The Young Yagers
A Narrative of Hunting Adventures in Southern Africa

MAYNE REID

A
PUBLIC DOMAIN
BOOK

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Young Yagers, by Mayne Reid

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

Title: The Young Yagers
A Narrative of Hunting Adventures in Southern Africa

Author: Mayne Reid

Illustrator: William Harvey

Release Date: December 15, 2010 [EBook #34668]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YOUNG YAGERS ***

Produced by Nick Hodson of London, England

Captain Mayne Reid

"The Young Yagers"

"A Narrative of Hunting Adventures in Southern Africa"

Chapter One.

The Camp of the Young Yägers.

Near the confluence of the two great rivers of Southern Africa—the *Yellow* and *Orange*—behold the camp of the "young yägers!"

It stands upon the southern bank of the latter stream, in a grove of Babylonian willows, whose silvery foliage, drooping gracefully to the water's edge, fringes both shores of the noble river as far as the eye can reach.

A tree of rare beauty is this *Salix Babylonica*—in gracefulness of form scarce surpassed even by the palms, the "princes of the forest." In our land, as we look upon it, a tinge of sadness steals over our reflections. We have grown to regard it as the emblem of sorrow. We have named it the "weeping willow," and draped the tomb with its soft pale fronds, as with a winding-sheet of silver.

Far different are the feelings inspired by the sight of this beautiful tree amid the *karoos* of Southern Africa. That is a land where springs and streams are "few and far between;" and the *weeping* willow—sure sign of the presence of water—is no longer the emblem of sorrow, but the symbol of joy.

Joy reigns in the camp under its shade by the banks of the noble Orange River, as is proved by the continuous peals of laughter that ring clear and loud upon the air, and echo from the opposite shores of the stream.

Who are they that laugh so loudly and cheerfully? *The young yägers*.

And who are the young yägers?

Let us approach their camp and see for ourselves. It is night, but the blaze of the camp-fire will enable us to distinguish all of them, as they are all seated around it. By its light we can take their portraits.

There are six of them—a full "set of six," and not one appears to be yet twenty years of age. They are all boys between the ages of ten and twenty—though two or three of them, and, maybe, more than that number, think themselves quite men.

Three of the party you will recognise at a glance as old acquaintances. They are no other than Hans, Hendrik, and Jan, our *ci-devant* "Bush-boys."

It is several years since we saw them last, and they have grown a good deal since then; but none of them has yet reached the full stature of manhood. Though no longer "Bush-boys," they are yet only boys; and Jan, who used to be called "little Jan," still merits and receives that distinctive appellation. It would stretch Jan to his utmost to square off against a four-foot measuring-stick; and he could only manage it by standing upon the very tips of his toes.

Hans has grown taller, but, perhaps, thinner and paler. For two years he has been at college, where he has been very busy with his books, and has greatly distinguished himself by carrying off the first prizes in everything. Upon Hendrik there is a decided change. He has outgrown his elder brother both in length and breadth, and comes very near looking like a full-grown man. He is yet but eighteen years old, straight as a rush, with a decided military air and gait. The last is not to be wondered at, as Hendrik has now been a cornet in the Cape Mounted Rifles for more than a year, and still holds that commission, as may be learnt by looking at his forage-cap, with its

golden embroidery over the peak. So much for our old acquaintances the "Bush-boys!"

But who are the other three that share with them the circle of the camp-fire? Who are their companions? for they are evidently on terms of companionship, and friendship too. Who are they? A word or two will tell that. They are the *Van Wyks*. The three sons of Diedrik Van Wyk.

And who, then, is Diedrik Van Wyk? That must also be explained. Diedrik is a very rich boor—a "vee-boor"—who every night shuts up within his spacious *kraals* more than three thousand horses and horned cattle, with five times that number of sheep and goats! In fact, Diedrik Van Wyk is accounted the richest vee-boor, or grazier, in all the Graaf Reinet.

Now the broad *plaatz*, or farm, of Diedrik Van Wyk lies contiguous to that of our old acquaintance, Hendrik Von Bloom; and it so chances that Hendrik and Diedrik are fast friends and inseparable companions. They see each other once a-day, at the least. Every evening Hendrik rides over to the "kraal" of Diedrik, or Diedrik to that of Hendrik, to enjoy a smoke together out of their ponderous pipes of meerschaum, or a "zoopje" of *brandewyn* distilled from their own peaches. They are, in fact, a pair of regular old comrades,—for Van Wyk in early life has seen military service as well as Von Bloom, —and, like all old soldiers, they love to repeat their camp stories, and "fight their battles o'er again."

Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered at, that the children of both should be intimate acquaintances. But, in addition to the friendship of their fathers, there is a tie of relationship between the two families,—the two mothers were cousins,—so that the children are what is usually termed second cousins,—a very interesting sort of affinity. And it is not an unlikely

thing that the relationship between the families of Von Bloom and his friend Van Wyk may one day become still closer and more interesting; for the former has for his daughter, as all the world knows, the beautiful flaxen-haired cherry-cheeked Trüey, while the latter is the father of the pretty brunette Wilhelmina—also an only daughter. Now there chance to be three boys in each family; and though both boys and girls are by far too young to think of getting married yet, there are suspicions abroad that the families of Von Bloom and Van Wyk will, at no very distant day, be connected by a double marriage—which would not be displeasing to either of the old comrades, Hendrik and Diedrik.

