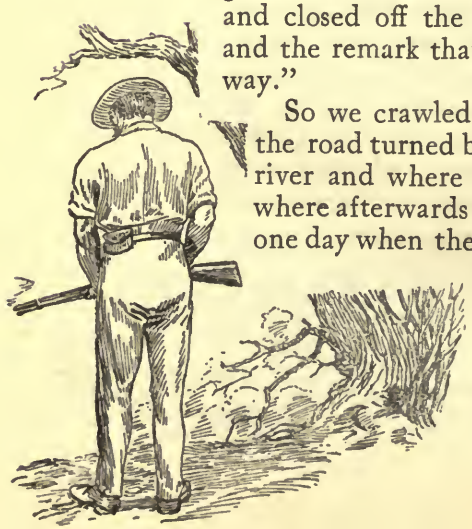
When the pull came, the back span, already disheartened and out of hand, swayed and turned every way, straining the front oxen to the utmost; yet Zwaartland took the strain and pulled. For a few moments both front oxen stood firm; then his mate cut it and turned; the team swung away with a rush, and the old fellow was jerked backwards and rolled over on his side. He struggled gamely, but it was some minutes before he could rise; and then his eye looked wilder and more despairing; his legs were planted apart to balance him, and his flanks were quivering.



Jim straightened up the double span again. Zwaartland leaned forward once more, and the others followed his lead; the waggon moved a little and they managed to pull it out. But I, walking in front, felt the brave old fellow stagger, and saw him, with head lowered, plod blindly like one stricken to death.

We outspanned on the rise, and I told Jim to leave the reim on Zwaartland's head. Many a good turn from him deserved one more from me—the last. I sent Jim for the rifle, and led the old front ox to the edge of the donga where a bleached tree lay across it. . . . He dropped into the donga under the dead tree; and I packed the dry branches over him and set fire to the pile. It looks absurd now; but to leave him to the wolf and the jackal seemed like going back on a friend; and the queer looks of the boys, and what they would think of me, were easier to bear. Jim watched, but said nothing: with a single grunt and a shrug of his shoulders he stalked back to the waggons.

The talk that night at the boys' fire went on in low-pitched tones—not a single word audible to me; but I knew what it was about. As Jim stood up to get his blanket off the waggon, he stretched himself and closed off the evening's talk with his Zulu click and the remark that "All white men are mad, in some way."



So we crawled on until we reached the turn where the road turned between the mountain range and the river and where the railway runs to-day. There, where afterwards Cassidy did his work, we outspanned one day when the heat became so great that it was no

longer possible to go on. For weeks the storm-clouds had gathered, threatened, and dispersed; thunder had come half-heartedly, little spots of rain enough to pock-mark the dust; but there had been no break in the drought.

It was past noon that day when everything grew still; the birds and insects hushed their sound; the dry leaves did not give a whisper. There was the warning in the air that one knows but cannot explain; and it struck me and the boys together that it was time to spread and tie down the buck-sails which we had not unfolded for months.

While we were busy at this there came an unheralded flash and crash; then a few drops as big as florins; and then the flood-gates were opened and the reservoir of the long months of drought was turned loose on us. Crouching under the waggon where I had crept to lash down the sail, I looked out at the deluge, hesitating whether to make a dash for my tent-waggon or remain there.

All along the surface of the earth there lay for a minute or so a two-feet screen of mingled dust and splash: long spikes of rain drove down and dashed into spray, each bursting its little column of dust from the powdery earth. There was an indescribable and unforgettable progression in sounds and smells and sights—a growth and change—rapid yet steady, inevitable, breathless, overwhelming. Little enough could one realise in those first few minutes and in the few square yards around; yet there are details, unnoticed at the time, which come back quite vividly

when the bewildering rush is over, and there are impressions which it is not possible to forget.

There were the sounds and the smells and the sights! The sounds that began with the sudden crash of thunder; the dead silence that followed it; the first great drops that fell with such pats on the dust; then more and faster—yet still so big and separate as to make one look round to see where they fell; the sound on the waggon-sail—at first as of bouncing marbles, then the 'devil's tattoo,' and then the roar!

And outside there was the muffled puff and patter in the dust; the rustle as the drops struck dead leaves and grass and sticks; the blend of many notes that made one great sound, always growing, changing and moving on—full of weird significance—until there came the steady swish and hiss of water upon water, when the earth had ceased to stand up against the rain and was swamped. But even that did not last; for then the fallen rain raised its voice against the rest, and little sounds of trickling scurrying waters came to tone the ceaseless hiss, and grew and grew until from every side the chorus of rushing tumbling waters filled the air with the steady roar of the flood.

And the smells! The smell of the baked drought-bound earth; the faint clearing and purifying by the first few drops; the mingled dust and damp; the rinsed air; the clean sense of water, water everywhere; and in the end the bracing sensation in nostrils and head, of, not wind exactly, but of swirling air thrust out to make room for the falling rain; and,

when all was over, the sense of glorious clarified air and scoured earth—the smell of a new-washed world!

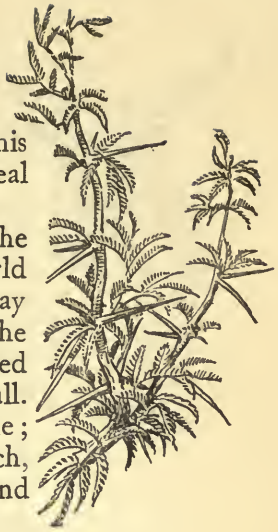
And the things that one saw went with the rest, marking the stages of the storm's short vivid life. The first puffs of dust, where drops struck like bullets; the cloud that rose to meet them; the drops themselves that streaked slanting down like a flight of steel ramrods; the dust dissolved in a dado of splash. I had seen the yellow-brown ground change colour; in a few seconds it was damp; then mud; then all asheen. A minute more, and busy little trickles started everywhere—tiny things a few inches long; and while one watched them they joined and merged, hurrying on with twist and turn, but ever onward to a given point—to meet like the veins in a leaf. Each tuft of grass became a fountain-head: each space between, a little rivulet: swelling rapidly, racing away with its burden of leaf and twig and dust and foam until in a few minutes all were lost in one sheet of moving water.

Crouching under the waggon I watched it and saw the little streamlets, dirty and débris-laden, steal slowly on like sluggard snakes down to my feet, and winding round me, meet beyond and hasten on. Soon the grass-tufts and higher spots were wet; and as the water rose on my boots and the splash beat up to my knees, it seemed worth while making for the tent of the waggon. But in there the roar was deafening; the rain beat down with such force that it drove through the canvas-covered waggon-tent and greased buck-sail in fine mist. In there it was black dark,

the tarpaulin covering all, and I slipped out again back to my place under the waggon to watch the storm.

We were on high ground which fell gently away on three sides—a long spur running down to the river between two of the numberless small watercourses scoring the flanks of the hills. Mere gutters they were, easy corrugations in the slope from the range to the river, insignificant drains in which no water ever ran except during the heavy rains. One would walk through scores of them with easy swinging stride and never notice their existence. Yet, when the half-hour's storm was over and it was possible to get out and look round, they were rushing boiling torrents, twenty to thirty feet across and six to ten feet deep, foaming and plunging towards the river, red with the soil of the stripped earth, and laden with leaves, grass, sticks, and branches—water-furies, wild and ungovernable, against which neither man nor beast could stand for a moment.

When the rain ceased the air was full of the roar of waters, growing louder and nearer all the time. I walked down the long low spur to look at the river, expecting much, and was grievously disappointed. It was no fuller and not much changed. On either side of me the once dry dongas emptied their soil-stained and débris-laden contents in foaming cataracts, each deepening the yellowy red of the river at its banks; but out in mid-stream the river was undisturbed, and its normal colour—the clear yellow of some ambers—was unchanged. How small the great storm seemed then! How puny the flooded

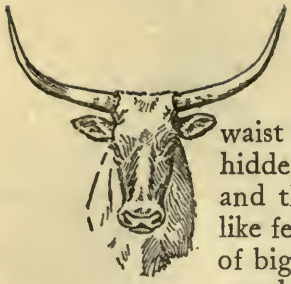


creeks and dongas—yet each master of man and his work! How many of them are needed to make a real flood!

There are few things more deceptive than the tropical storm. To one caught in it, all the world seems deluged and overwhelmed; yet a mile away it may be all peace and sunshine. I looked at the river and laughed—at myself! The revelation seemed complete; it was humiliating; one felt so small. Still, the drought was broken; the rains had come; and in spite of disappointment I stayed to watch, drawn by the scores of little things caught up and carried by—the first harvest garnered by the rains.

A quarter of an hour or more may have been spent thus, when amid all the chorus of the rushing waters there stole in a duller murmur. Murmur it was at first, but it grew steadily into a low-toned, monotoned, distant roar; and it caught and held one like the roar of coming hail or hurricane. It was the river coming down.

The sun was out again, and in the straight reach above the bend there was every chance to watch the flood from the bank where I stood. It seemed strangely long in coming, but come it did at last, in waves like the half-spent breakers on a sandy beach—a slope of foam and broken waters in the van, an ugly wall with spray-tipped feathered crest behind, and tier on tier to follow. Heavens, what a scene! The force of waters, and the utter hopeless puniness of man! The racing waves, each dashing for the foremost place, only to force the further on; the tall reeds caught



waist high and then laid low, their silvery tops dipped, hidden, and drowned in the flood; the trees yielding, and the branches snapping like matches and twirling like feathers down the stream; the rumbling thunder of big boulders loosed and tumbled, rolled like marbles on the rocks below; whole trees brought down, and turning helplessly in the flood—drowned giants with their branches swinging slowly over like nerveless arms. It was tremendous; and one had to stay and watch.

Then the waves ceased; and behind the opposite bank another stream began to make its way, winding like a huge snake, spreading wider as it went across the flats beyond, until the two rejoined and the river became one again. The roar of waters gradually lessened; the two cataracts beside me were silent; and looking down I saw that the fall was gone and that water ran to water—swift as ever, but voiceless now—and was lost in the river itself. Inch by inch the water rose towards my feet; tufts of grass trembled, wavered, and went down; little wavelets flipped and licked like tongues against the remaining bank of soft earth below me; piece after piece of it leant gently forward, and toppled headlong in the eager creeping tide; deltas of yellow scum-flecked water worked silently up the dongas, reaching out with stealthy feelers to enclose the place where I was standing; and then it was time to go!