I have said there are three boys in each family. You already know the Von Blooms, Hans, Hendrik, and Jan. Allow me to introduce you to the Van Wyks. Their names are Willem, Arend, and Klaas.

Willem is the eldest, and, though not yet eighteen, is quite a man in size. Willem is, in fact, a boy of very large dimensions, so large that he has received the *sobriquet* of "Groot Willem" (Big William) therefrom. All his companions call him "Groot Willem." But he is strong in proportion to his size,—by far the strongest of the young yägers. He is by no means tidy in his dress. His clothes, consisting of a big jacket of homespun cloth, a check shirt, and an enormously wide pair of leathern trousers, hang loosely about him, and make him look larger than he really is. Even his broad-brimmed felt hat has a slouching set upon his head, and his *feldtschoenen* are a world too wide for his feet.

And just as easy as his dress is the disposition of the wearer. Though strong as a lion, and conscious of his strength, Groot Willem would not harm a fly, and his kindly and unselfish nature makes him a favourite with all.

Groot Willem is a mighty hunter, carries one of the largest of guns, a regular Dutch "roer," and also an enormous powder-horn, and pouch full of leaden bullets. An ordinary boy would stagger under such a load, but it is nothing to Groot Willem.

Now it may be remembered that Hendrik Von Bloom is also a "mighty hunter;" and I shall just whisper that a slight feeling of rivalry—I shall not call it jealousy, for they are good friends—exists between these two Nimrods. Hendrik's favourite gun is a rifle, while the roer of Groot Willem is a "smooth bore;" and between the merits of these two weapons camp-fire discussions are frequent and sharp. They are never carried beyond the limits of gentlemanly feeling, for loose and slovenly as is Groot Willem in outward appearance, he is a gentleman within.

Equally a gentleman, but of far more taste and style, is the second brother of the Van Wyks, Arend. In striking appearance and manly beauty he is quite a match for Hendrik Von Bloom himself, though in complexion and features there is no resemblance between them. Hendrik is fair, while Arend is very dark-skinned, with black eyes and hair. In fact, all the Van Wyks are of the complexion known as "brunette," for they belong to that section of the inhabitants of Holland sometimes distinguished as "Black Dutch." But upon Arend's fine features the hue sits well, and a handsomer youth is not to be seen in all the Graaf Reinet. Some whisper that this is the opinion of the beautiful Gertrude Von Bloom; but that can only be idle gossip, for the fair Trüey is yet but thirteen, and therefore can have no opinion on such a matter. Africa, however, is an early country, and there *might* be something in it.

Arend's costume is a tasty one, and becomes him well. It consists of a jacket of dressed antelope-skin,—the skin of the springbok; but this, besides being tastefully cut

and sewed, is very prettily embroidered with slashes of beautiful leopard-skin, while broad bands of the same extend along the outside seams of the trousers, from waist to ankle, giving to the whole dress, a very rich and striking effect. Arend's head-dress is similar to that worn by Hendrik Von Bloom, viz: a military forage-cap, upon the front of which are embroidered in gold bullion a bugle and some letters; and the explanation of that is, that Arend, like his second cousin, is a cornet in the Cape Rifles, and a dashing young soldier he is.

Now the portrait of Klaas in pen and ink.—Klaas is just Jan's age and Jan's exact height, but as to circumference therein exists a great difference. Jan, as you all know, is a thin, wiry little fellow, while Klaas, on the contrary, is broad, stout, and burly. In fact, so stout is he, that Jan repeated two and a half times would scarce equal him in diameter!

Both wear cloth roundabouts and trousers, and little broad-brimmed hats; both go to the same school; and, though there is a considerable difference between them in other respects, both are great boys for bird-catching and all that sort of thing. As they only carry small shot-guns, of course they do not aspire to killing antelopes or other large animals; but, small as their guns are, I pity the partridge, guinea-hen, or even bustard, that lets either of them crawl within reach of it.

Now it has been hinted that between the hunters Groot Willem and Hendrik there is a slight feeling of rivalry in regard to matters of *venerie*. A very similar feeling, spiced perhaps with a little bit of jealousy, has long existed between the bird-catchers, and sometimes leads to a little coolness between them, but that is usually of very short duration.

Hans and Arend have no envious feelings—either of one another or of anybody else. Hans is too much of a

philosopher: besides, the accomplishment in which he excels, the knowledge of natural history, is one in which he is without a rival. None of the rest make any pretensions to such knowledge; and the opinion of Hans on any matter of science is always regarded as a final judgment.

As to Arend, he is not particularly proud of any acquirement. Handsome, brave, and generous, he is nevertheless a right modest youth,—a boy to be beloved.

And now you know who are the *young yägers*.