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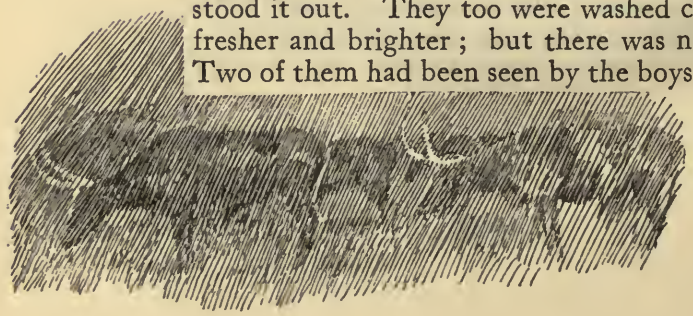
The cattle had turned their tails to the storm, and stood it out. They too were washed clean and looked fresher and brighter; but there was nothing in that! Two of them had been seen by the boys moving slowly,



foot by foot, before the driving rain down the slope from the outspan, stung by the heavy drops and yielding in their weakness to the easy gradient. Only fifty yards away they should have stopped in the hollow—the shallow dry donga of the morning; but they were gone! Unwilling to turn back and face the rain, they had no doubt been caught in the rush of storm-water and swirled away, and their bodies were bobbing in the Crocodile many miles below by the time we missed them.

In a couple of hours the water had run off; the flooded dongas were almost dry again; and we moved on.

It was then that the real 'rot' set in. Next morning there were half a dozen oxen unable to stand up; and so again the following day. It was no longer possible to take the four waggons; all the spare cattle had been used up and it was better to face the worst at once; so I distributed the best of the load on the other three waggons and abandoned the rest of it with the fourth waggon in the bush. But day by day the oxen dropped out, and when we reached the Junction and branched up the Kaap, there were not enough left for three waggons.

This time it meant abandoning both waggon and load; and I gave the cattle a day's rest then, hoping that they would pick up strength on good grass to face the eight drifts that lay between us and Barberton.

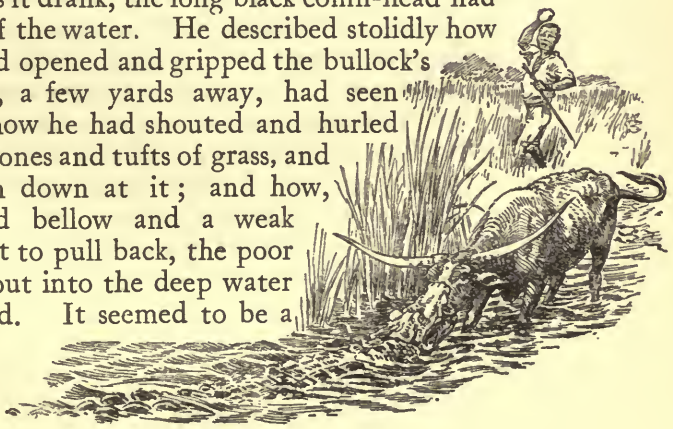
OUR LAST HUNT

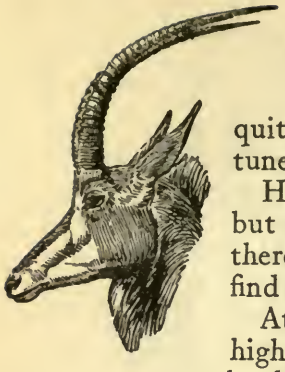
We had not touched fresh meat for many days, as there had been no time for shooting; but I knew that game was plentiful across the river in the rough country between the Kaap and Crocodile, and I started off to make the best of the day's delay, little dreaming that it was to be the last time Jock and I would hunt together.

Weeks had passed without a hunt, and Jock must have thought there was a sad falling away on the part of his master; he no longer expected anything; the rifle was never taken down now except for an odd shot from the outspan or to put some poor animal out of its misery. Since the night with the lions, when he had been ignominiously cooped up, there had been nothing to stir his blood and make life worth living; and this morning as he saw me rise from breakfast and proceed to potter about the waggons in the way he had come to regard as inevitable, he looked on indifferently for a few minutes and then stretched out full length in the sun and went to sleep.

I could not take him with me across the river, as the 'fly' was said to be bad there, and it was no place to risk horse or dog. The best of prospects would not have tempted me to take chance with him, but I hated ordering him to stay behind, as it hurt his dignity and sense of comradeship, so it seemed a happy accident that he was asleep and I could slip away unseen. As the cattle were grazing along the river-bank only a few hundred yards off, I took a turn that way to have a look at them, with natural but quite fruitless concern for their welfare, and a moment later met the herd-boy running towards me and calling out excitedly something which I made out to be :

"Crocodile! Crocodile, Inkos! A crocodile has taken one of the oxen." The waggon-boys heard it also, and armed with assegais and sticks were on the bank almost as soon as I was; but there was no sign of crocodile or bullock. The boy showed us the place where the weakened animal had gone down to drink—the hoof slides were plain enough—and told how, as it drank, the long black coffin-head had appeared out of the water. He described stolidly how the big jaws had opened and gripped the bullock's nose; how he, a few yards away, had seen the struggle; how he had shouted and hurled his sticks and stones and tufts of grass, and feinted to rush down at it; and how, after a muffled bellow and a weak staggering effort to pull back, the poor beast had slid out into the deep water and disappeared. It seemed to be a



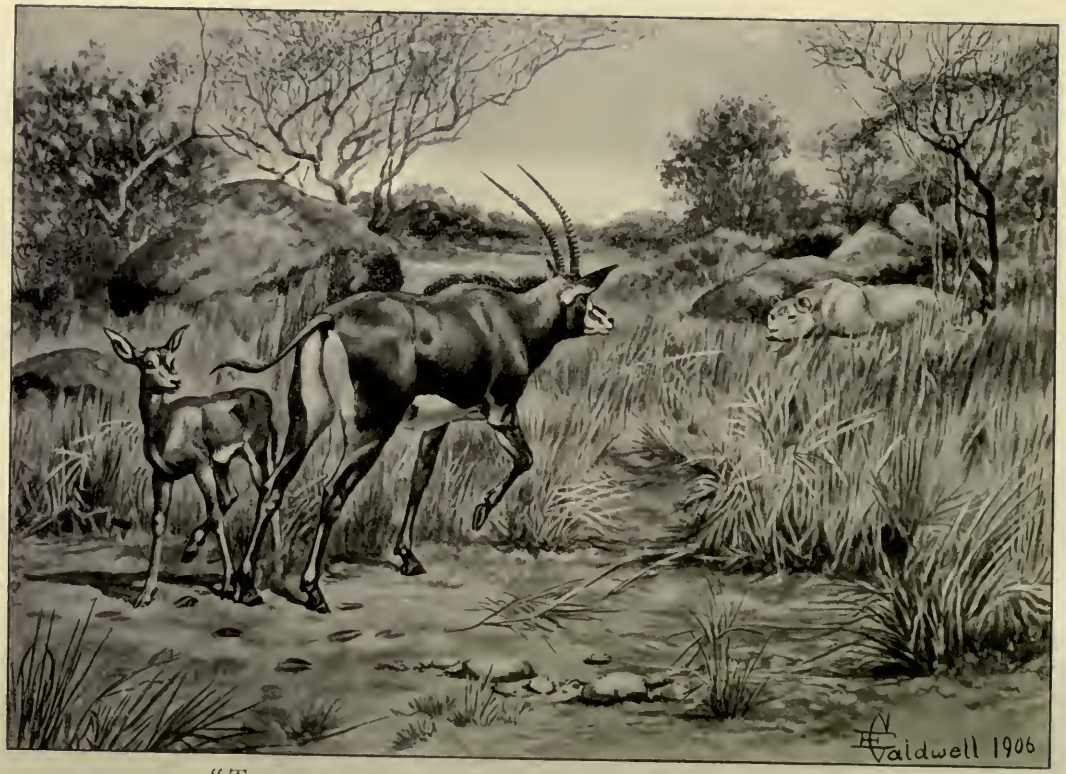


quite unnecessary addition to my troubles: misfortunes were coming thick and fast!

Half an hour was wasted in watching and searching; but we saw no more of crocodile or bullock, and as there was nothing to be done I turned up stream to find a shallower and a safer crossing.

At best it was not pleasant: the water was waist-high and racing in narrow channels between and over boulders and loose slippery stones, and I was glad to get through without a tumble and a swim.

The country was rough on the other side, and the old grass was high and dense, for no one went there in those days, and the grass stood unburnt from season to season. Climbing over rocks and stony ground, crunching dry sticks underfoot, and driving a path through the rank tambookil grass, it seemed well-nigh hopeless to look for a shot; several times I heard buck start up and dash off only a few yards away, and it began to look as if the wiser course would be to turn back. At last I got out of the valley into more level and more open ground, and came out upon a ledge or plateau a hundred yards or more wide, with a low ridge of rocks and some thorns on the far side—quite a likely spot. I searched the open ground from my cover, and seeing nothing there crossed over to the rocks, threading my way silently between them and expecting to find another clear space beyond. The snort of a buck brought me to a standstill among the rocks, and as I listened it was followed by another and another from the same quarter, delivered at irregular intervals; and each snort was accompanied by the

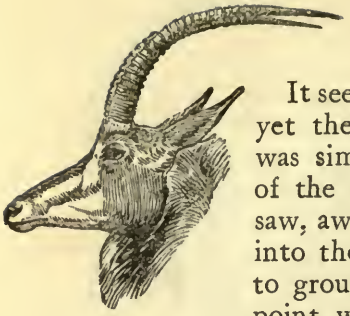


"THE BRAVE MOTHER STOOD BETWEEN HER YOUNG AND DEATH"

sound of trampling feet, sometimes like stamps of anger and at other times seemingly a hasty movement.

I had on several occasions interrupted fights between angry rivals : once two splendid koodoo bulls were at it ; a second time it was two sables, and the vicious and incredibly swift sweep of the scimitar horns still lives in memory, along with the wonderful nimbleness of the other fellow who dodged it ; and another time they were blue wildebeeste ; but some interruption had occurred each time, and I had no more than a glimpse of what might have been a rare scene to witness.

I was determined not to spoil it this time : no doubt it was a fight, and probably they were fencing and circling for an opening, as there was no bump of heads or clash of horns and no tearing scramble of feet to indicate the real struggle. I crept on through the rocks and found before me a tangle of thorns and dead wood, impossible to pass through in silence ; it was better to work back again and try the other side of the rocks. The way was clearer there, and I crept up to a rock four or five feet high, feeling certain from the sound that the fight would be in full view a few yards beyond. With the rifle ready I raised myself slowly until my eyes were over the top of the rock. Some twenty yards off, in an open flat of downtrodden grass, I saw a sable cow : she was standing with feet firmly and widely planted, looking fiercely in front of her, ducking her head in threatening manner every few seconds, and giving angry snorts ; and behind, and huddled up against her, was her scared bewildered little red-brown calf.



It seems stupid not to have guessed what it all meant ; yet the fact is that for the few remaining seconds I was simply puzzled and fascinated by the behaviour of the two sables. Then in the corner of my eye I saw, away on my right, another red-brown thing come into the open : it was Jock, casting about with nose to ground for my trail which he had over-run at the point where I had turned back near the deadwood on the other side of the rocks.

What happened then was a matter of a second or two. As I turned to look at him he raised his head, bristled up all over, and made one jump forward ; then a long low yellowish thing moved in the unbeaten grass in front of the sable cow, raised its head sharply, and looked full into my eyes ; and before I could move a finger it shot away in one streak-like bound. A wild shot at the lioness, as I jumped up full height ; a shout at Jock to come back ; a scramble of black and brown on my left ; and it was all over : I was standing in the open ground, breathless with excitement, and Jock, a few yards off, with hind-legs crouched ready for a dash, looking back at me for leave to go !

The spoor told the tale ; there was the outer circle made by the lioness in the grass, broken in places where she had feinted to rush in and stopped before the lowered horns ; and inside this there was the smaller circle, a tangle of trampled grass and spoor, where the

brave mother had stood between her young and death.

* * * * *

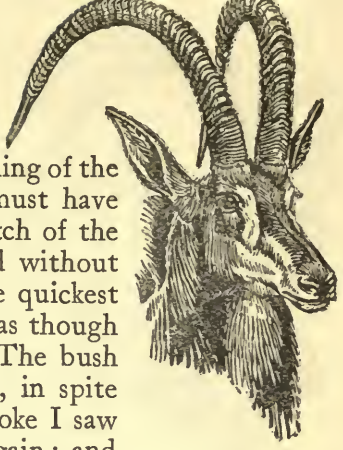
Any attempt to follow the lioness after that would have been waste of time. We struck off in a new direction, and in crossing a stretch of level ground where the thorn-trees were well scattered and the grass fairly short my eye caught a movement in front that brought me to instant standstill. It was as if the stem of a young thorn-tree had suddenly waved itself and settled back again, and it meant that some long-horned buck, perhaps a koodoo or a sable bull, was lying down and had swung his head; and it meant also that he was comfortably settled, quite unconscious of danger. I marked and watched the spot, or rather, the line, for the glimpse was too brief to tell more than the direction; but there was no other move. The air was almost still, with just a faint drift from him to us, and I examined every stick and branch, every stump and ant-heap, every bush and tussock, without stirring a foot. But I could make out nothing: I could trace no outline and see no patch of colour, dark or light, to betray him.

It was an incident very characteristic of Bushveld hunting. There I stood minute after minute—not risking a move, which would be certain to reveal me—staring and searching for some big animal lying half-asleep within eighty yards of me on ground that you would not call good cover for a rabbit. We were in the sunlight: he lay somewhere beyond, where a few scattered thorn-trees threw dabs of shade, marbling

with dappled shade and light the already mottled surface of earth and grass. I was hopelessly beaten, but Jock could see him well enough; he crouched beside me with ears cocked, and his eyes, all ablaze, were fixed intently on the spot, except for an occasional swift look up to me to see what on earth was wrong and why the shot did not come; his hind-legs were tucked under him and he was trembling with excitement. Only those will realise it who have been through the tantalising humiliating experience. There was nothing to be done but wait, leaving the buck to make the first move.

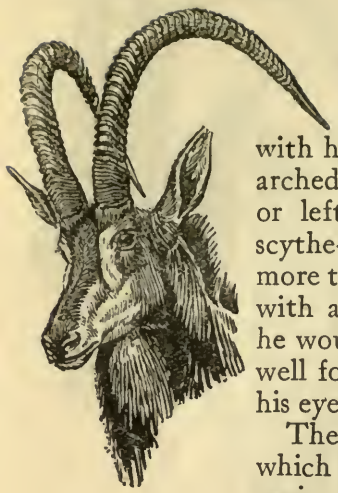
And at last it came: there was another slight shake of the horns, and the whole figure stood out in bold relief. It was a fine sable bull lying in the shadow of one of the thorn-trees with his back towards us, and there was a small ant-heap close behind him, making a greyish blot against his black back and shoulder, and breaking the expanse of colour which the eye would otherwise easily have picked up.

The ant-heap made a certain shot impossible, so I lowered myself slowly to the ground to wait until he should begin feeding or change his position for comfort or shade, as they often do: this might mean waiting for half an hour or more, but it was better than risking a shot in the position in which he was lying. I settled down for a long wait with the rifle resting on my knees, confidently expecting that when the time came to move he would get up slowly, stretch himself,



and have a good look round. But he did nothing of the kind; a turn or eddy of the faint breeze must have given him my wind; for there was one twitch of the horns, as his nose was laid to windward, and without an instant's pause he dashed off. It was the quickest thing imaginable in a big animal: it looked as though he started racing from his lying position. The bush was not close enough to save him, however, in spite of his start, and through the thin veil of smoke I saw him plunge and stumble, and then dash off again; and Jock seeing me give chase, went ahead and in half a minute I was left well behind, but still in sight of the hunt.

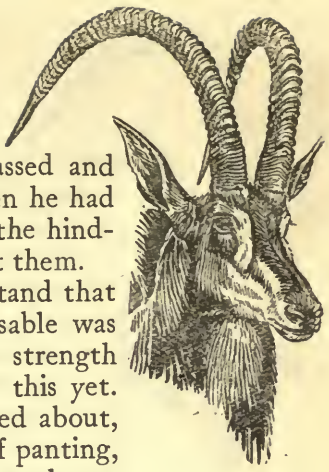
I shouted at Jock to come back, just as one murmurs good-day to a passing friend in the din of traffic—from force of habit: of course, he could hear nothing. It was his first and only go at a sable; he knew nothing of the terrible horns and the deadly scythe-like sweep that makes the wounded sable so dangerous—even the lioness had fought shy of them—and great as was my faith in him, the risk in this case was not one I would have taken. There was nothing to do but follow. A quarter of a mile on I drew closer up and found them standing face to face among the thorns. It was the first of three or four stands; the sable, with a watchful eye on me, always moved on as I drew near enough to shoot. The beautiful black and white bull stood facing his little red enemy and the fence and play of feint and thrust, guard and dodge, was wonderful to see. Not once did either touch the other; at Jock's least movement the sable's head would go down



with his nose into his chest and the magnificent horns arched forward and poised so as to strike either right or left, and if Jock feinted a rush either way the scythe-sweep came with lightning quickness, covering more than half a circle and carrying the gleaming points with a swing right over the sable's own back. Then he would advance slowly and menacingly, with horns well forward ready to strike and eyes blazing through his eyebrows, driving Jock before him.

There were three or four of these encounters in which I could take no hand : the distance, the intervening thorns and grass, and the quickness of their movements, made a safe shot impossible; and there was always the risk of hitting Jock, for a hard run does not make for good shooting. Each time as the sable drove him back there would be a short vicious rush suddenly following the first deliberate advance, and as Jock scrambled back out of the way the bull would swing round with incredible quickness and be off full gallop in another direction. Evidently the final rush was a manœuvre to get Jock clear of his heels and flanks as he started, and thus secure a lead for the next run.

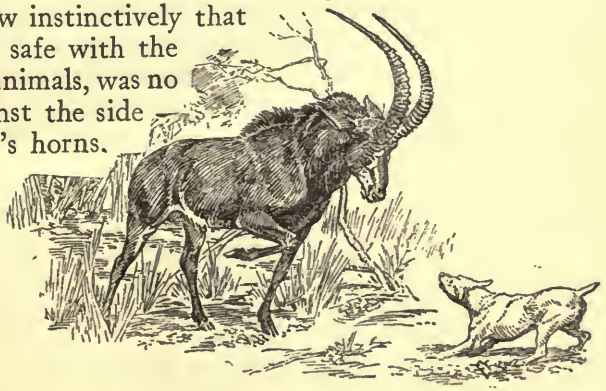
Since the day he was kicked by the koodoo cow Jock had never tackled an unbroken hind-leg ; a dangling one he never missed ; but the lesson of the flying heels had been too severe to be forgotten, and he never made that mistake again. In this chase I saw him time after time try at the sable's flanks and run up abreast of his shoulder and make flying leaps at the throat ; but he never got in front where the

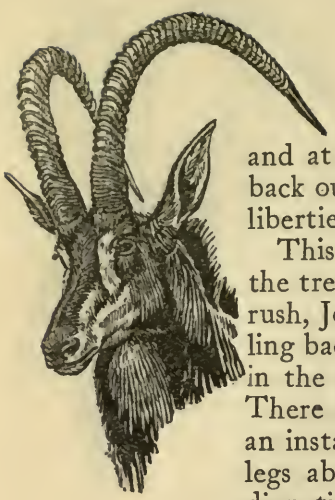


horns could reach him, and although he passed and repassed behind to try on the other side when he had failed at the one, and looked up eagerly at the hind-legs as he passed them, he made no attempt at them.

It must have been at the fourth or fifth stand that Jock got through the guard at last. The sable was badly wounded in the body and doubtless strength was failing, but there was little evidence of this yet. In the pauses Jock's tongue shot and slithered about, a glittering red streak, but after short spells of panting, his head would shut up with a snap like a steel trap and his face set with that look of invincible resolution which it got in part from the pursed-up mouth and in part from the intensity of the beady black-brown eyes: he was good for hours of this sort of work.

This time the sable drove him back towards a big thorn-tree. It may have been done without design, or it may have been done with the idea of pinning him up against the trunk. But Jock was not to be caught that way; in a fight he took in the whole field, behind as well as in front—as he had shown the night the second wild dog tackled him. On his side, too, there may or may not have been design in backing towards the tree; who knows? I thought that he scored, not by a manœuvre, but simply because of his unrelaxing watchfulness and his resolute unhesitating courage. He seemed to know instinctively that the jump aside, so safe with the straight-charging animals, was no game to play against the side sweep of a sable's horns.





and at each charge of the enemy he had scrambled back out of range without the least pretence of taking liberties.

This time the sable drove him steadily back towards the tree, but in the last step, just as the bull made his rush, Jock jumped past the tree and instead of scrambling back out of reach as before, dodged round and was in the rear of the buck before it could turn on him. There were no flying heels to fear then, and without an instant's hesitation he fastened on one of the hind-legs above the hock. With a snort of rage and indignation the sable spun round and round, kicking and plunging wildly and making vicious sweeps with his horns; but Jock, although swung about and shaken like a rat, was out of reach and kept his grip. It was a quick and furious struggle, in which I was altogether forgotten, and as one more desperate plunge brought the bull down in a struggling kicking heap with Jock completely hidden under him, I ran up and ended the fight.

It always took him some time to calm down after these tussles: he became so wound up by the excitement of the struggle that time was needed to run down again, so to say. While I was busy on the double precaution of fixing up a scare for the aasvogels and cutting grass and branches to cover the buck, Jock moved restlessly round the sable, ever ready to pounce on him again at the least sign of life. The slithering tongue and wide-open mouth looked like a big red gash splitting his head in two; he was so blown, his breath came and went like the puffing of a diminutive

steam-engine at full speed, and his eyes with all the wickedness of fight—but none of the watchfulness—gone out of them, flickered incessantly from the buck to me : one sign from either would have been enough ! It was the same old scene, the same old performance, that I had watched scores of times ; but it never grew stale or failed to draw a laugh, a word of cheer, and pat of affection ; and from him there came always the same response, the friendly wagging of that stumpy tail, a splashy lick, a soft upward look, and a wider split of the mouth that was a laugh as plain as if one heard it. But that was only an interruption—a few seconds' distraction : it did not put him off or satisfy him that all was well. His attention went back to the buck, and the everlasting footwork went on again. With his front to the fallen enemy and his fore-legs well apart he kept ever on the move forwards and backwards, in quick steps of a few inches each, and at the same time edging round in his zigzag circle, making a track round the buck like a weather chart with the glass at ' Changeable.'

" Silly old fusser ! Can't you see he's finished ? " He could not hear anything, but the responsive wag showed that he knew I was talking to him ; and, dodging the piece of bark I threw at him, he resumed his ridiculous round.

I was still laughing at him, when he stopped and turning sharply round made a snap at his side ; and a few seconds later he did it again. Then there was a thin sing of insect wings ; and I knew that the Tsetse fly were on us.

The only thought then was for Jock, who was still

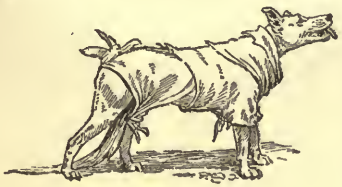
working busily round the sable. For some minutes I sat with him between my legs, wisping away the flies with a small branch and wondering what to do. It soon became clear that there was nothing to be gained by waiting: instead of passing away the fly became more numerous, and there was not a moment's peace or comfort to be had, for they were tackling me on the neck, arms, and legs, where the thorn-ripped pants left them bare to the knees; so, slinging the rifle over my shoulder, I picked Jock up, greatly to his discomfort, and carried him off in my arms at the best pace possible under the circumstances. Half a mile of that was enough, however: the weight, the awkwardness of the position, the effort to screen him, and the difficulty of picking my way in very rough country at the same time, were too much for me. A tumble into a grass-hidden hole laid us both out sprawling, and I sat down again to rest and think, swishing the flies off as before.

Then an idea came which, in spite of all the anxiety, made me laugh, and ended in putting poor old Jock in quite the most undignified and ridiculous plight he had known since the days of his puppyhood when his head stuck in the bully-beef tin or the hen pecked him on the nose. I ripped off as much of my shirt as was not needed to protect me against the flies, and making holes in it for his legs and tail fitted him out with a home-made suit in about five minutes. Time was everything: it was impossible to run with him in my arms, but we could run together until we got out of the fly belt, and there was not much risk of being bitten as long as we kept up the running in the

long grass. It was a long spell, and what with the rough country and the uncontrollable laughter at the sight of Jock, I was pretty well done by the time we were safely out of the 'fly.' We pulled up when the country began to fall away sharply towards the river, and there, to Jock's evident satisfaction, I took off his suit—by that time very much tattered and awry.

It was there, lying between two rocks in the shade of a marula tree, that I got one of those chances to see game at close quarters of which most men only hear or dream. There were no snapshot cameras then!

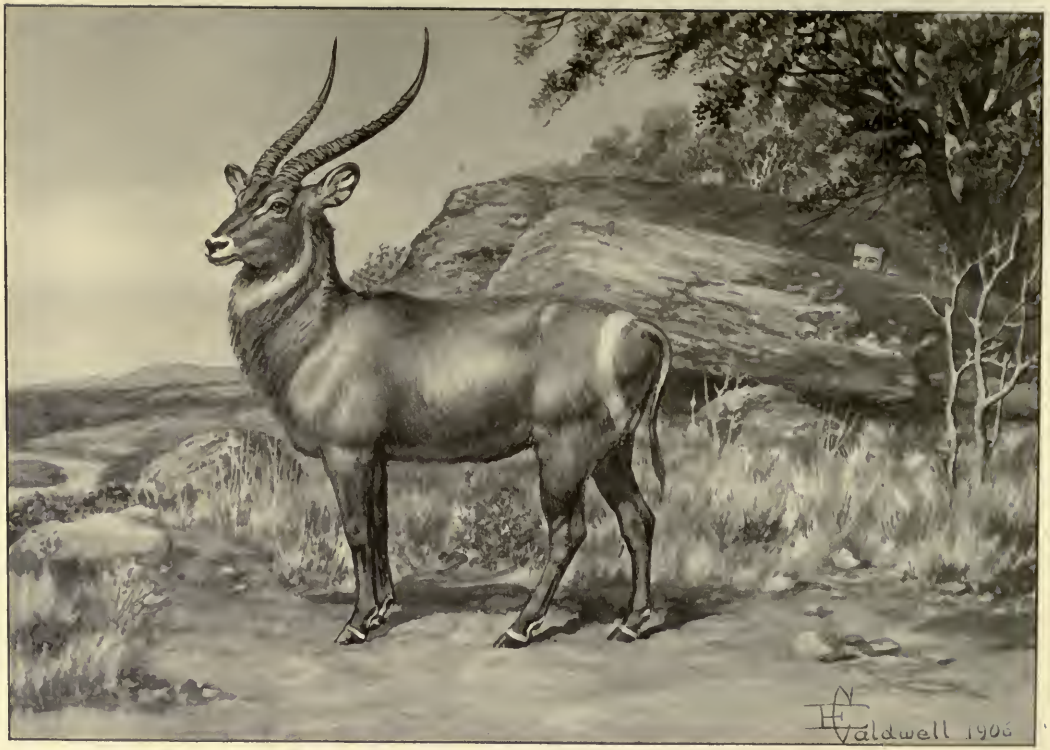
We had been lying there it may be for half an hour or more, Jock asleep and I spread out on my back, when a slight but distinct click, as of a hoof against a stone, made me turn quietly over on my side and listen. The rock beside me was about four feet high, and on the other side of it a buck of some kind, and a big one too, was walking with easy stride towards the river. Every footstep was perfectly clear; the walk was firm and confident: evidently there was not the least suspicion of danger. It was only a matter of yards between us, and what little breeze there was drifted across his course towards me, as he too made for the river, holding a course parallel with the two long rocks between which we were lying. The footsteps came abreast of us and then stopped, just as I was expecting him to walk on past the rock and down the hill in front of me. The sudden halt seemed to mean that some warning instinct had arrested him, or some least taint upon the pure air softly eddying between the rocks had reached him. I could hear his sniffs, and



pictured him looking about, silent but alarmed, before deciding which way to make his rush.

I raised myself by inches, close to the rock, until I could see over it. A magnificent waterbuck bull, full-grown and in perfect coat and condition, was standing less than five yards away and a little to the right, having already passed me when he came to a stop : he was so close that I could see the waves and partings in his heavy coat ; the rise and fall in his flanks as he breathed ; the ruff on his shaggy bearded throat, that gave such an air of grandeur to the head ; the noble carriage, as with head held high and slightly turned to windward he sniffed the breeze from the valley ; the nostrils, mobile and sensitive, searching for the least hint of danger ; and the eye, large and full and soft, luminous with watchful intelligence, and yet mild and calm—so free was it from all trace of a disturbing thought. And yet I was so close, it seemed almost possible to reach out and touch him. There was no thought of shooting : it was a moment of supreme enjoyment. Just to watch him : that was enough.

In a little while he seemed satisfied that all was well, and with head thrown slightly forward and the sure clean tread of his kind, he took his line unhesitatingly down the hill. As he neared the thicker bush twenty yards away a sudden impulse made me give a shout. In a single bound he was lost among the trees, and the clattering of loose stones and the crackle of sticks in his path had ceased before the cold shiver-down-the-back, which my spell-breaking shout provoked, had



"JUST TO WATCH HIM, THAT WAS ENOUGH"

passed away. When I turned round Jock was still asleep: little incidents like that brought his deafness home.

* * * * *

It was our last day's hunting together; and I went back to the dreary round of hard, hopeless, useless struggle and daily loss.

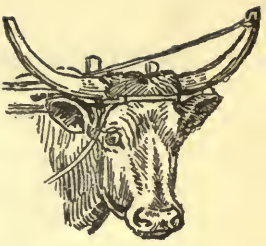
One day, a calm cloudless day, there came without warning a tremendous booming roar that left the air vibrating and seemed to shake the very earth, as a thousand echoes called and answered from hill to hill down the long valley. There was nothing to explain it; the kaffirs turned a sickly grey, and appealed to me; but I could give them no explanation—it was something beyond my ken—and they seemed to think it an evil omen of still greater ill-luck. But, as it turned out, the luck was not all bad: some days passed before the mystery was solved, and then we came to where Coombes, with whom a week earlier I had tried—and failed—to keep pace, had been blown to pieces with his boys, waggon, oxen, and three tons of dynamite: there was no fragment of waggon bigger than one's hand; and the trees all around were barked on one side. We turned out to avoid the huge hole in the drift, and passed on.

There were only twenty oxen left when we reached the drift below Fig Tree. The water was nearly breast high and we carried three-fourths of the loads through on our heads, case by case, to make the pull as easy as possible for the oxen, as they could only crawl then.

We got one waggon through with some difficulty, but at nightfall the second was still in the river ; we had carried out everything removable, even to the bucksails, but the weakened bullocks could not move the empty waggon.

The thunder-clouds were piling up ahead, and distant lightning gave warning of a storm away up river ; so we wound the trek-chain round a big tree on the bank, to anchor the waggon in case of flood, and reeling from work and weariness, too tired to think of food, I flung myself down in my blankets under the other waggon which was outspanned where we had stopped it in the double-rutted veld road, and settling comfortably into the sandy furrow cut by many wheels, was ' dead to the world ' in a few minutes. Near midnight the storm awoke me and a curious coldness about the neck and shoulders made me turn over to pull the blankets up. The road had served as a storm-water drain, converting the two wheel furrows into running streams, and I, rolled in my blankets, had dammed up one of them. The prompt flow of the released water as soon as I turned over, told plainly what had happened. I looked out at the driving rain and the glistening earth, as shown up by constant flashes of lightning : it was a world of rain and spray and running water. It seemed that there was neither hope nor mercy anywhere ; I was too tired to care, and dropping back into the trough, slept the night out in water.

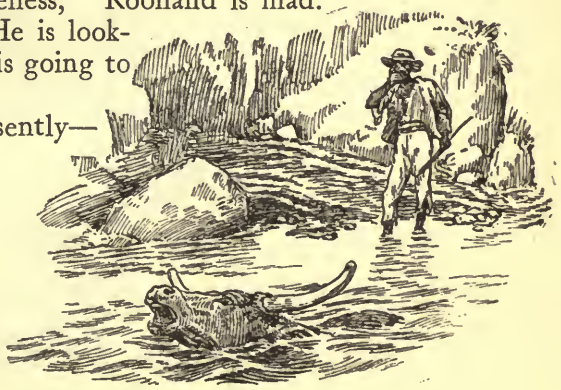
In the morning we found the waggon still in the drift, although

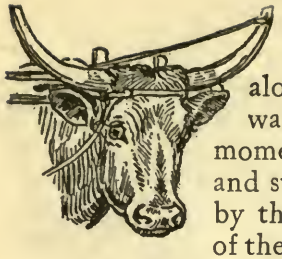


partly hidden by the flood, but the force of the stream had half-floated and half-forced it round on to higher ground; only the anchoring chain had saved it. We had to wait some hours for the river to run down, and then to my relief the rested but staggering oxen pulled it out at the first attempt.

Rooiland, the light red ox with blazing yellow eyes and topped horns, fierce and untamable to the end, was in the lead then. I saw him as he took the strain in that last pull, and it was pitiful to see the restless eager spirit fighting against the failing strength: he looked desperate. The thought seems fanciful—about a dumb animal—and perhaps it is; but what happened just afterwards makes it still vivid and fitted in very curiously with the superstitious notions of the boys. We outspanned in order to re-pack the loads, and Rooiland, who as front ox was the last to be released, stood for a few moments alone while the rest of the cattle moved away; then turning his back on them he gave a couple of low moaning bellows and walked down the road back to the drift again. I had no doubt it was to drink; but the boys stopped their work and watched him curiously, and some remarks passed which were inaudible to me. As the ox disappeared down the slope into the drift, Jim called to his leader to bring him back, and then turning to me, added with his usual positiveness, "Rooiland is mad. Umtagati! Bewitched! He is looking for the dead ones. He is going to die to-day!"

The boy came back presently—

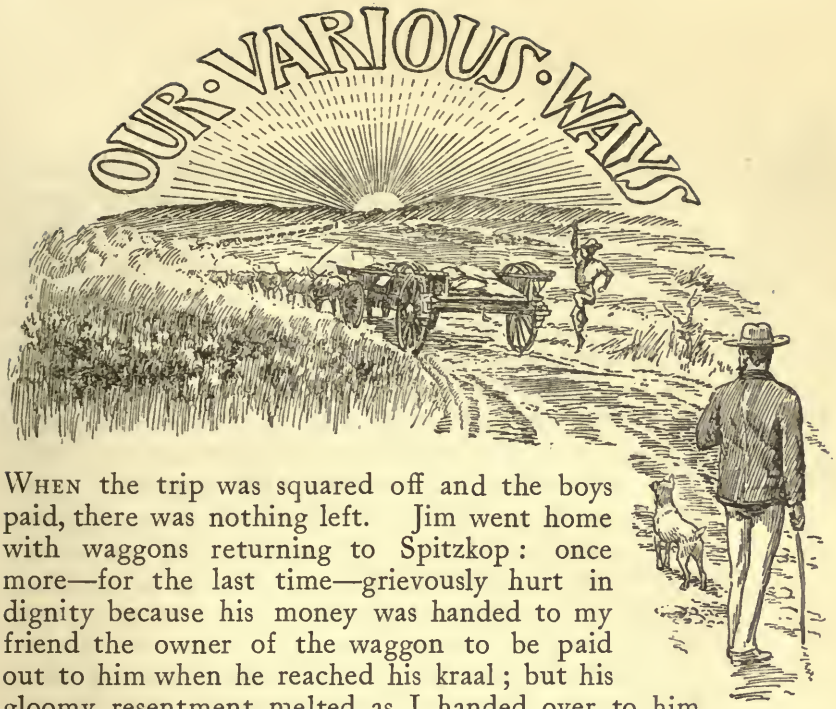




alone. When he reached the drift, he said, Rooiland was standing breast-high in the river, and then in a moment, whether by step or slip, he was into the flood and swept away. The leader's account was received by the others in absolute silence: a little tightening of the jaws and a little brightening of the eyes, perhaps, were all I could detect. They were saturated with superstition, and as pagan fatalists they accepted the position without a word. I suggested to Jim that it was nothing but a return of Rooiland's old straying habit, and probed him with questions, but could get nothing out of him; finally he walked off with an expressive shake of the head and the repetition of his former remark, without a shade of triumph, surprise, or excitement in his voice: "He is looking for the dead ones!"

We were out of the fly then, and the next day we reached Fig Tree.

That was the end of the last trek. Only three oxen reached Barberton, and they died within the week: the ruin was complete.



When the trip was squared off and the boys paid, there was nothing left. Jim went home with waggons returning to Spitzkop: once more—for the last time—grievously hurt in dignity because his money was handed to my friend the owner of the waggon to be paid out to him when he reached his kraal; but his gloomy resentment melted as I handed over to him things for which there was no further need. The waggons moved off, and Jim with them; but twice he broke back again to dance and shout his gratitude; for it was wealth to him to have the reims and voorslag, the odd yokes and strops and waggon tools, the baking pot and pan and billies; and they were little to me when all else was gone. And Jim, with all his faults, had earned some title to remembrance for his loyalty. My way had been his way; and the hardest day had never been too hard for him: he had seen it all through to the finish, without a grumble and without a shirk.

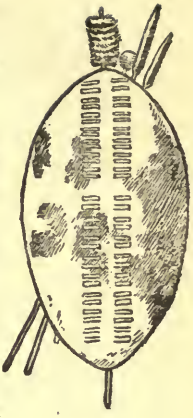
His last shout, like the bellow of a bull, was an uproarious good-bye to Jock. And Jock seemed to know

it was something of an occasion, for, as he stood before me looking down the road at the receding waggons and the dancing figure of Jim, his ears were cocked, his head was tilted a little sideways, and his tail stirred gently. It was at least a friendly nod in return!

A couple of weeks later I heard from my friend: "You will be interested to hear that that lunatic of yours reached his kraal all right; but that's not *his* fault. He is a holy terror. I have never known such a restless animal: he is like a change in the weather—you seem to feel him everywhere, upsetting everything and every one the whole time. I suppose you hammered him into his place and kept him there; but I wouldn't have him at a gift. It is not that there was anything really wrong; only there was no rest, no peace.

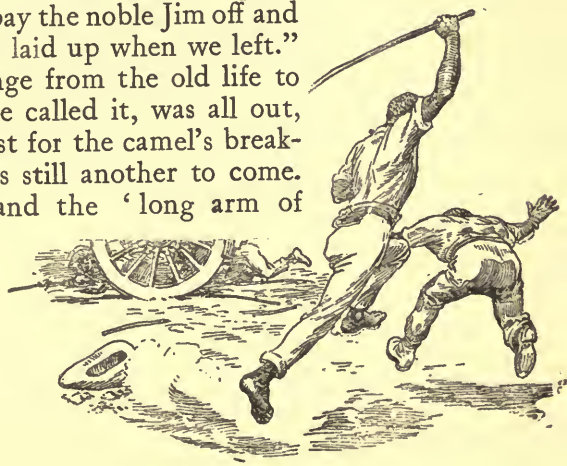
"But he's a gay fighter! That was a treat: I never laughed so much in my life. Below the Devil's Kantoor we met a lot of waggons from Lydenburg, and he had a row with one of the drivers, a lanky nigger with dandy-patched clothes. The boy wouldn't fight—just yelled blue murder while Jim walloped him. I heard the yells and the whacks, like the beating of carpets, and there was Jim laying it on all over him—legs, head, back, and arms—with a sort of ferocious satisfaction, every whack being accompanied by a husky suppressed shout: 'Fight, Shangaan! Fight!' But the other fellow was not on for fighting; he floundered about, yelled for mercy and help, and tried to run away; but Jim simply played round him—one spring put him alongside each time. I felt

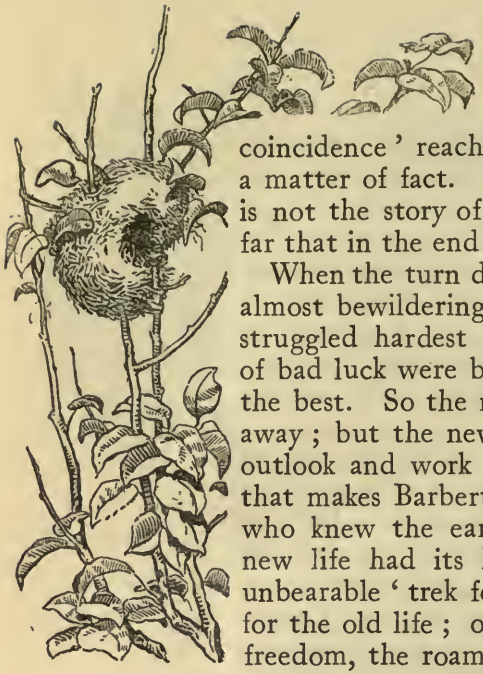
sorry for the long nigger and was going to interfere and save him, but just then one of his pals called out to their gang to come along and help, and ran for his sticks. It was rare fun then. Jim dropped the patched fellow and went like a charging lion straight for the waggons where the gang were swarming for their sticks, letting out right and left whenever he saw a nigger, whether they wanted to fight or not; and in about five seconds the whole lot were heading for the bush with Jim in full chase.



"Goodness knows what the row was about. As far as I can make out from your heathen, it is because the other boy is a Shangaan and reads the Bible. Jim says this boy—Sam is his name—worked for you and ran away. Sam says it is not true, and that he never even heard of you, and that Jim is a stranger to him. There's something wrong in this, though, because when the row began, Sam first tried to pacify your lunatic, and I heard him sing out in answer to the first few licks, 'Kahle, Umganaam; Kahle, Makokel'!' (Gently, friend; gently, Makokel'.) 'Wow, Makokela, y' ou bulala mena!' (Wow, Makokela, you will kill me.) He knew Jim right enough; that was evident. But it didn't help him; he had to skip for it all the same. I was glad to pay the noble Jim off and drop him at his kraal. Sam was laid up when we left."

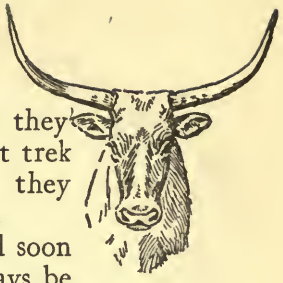
It is better to skip the change from the old life to the new—when the luck, as we called it, was all out, when each straw seemed the last for the camel's breaking back, and there was always still another to come. But the turn came at last, and the 'long arm of





coincidence' reached out to make the 'impossible' a matter of fact. It is better to skip all that: for it is not the story of Jock, and it concerns him only so far that in the end it made our parting unavoidable.

When the turn did come it was strange, and at times almost bewildering, to realise that the things one had struggled hardest against and regarded as the worst of bad luck were blessings in disguise and were all for the best. So the new life began and the old was put away; but the new life, for all its brighter and wider outlook and work of another class, for all the charm that makes Barberton now a cherished memory to all who knew the early days, was not all happy. The new life had its hours of darkness too; of almost unbearable 'trek fever'; of restless, sleepless, longing for the old life; of 'home-sickness' for the veld, the freedom, the roaming, the nights by the fire, and the days in the bush! Now and again would come a sleepless night with its endless procession of scenes, in which some remembered from the past were interlinked with others imagined for the future; and here and there in these long waking dreams came stabs of memory—flashes of lightning vividness: the head and staring eyes of the koodoo bull, as we had stood for a portion of a second face to face; the yawning mouth of the maddened crocodile; the mamba and its beady hateful eyes, as it swept by before the bush-fire. And there were others too that struck another chord: the cattle, the poor dumb beasts that had worked and died: stepping-stones in a man's career; the 'books,' the 'chalk and blackboard' of the



school—used, discarded, and forgotten! No, they were not forgotten; and the memory of the last trek was one long mute reproach on their behalf: they had paved the roadway for the Juggernaut man.

All that was left of the old life was Jock; and soon there was no place for him. He could not always be with me; and when left behind he was miserable, leading a life that was utterly strange to him, without interest and among strangers. While I was in Barberton he accompanied me everywhere, but—absurd as it seems—there was a constant danger for him there, greater though less glorious than those he faced so lightly in the veld. His deafness, which passed almost unnoticed and did not seem to handicap him at all in the veld, became a serious danger in camp. For a long time he had been unable to hear a sound, but he could *feel* sounds: that is to say, he was quick to notice anything that caused a vibration. In the early days of his deafness I had been worried by the thought that he would be run over while lying asleep near or under the waggons, and the boys were always on the look-out to stir him up; but we soon found that this was not necessary. At the first movement he would feel the vibration and jump up. Jim realised this well enough, for when wishing to direct his attention to strange dogs or Shangaans, the villain could always dodge me by stamping or hammering on the ground, and Jock always looked up: he seemed to know the difference between the sounds he could ignore, such as chopping wood, and those that he ought to notice.

In camp—Barberton in those days was reckoned

a mining camp, and was always referred to as ' camp ' —the danger was due to the number of sounds. He would stand behind me as I stopped in the street, and sometimes lie down and snooze if the wait was a long one ; and the poor old fellow must have thought it a sad falling off, a weary monotonous change from the real life of the veld. At first he was very watchful, and every rumbling wheel or horse's footfall drew his alert little eyes round to the danger point ; but the traffic and noise were almost continuous and one sound ran into another ; and thus he became careless or puzzled and on several occasions had narrowly escaped being run over or trodden on.

Once, in desperation after a bad scare, I tried chaining him up, and although his injured reproachful look hurt, it did not weaken me : I had hardened my heart to do it, and it was for his own sake. At lunch-time he was still squatting at the full length of the chain, off the mat and straw, and with his head hanging in the most hopeless dejected attitude one could imagine. It was too much for me—the dog really felt it ; and when I released him there was no rejoicing in his freedom as the hated collar and chain dropped off : he turned from me without a sign or sound of any sort, and walking off slowly, lay down some ten yards away with his head resting on his paws ! He went to think—not to sleep.

I felt abominably guilty, and was conscious of wanting to make up for it all the afternoon.

Once I took him out to Fig Tree Creek fifteen miles away, and left him with a prospector friend at whose

camp in the hills it seemed he would be much better off and much happier. When I got back to Barberton that night he was waiting for me, with a tag of chewed rope hanging round his neck, not the least ashamed of himself, but openly rejoicing in the meeting and evidently never doubting that I was equally pleased. And he was quite right there.

But it could not go on. One day as he lay asleep behind me, a loaded waggon coming sharply round a corner as nearly as possible passed over him. The wheel was within inches of his back as he lay asleep in the sand: there was no chance to grab—it was a rush and a kick that saved him; and he rolled over under the waggon, and found his own way out between the wheels.

A few days after this Ted passed through Barberton, and I handed Jock over to him, to keep and to care for until I had a better and safer home for him.

* * * * *

One day some two years later there turned up at my quarters an old friend of the transport days—Harry Williams—he had been away on a long trek 'up north' to look for some supposed mine of fabulous richness of which there had been vague and secret reports from natives. He stayed with me for some days, and one evening after the bout of fever and ague had passed off and rest and good feeding had begun to pull him round, he told us the story of their search. It was a trip of much adventure, but it was the end of his story that interested me most; and that is all that need be told here.

They had failed to find the mine; the native who

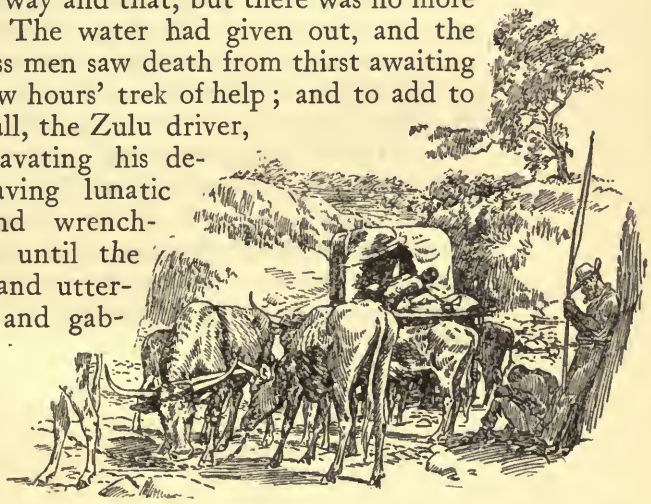
was supposed to know all about it had deserted, with all he could carry off; they were short of food and money, and out of medicines; the delays had been great; they were two hundred miles from any white men; there was no road but their own erratic track through the bush; the rains had begun and the fever season set in; the cattle—they had one waggon and span—were worn out; the fever had gripped them, and of the six white men, three were dead, one dying, and two only able to crawl; most of their boys had deserted; one umfaan fit for work, and the driver—then delirious with fever—completed the party.

The long journey was almost over; and they were only a few treks from the store and camp for which they were making; but they were so stricken and helpless it seemed as though that little was too much, and they must die within reach of help. The driver, a big Zulu, was then raving mad; he had twice run off into the bush and been lost for hours. Precious time and waning strength were spent in the search, and with infinite effort and much good luck they had found him and induced him to return. On the second occasion they had enticed him on to the waggon and, as he lay half unconscious between bursts of delirium, had tied him down flat on his back, with wrists and ankles fastened to the buckrails. It was all they could do to save him: they had barely strength to climb up and pour water into his mouth from time to time.

It was midday then, and their dying comrade was so far gone that they decided to abandon one trek and wait for evening, to allow him to die in peace.

Later on, when they thought it was all over, they tried to scrape out a grave for him, and began to pull out one old blanket to wrap round him in place of a shroud and coffin. It was then that the man opened his eyes and faintly shook his head ; so they inspanned as best they could and made another trek. I met the man some years afterwards, and he told me he had heard all they said, but could only remember one thing, and that was Harry's remark, that ' two gin-cases were not enough for a coffin, so they would have to take one of the blankets instead.'

In the morning they went on again. It was then at most two treks more to their destination ; but they were too weak to work or walk, and the cattle were left to crawl along undriven ; but after half an hour's trekking, they reached a bad drift where the waggon stuck ; the cattle would not face the pull. The two tottering trembling white men did their best, but neither had strength to use the whip ; the umfaan led the oxen this way and that, but there was no more effort in them. The water had given out, and the despairing helpless men saw death from thirst awaiting them within a few hours' trek of help ; and to add to the horror of it all, the Zulu driver, with thirst aggravating his delirium, was a raving lunatic — struggling and wrenching at his bonds until the waggon rattled, and uttering maniac yells and gabbling incessantly.



Hours had gone by in hopeless effort; but the oxen stood out at all angles, and no two would pull together in answer to the feeble efforts of the fainting men. Then there came a lull in the shouts from the waggon and in answer to the little voorlooper's warning shout, " Pas op, Baas ! " (Look out, Master !), the white men looked round and saw the Zulu driver up on his knees freeing himself from the reims. In another moment he was standing up full height—a magnificent but most unwelcome sight: there was a thin line of froth along the half-opened mouth; the deep-set eyes glared out under eyebrows and forehead bunched into frowning wrinkles, as for a few seconds he leaned forward like a lion about to spring and scanned the men and oxen before him; and then as they watched him in breathless silence, he sprang lightly off the waggon, picked up a small dry stick as he landed, and ran up along the span.

He spoke to the after-ox by name as he passed; called to another, and touched it into place; thrust his way between the next one and the dazed white man standing near it, tossing him aside with a brush of his arm, as a ploughshare spurns a sod; and then they saw how the boy's madness had taken him. His work and his span had called to him in his delirium; and he had answered. With low mutterings, short words hissed out, and all the sounds and terms the cattle knew shot at them—low pitched and with intense repression—he ran along the span, crouching low all the time like a savage stealing up for murderous attack.

The two white men stood back and watched.

Reaching the front oxen, he grasped the leading reim and pulled them round until they stood level for the straight pull out; then down the other side of the span he ran with cat-like tread and activity, talking to each and straightening them up as he had done with the others; and when he reached the waggon again, he turned sharply and overlooked the span. One ox had swung round and stood out of line; there was a pause of seconds, and then the big Zulu called to the ox by name—not loudly but in a deep low tone, husky with intensity—and the animal swung back into line again.

Then out of the silence that followed came an electrifying yell to the span: every bullock leaned to its yoke, and the waggon went out with a rush.

And he drove them at a half-trot all the way to the store: without water; without help; without consciousness; the little dry twig still in his hand, and only his masterful intensity and knowledge of his work and span to see him through.

"A mad troublesome savage," said Harry Williams, "but one of the very best. Anyhow, we thought so; he saved us!"

There was something very familiar in this, and it was with a queer feeling of pride and excitement that I asked:

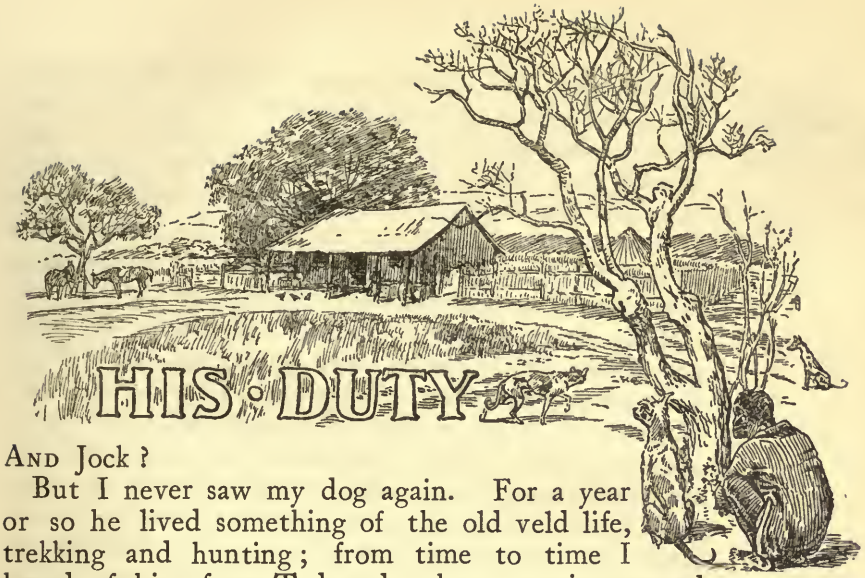
"Did he ever say to you 'My catchum lion 'live'?"

"By gum! You know him? Jim: Jim Makokel'!"

"Indeed I do. Good old Jim!"

* * * *

Years afterwards Jim was still a driver, working when necessary, fighting when possible, and enjoying intervals of lordly ease at his kraal where the wives and cattle stayed and prospered.



And Jock?

But I never saw my dog again. For a year or so he lived something of the old veld life, trekking and hunting; from time to time I heard of him from Ted and others: stories seemed to gather easily about him as they do about certain people, and many knew Jock and were glad to bring news of him. The things they thought wonderful and admirable made pleasant news for them to tell and welcome news to me, and they were heard with contented pride, but without surprise, as "just like him": there was nothing more to be said.

One day I received word from Ted that he was off to Scotland for a few months and had left Jock with another old friend, Tom Barnett—Tom, at whose store under the Big Fig Tree, Seedling lies buried; and although I was glad that he had been left with a good friend like Tom, who would care for him as well as any one could, the life there was not of the kind

to suit him. For a few months it would not matter; but I had no idea of letting him end his days as a watch-dog at a trader's store in the kaffir country. Tom's trouble was with thieves; for the natives about there were not a good lot, and their dogs were worse. When Jock saw or scented them, they had the poorest sort of luck or chance: he fought to kill, and not as town dogs fight; he had learnt his work in a hard school, and he never stopped or slackened until the work was done; so his fame soon spread and it brought Tom more peace than he had enjoyed for many a day. Natives no longer wandered at will into the reed-enclosed yard; kaffir dogs ceased to sneak into the store and through the house, stealing everything they could get. Jock took up his place at the door, and hungry mongrels watched him from a distance or sneaked up a little closer when from time to time he trotted round to the yard at the back of the building to see how things were going there.

All that was well enough during the day; but the trouble occurred at night. The kaffirs were too scared to risk being caught by him, but the dogs from the surrounding kraals prowled about after dark, scavenging and thieving where they could; and what angered Tom most of all was the killing of his fowls. The yard at the back of the store was enclosed by a fence of close-packed reeds, and in the middle of the yard stood the fowl-house with a clear space of bare ground all round it. On many occasions kaffir dogs had found their way through the reed fence and killed fowls perching about the yard, and several times they

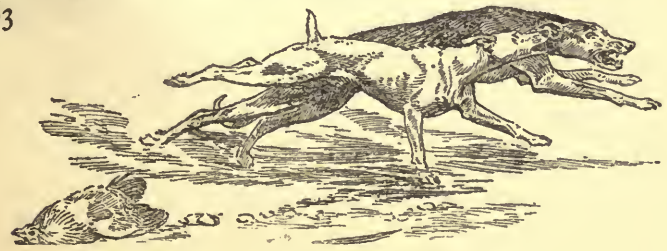
had burgled the fowl-house itself. In spite of Jock's presence and reputation, this night robbing still continued, for while he slept peacefully in front of the store, the robbers would do their work at the back. Poor old fellow! They were many and he was one; they prowled night and day, and he had to sleep sometimes; they were watchful and he was deaf; so he had no chance at all unless he saw or scented them.

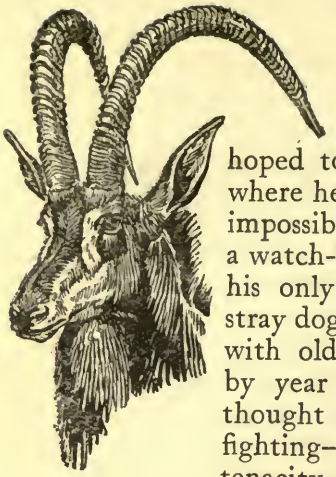
There were two small windows looking out on to the yard, but no door in the back of the building; thus, in order to get into the yard, it was necessary to go out of the front door and round the side of the house. On many occasions Tom, roused by the screaming of the fowls, had seized his gun and run round to get a shot at the thieves; but the time so lost was enough for a kaffir dog, and the noise made in opening the reed gate gave ample warning of his coming.

The result was that Tom generally had all his trouble for nothing; but it was not always so. Several times he roused Jock as he ran out, and invariably got some satisfaction out of what followed; once Jock caught one of the thieves struggling to force a way through the fence and held on to the hind leg until Tom came up with the gun; on other occasions he had caught them in the yard; on others, again, he had run them down in the bush and finished it off there without help or hindrance.

That was the kind of life to which Jock seemed to have settled down.

He was then in the very prime of life, and I still





hoped to get him back to me some day to a home where he would end his days in peace. Yet it seemed impossible to picture him in a life of ease and idleness—a watch-dog in a house sleeping away his life on a mat, his only excitement keeping off strange kaffirs and stray dogs, or burrowing for rats and moles in a garden, with old age, deafness, and infirmities growing year by year to make his end miserable. I had often thought that it might have been better had he died fighting—hanging on with his indomitable pluck and tenacity, tackling something with all the odds against him ; doing his duty and his best as he had always done—and died as Rocky's dog had died. If on that last day of our hunting together he had got at the lioness, and gone under in the hopeless fight ; if the sable bull had caught and finished him with one of the scythe-like sweeps of the scimitar horns ; if he could have died—like Nelson—in the hour of victory ! Would it not have been better for him—happier for me ? Often I thought so. For to fade slowly away ; to lose his strength and fire and intelligence ; to outlive his character, and no longer be himself ! No, that could not be happiness !

Well, Jock is dead ! Jock, the innocent cause of Seedling's downfall and death, lies buried under the same big Fig Tree : the graves stand side by side. He died, as he lived—true to his trust ; and this is how it happened, as it was faithfully told to me :

It was a bright moonlight night—Think of the scores we had spent together, the mild glorious nights of the Bushveld !—and once more Tom was roused by

a clatter of falling boxes and the wild screams of fowls in the yard. Only the night before the thieves had beaten him again; but this time he was determined to be even with them. Jumping out of bed he opened the little window looking out on to the fowl-house, and, with his gun resting on the sill, waited for the thief. He waited long and patiently; and by-and-by the screaming of the fowls subsided enough for him to hear the gurgling and scratching about in the fowl-house, and he settled down to a still longer watch; evidently the kaffir dog was enjoying his stolen meal in there.

"Go on! Finish it!" Tom muttered grimly; "I'll have you this time if I wait till morning!"

So he stood at the window waiting and watching, until every sound had died away outside. He listened intently: there was not a stir; there was nothing to be seen in the moonlit yard; nothing to be heard; not even a breath of air to rustle the leaves in the big fig-tree.

Then, in the same dead stillness the dim form of a dog appeared in the doorway, stepped softly out of the fowl-house, and stood in the deep shadow of the little porch. Tom lifted the gun slowly and took careful aim. When the smoke cleared away, the figure of the dog lay still, stretched out on the ground where it had stood; and Tom went back to bed, satisfied.

* * * * *

The morning sun slanting across the yard shone in Tom's eyes as he pushed the reed gate open and made

his way towards the fowl-house. Under the porch, where the sunlight touched it, something shone like burnished gold.

He was stretched on his side—it might have been in sleep; but on the snow-white chest there was one red spot.

And inside the fowl-house lay the kaffir dog—dead. Jock had done his duty.

THE END

NOTES

SNAKE stories are proverbially an 'uncommercial risk' for those who value a reputation for truthfulness. Hailstorms are scarcely less disastrous; hence these notes!

MAMBA.—This is believed to be the largest and swiftest of the deadly snakes, and one of the most wantonly vicious. The late Dr. Colenso (Bishop of Zululand) in his Zulu dictionary describes them as attaining a length of twelve feet, and capable of chasing a man on horseback. The writer has seen several of this length, and has heard of measurements up to fourteen feet (which, however, were not sufficiently verified); he has also often heard stories of men on horseback being chased by black mambas, but has never met the man himself, nor succeeded in eliciting the important facts as to pace and distance. However that may be, the movements of a mamba, even on open ground, are, as the writer has several times observed, so incredibly swift as to leave no other impression on the mind than that of having witnessed a magical disappearance. How often and how far they 'travel on their tails,' whether it is a continuous movement or merely a momentary uprising to command a view, and what length or what proportion of the body is on the ground for support or propulsion, the writer has no means of knowing: during the Zulu war an Imperial officer was bitten by a mamba *while on horseback* and died immediately.

HAILSTORMS.—Bad hailstorms occur every year in South

Africa, but they do not last long (ten minutes is enough to destroy everything that stands). The distances are immense, and the area of disturbance is usually a narrow strip; hence, except when one strikes a town, very few people ever witness them. This summer hailstorms were more general and more severe in the Transvaal than for some time past. A bad storm baffles description. The size of the hailstones is only one of the factors—a strong wind enormously increases the destructiveness; yet some idea may be gathered from the size of the stones. The writer took a plaster cast of one picked up at Zuurfontein (near Johannesburg), in November 1906, which measured 4½ inches long, 3½ wide and 1⅛ inches thick—a slab of white ice. In the Hekpoort Valley (near Johannesburg) and in Barberton, about the same date, the veld was like a glacier; the hail lay like snow, inches deep, and during the worst spells the general run of the hailstones varied in size from pigeons' eggs to hens' eggs; but the big ones, the crash of whose individual blows was distinctly heard through the general roar, are described as 'bigger than cricket balls' and 'the size of breakfast cups,' generally with an elongation or tail—like a balloon. Sheep and buck were killed, and full-grown cattle so battered that some were useless and others died of the injuries; wooden doors were broken in, the panels being completely shattered; corrugated iron roofs were perforated, and in some cases the hailstones drove completely through them. The writer photographed a portion of a roof in Barberton which had suffered thus, and saw plaster casts—formed by pouring plaster of Paris into the indentations which two hailstones had made in a flower bed—in diameter equalling, respectively, tennis and cricket balls.

Near Harrismith, O.R.C., in 1903, two herd boys with a troop of about a hundred goats and calves were caught by the hail. The boys and all the stock, except one old goat, were killed.

GLOSSARY

NOTE.—*The spelling of Cape Dutch and native names is in many cases not to be determined by recognised authority. The pronunciation cannot be quite accurately suggested through the medium of English. The figures of weights and measurements of animals are gathered from many sources, and refer only to first-class specimens. The weights are necessarily approximate.*

AASVOGEL (D), a vulture (*lit.* carrion bird).
ANTBEAR, AARDVARK (D) (*Orycteropus Afer*).
ANT-HEAP, mound made by termites or 'white ants.' Usually formed by one colony of ants; about two to four feet in base diameter and height, but often in certain localities very much larger. The writer photographed one this year near the scene of the Last Hunt, eighteen feet base diameter and ten feet high, and another in Rhodesia which formed a complete background for a travelling waggonette and six mules. In both cases these mounds were 'deserted cities,' and trees, probably fifty to one hundred years old, were growing out of them.
ASSEGAI (*pro.* ass-e-guy) (N), native spear.

BAAS (D), master.
BANSELA (*pro.* baan-sé-la) (N), a present.
BEKER (*pro.* beaker) (D), a cup.
BILLY, a small tin utensil with lid and handle, used for boiling water.
BUCKSAIL, tarpaulin used for covering transport waggons, which are known as buck-waggons.

Buffalo, Cape buffalo (*Bos Caffer*). Height, 5 ft. 6 in.; weight, possibly 1000 lbs.; horns, 48 in. from tip to tip and 36 in. each in length on curve.

Bultong, or Biltong (*pro.* biltong) (d), meat cut in strips, slightly salted, and dried in the open air.

Bushbuck, a medium-sized but very courageous antelope (*Tragelaphus scriptus*). Height, 3 ft.; weight, 130 lbs.; horns (male only), 18 in.

Bushveld, properly Boschveld (d), bush country; also called Low Veld and Low Country.

Cane Rat (*Thryonomys swinderenianus*).

Cetywayo (*see* Ketshwayo).

Chaka, properly Tshaka (n), the first of the great Zulu kings and founder of the Zulu military power.

Dassie (*pro.* daas-ey) (d), rock-rabbit; coney (*Procavia* (*Hyrax*) *capensis*) (*lit.* little badger).

Dingaan, properly Dingan (e) (n), the second of the great Zulu kings; brother, murderer, and successor of Chaka.

Disselboom (d), the pole of a vehicle.

Donga (n), a gully or dry watercourse with steep banks.

Doughboys, scones; frequently unleavened dough baked in coals; also ash-cakes, roaster cookies, stick-in-the-gizzards, veld-bricks, &c.

Drift (d), a ford.

Duiker (*pro.* in Eng. dyker, in Dutch dayker) (d), a small antelope found throughout Africa (*Cephalophus grimmi*). Gross weight, 30 to 40 lbs.; height, 28 in.; horns, 5½ in. (*lit.* diver, so called from its habit of disappearing and reappearing in low scrub in a succession of bounds when it first starts running).

Go'way Bird, the grey plantain eater (*Schizorhis concolor*).

Hartebeeste (*pro.* haar-te-beast) (d), a large antelope, of which there are several varieties, varying in gross weight from 300 to 500 lbs. Height, 48 in.; horns, 24 in.

Highveld, properly Hoogeveld (d), high country; the plateau, about 5000 to 6000 ft. above sea-level.

Honey Bird, the honey guide (several species; family, *Indicatoriaæ*).
Honey-sucker, sunbird (several species ; family, *Nectariniidæ*).
Horse-sickness, a lung affection prevalent during summer in low-lying parts; generally fatal; caused by microbes introduced in the blood by some insect.

Impala (n), an antelope (*Æpyceros melampus*); habitat, Bushveld; weight, 140 lbs.; horns, up to 20 in., straight.
Impi (*pro.* impey) (n), an army or body of armed natives gathered for or engaged in war.
Induna (*pro.* in-doó-nah) (n), a head-man, captain, or chief, great or petty.
Inkos (*pro.* in-kós—'os' as in verbose) (n), chief; used as a term of respect in address or salutation.
Inspan, properly Enspan (d), to yoke up, harness up, or hitch up.
Isandhl'wana, also 'Sandhl'wana, incorrectly Isandula (*pro.* saan-shle-waá-na), meaning 'the little hand,' the hill which gave the name to the battle in which the 24th Regiment was annihilated in the Zulu War, 1879.

Kaffir Corn, sorghum.
Kahle (*pro.* kaa-shle, corrupted in kitchen Kaffir to 'gaashly') (n), gently, carefully, pleasantly, well. 'Hamba kahle,' farewell, go in peace. 'Hlala (*pro.* shlala) kahle,' farewell, stay in peace.
Kehla (*pro.* keh-shlaa) (n), a native of certain age and position entitled to wear the head ring. Dutch, *ring kop*—ring head.
Kerrie, or Kirrie, native sticks used for fighting, frequently knobbed; hence, knob-kerrie.
Ketshwayo (*pro.* ketsh-wy̆-o), incorrectly Cetywayo, fourth and last of the great Zulu kings.
Klipspringer (d), a small antelope, in appearance and habit rather like chamois (*Oreotragus saltator*) (*lit.* a rock-jumper).
Kloof (d), a gorge.
Kneehalter (d), to couple the head to one foreleg by a reim or strap attached to the halter, closely enough to prevent the animal from moving fast.
Knoorhaan, commonly, but incorrectly, Koorhaan or Koraan, (d), the smaller bustard (*lit.* scolding cock).

Koodoo, properly Kudu (n) (*Strepsiceros capensis*). Habitat, rugged bushy country. Height, 5 ft.; weight, 600 lbs.; horns, up to 48 in. straight, and 66 in. on curve.

Kopje (*pro.* copy) (d), a hill (*lit.* a little head).

Kraal (*pro.* in Eng. crawl) (d), an enclosure for cattle, sheep, &c., a corral; also a collection of native huts, the home of a family, the village of a chief or tribe.

Krans (d), often spelt Krantz (German) (D. *krans*, a circlet or crown), a precipitous face or coronet of rock on a hill or mountain.

Lagavaan, a huge water lizard, the monitor. Cape Dutch, *lagewaan* (pure Dutch, *laguaan*) (*Varanus niloticus*). Maximum length up to 8 ft.

Looper, round shot for fowling-piece, about four times the size of buck shot.

Marula, in Zulu Umgano, a tree which furnishes soft white wood, which is carved into bowls, spoons, &c.; fruit eaten or fermented for drink (*Sclerocarya caffra*).

Meerkat (d), a small animal of the mongoose kind (properly applied to *Suricata tetradactyla*, but loosely to several species).

Middleveld, properly Middelveld (d), the mixed country lying between the Highveld and the Bushveld.

Nekstrop (d), the neck-strap, or reim, which, attached to the yokeskeys, keeps the yoke in place.

Nix (d), nothing (from D. *niets*).

Oribi (n), a small antelope (*Ourebia scoparia*). Weight, 30 lbs.; height, 24 in.; horns, 6 in.

Outspan, properly Uitspan (d), to unyoke or unharness; also the camp where one has outspanned, and places where it is customary, or by law permitted, to outspan.

Pauw (*pro.* pow) (d), the great bustard (*lit.* peacock).

Panda, properly 'Mpande (n), the third of the great Zulu kings.

Pezulu (n), on top, up, above.

Partridge, Pheasant, names applied somewhat loosely to various species of francolin.

Poort (*pro.* pooh-rt) (d), a gap or gorge in a range of hills (*lit.* gate).

Quagga, zebra (correctly applied to *Equus quagga*, now extinct, but still applied to the various species of zebra found in South Africa).

Reim (*pro.* reem) (d), a stout strip of raw hide.

Reimpje (*pro.* reempy) (d), a small reim.

Rietbuck, properly (d) Rietbok (*pro.* reet-buck), reed buck (*Cervicapra arundinum*). Height, 3 ft. 6 in.; gross weight, 140 lbs.; horns, male only, up to 16 in.

Sable Antelope (*Hippotragus niger;* Dutch, *zwaart witpens*). Habitat, bushveld. Height, 4 ft. 6 in.; weight, 350 lbs.; horns, up to 48 in. on curve.

Sakubona (n), Zulu equivalent of 'Good day.'

Salted Horse, one which has had horse-sickness, and is thus considered immune (as in small-pox); hence 'salted' is freely used colloquially as meaning acclimatised, tough, hardened, &c.

Schans (*pro.* skaans) (d), a stone or earth breastwork for defence, very common in old native wars.

Schelm (d), a rascal; like Scotch skellum.

Scherm (*pro.* skarem) (d), a protection of bush or trees, usually against wild animals.

Sjambok (*pro.* in English shambok, in Dutch saam-bok) (d), tapering raw-hide whip made from rhinoceros, hippopotamus, or giraffe skin.

Skey (*pro.* skay), a yokeskey; short for Dutch *jukskei*.

Sloot (d), a ditch.

Span (d), a team.

Spoor (d), footprints; also a trail of man, animal, or vehicle.

Springbuck, properly Springbok (d), a small antelope (*Antidorcas* (*Gazella*) *euchore*). Habitat, highveld and other open grass country. Height, 30 in.; weight, up to 90 lbs.; horns, 19 in. (*lit.* jumping buck).

Spruit (*pro.* sprait; also commonly, but incorrectly, sproot) (d), a stream.

Squirrel, or Tree Rat, native name 'Mchinaand (*Funisciurus palliatus*).

Stembuck (Cape Dutch, *stembok* or *steinbok*, from the pure Dutch *steenbok*, the Alpine ibex), a small antelope (*Raphicerus campestais*). Height, 22 in.; weight, 25 lbs.; horns, 5 in.

Stoep (*pro.* stoop) (D), a raised promenade or paved verandah in front or at sides of a house.

Tambuki Grass, also Tambookie, and sometimes Tambuti (N), a very rank grass; in places reaches 15 ft. high and stem diameter ½ in.
Tick, or Rhinoceros, Bird, the 'ox-pecker' (*Buphaga Africana*).
Tiger. In South Africa the leopard is generally called a tiger; first so described by the Dutch—*tijger*.
Tock-tockie, a slow-moving beetle, incapable of flight. Gets its name from its means of signalling by rapping the abdomen on the ground (*tenebrionid* beetle of the genus *Psammodes*).
Trek (D) (*lit.* to pull), to move off or go on a journey; a journey, an expedition—*e.g.*, the Great Trek (or exodus of Boers from Cape Colony, 1836–48); also, and commonly, the time, distance, or journey from one outspan to another.
Trek Gear, the traction gear, chain, yokes, &c., of a waggon. The Boer pioneers had no chains, and used reims plaited into a stout 'rope'; hence *trek-touw*, or pulling-rope.
Tsessebe, an antelope, one of the hartebeeste family (*Damaliscus lunatus;* Dutch, bastard hartebeeste). Height, 48 in.; weight. 300 lbs.; horns, 15 in.
Tsetse Fly, a grey fly, little larger than the common house fly, whose bite is fatal to domesticated animals.
Twiggle, little people's word for the excited movement of a small dog's tail, believed to be a combination of wriggle and twiddle.

Umfaan (N), a boy.
Umganaam (N), my friend.
Umlungu (N), the native word to describe a white man.

Veld (*pro.* felt) (D), the open or unoccupied country; uncultivated or grazing land.
Vlei (*pro.* flay) (D), a small, shallow lake, a swamp, a depression intermittently damp, a water meadow.
Voorlooper (D) (*lit.* front walker), the leader, the boy who leads the front oxen; the *pat'-intambu* (Zulu for 'take the reim').
Voorslag (*pro.* foor-slaach) (D) (*lit.* front lash or skin), the strip of buck hide which forms the fine end of a whip-lash.

Waterbuck (*Cobus ellipsiprymnus;* Dutch, *kring-gat*). Height, 48 in.; weight, 350 lbs.; horns, males only, 36 in.

Wildebeeste (*pro.* vill-de-beast) (D) (*lit.* wild cattle), the brindled gnu, blue wildebeeste (*Connochaetes taurinus*). Height, 4 ft. 6 in.; weight, 400 lbs.; horns, 30 in.

Wild Dog, the 'Cape hunting dog' (*Lycaon pictus*).

Wooden Orange, fruit of the klapper (a species of *Strychnos*).

Wolf, the usual name for the hyena, derived from *tijger-wolf*, the pure Dutch name for the spotted hyena.

Yokeskey, the wooden slat which, coupled by nekstrops, holds the yoke in place.

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