Chapter Two.

Swartboy the Bushman and Congo the Kaffir.

I have said that the young yägers were encamped on the southern bank of the Great Orange River. What were they doing there? The spot they occupied was many a long day's journey from their home in the Graaf Reinet, and many a day's journey beyond the frontier of the Cape Colony. There were no settlements near. No white men ever wandered so far, except an occasional "smouse," or trader—a class of men who extend their bartering expeditions almost to the central parts of the African Continent. Sometimes, too, the "trek-boor," or nomade grazier, may have driven his flocks to this remote place, but for all that it could not be considered a settled country. It was still a wilderness.

And what were the young Von Blooms and Van Wyks doing in the wilderness? *Jäging* to be sure, and nothing else,—they were simply out on a hunting expedition.

It was an expedition that had been long talked of and planned. Since their grand hunt of the elephant, the "Bush-boys" had not followed any game. Hendrik had been with his regiment, and Hans and Jan busy with their respective studies. So with Arend Van Wyk as with Hendrik, and Klaas as with Jan. Groot Willem alone, from time to time, had been jäging springboks and such other game as is to be found among the settlements. But the present was a grand expedition intended to be carried far beyond the settled part of the colony—in fact, as far as they thought fit to go. The boys had received the full sanction of their parents, and had been fitted out in proper style—each having a good horse, and each three a large wagon to carry all their camp utensils, and serve as a tent to sleep in. Each wagon had its driver, and full

span of ten long-horned oxen; and these, with a small pack of rough-looking *buck-dogs*, might be seen in the camp—the oxen tied to the disselbooms of the wagons, and the dogs grouped in various attitudes around the fire. The horses were also fastened some to the wheels, and others to trees that grew near.

Two other objects in the camp are well worthy of a word or two; in fact, they are two individuals of very great importance to the expedition—as without them the wagons would be a troublesome affair. They are the drivers of these vehicles, and each is as proud of his whip-craft as Jehu could possibly have been of his.

In one of these drivers you will recognise an old acquaintance. The large head and high cheek-bones, with the flat spread nostrils between; the small oblique Mongolian eyes; the short curly wool-knots, planted sparsely over the broad skull; the yellow complexion; the thick "chunky" form, scarce four feet in height, and sparely clad in red flannel shirt and brown leathern "crackers;" with all these features and characters before your mind, you cannot fail to recognise an old favourite—the Bushman, *Swartboy*.

Swartboy it was; and, though several years have rolled over the Bushman's bare head since we saw him last, there is no visible change observable in Swartboy. The thinly scattered "kinks" of browny black wool still adorn Swartboy's crown and occiput, but they are no thinner—the same good-natured grin is observed upon his yellow face—he is still the same faithful servant—the same expert driver—the same useful fellow that he ever was. Swartboy, of course, drives the wagon of the Von Blooms.

Now the driver of the Van Wyk vehicle is about as unlike Swartboy as a bear to a bluebottle.

In the first place, he is above a third taller than the Bushman, standing over six feet,—not in his stockings, for he never wears stockings, but in sandals, which he does wear.

His complexion is darker than that of the Hottentot, although it is not black, but rather of a bronze colour; and the hair of his head, although somewhat "woolly," is longer than Swartboy's, and less inclined to *take root at both ends*! Where the line of Swartboy's nose is concave, that of the other is convex, and the nose itself almost aquiline. A dark piercing eye, a row of white teeth regularly set, lips of moderate thickness, a well-proportioned form, and erect attitude, give to this individual, an aspect of grandeur and gravity, both of which are in complete contrast with the comic picture presented by the short stout body and grinning countenance of the Bushman.

The costume of the tall man has something graceful about it. It consists of a tunic-like skirt suspended around the waist and hanging down to mid-thigh. There is something peculiar in this skirt. It has the appearance of a fringe or drapery of long white hairs, not plaited or woven, but hanging free and full. It is, in fact, the true costume of a savage; and consists simply of a number of antelope's tails—the white tails of the gnoo—strung together around the waist, and allowed to fall to their full length down the thighs. A sort of "tippet" of the same surrounding the shoulders, with copper rings on the ankles and armlets encircling the wrist, a bunch of ostrich-feathers waving from his crown, and a string of beads around his neck, complete the costume of Congo the Kaffir—for to that nation of romantic savages belonged the wagon-driver of the Van Wyks.

What! a Kaffir the driver of a wagon? you will exclaim. You can hardly realise the idea, that a Kaffir—a warrior, as you may deem him—could be employed in so menial

an office as wagon-driving! But it is even so. Many Kaffirs are so engaged in the Cape Colony,—indeed, many thousands; and in offices of a more degrading kind than driving a wagon team—which by the way, is far from being considered an unworthy employment in South Africa, so far that the sons of the wealthiest boors may often be seen mounted upon the voor-kist and handling the long bamboo whip with all the ability of a practised "jarvey." There is nothing odd about Congo the Kaffir being wagon-driver to the Van Wyks. He was a refugee, who had escaped from the despotic rule of the blood-stained monster Chaaka. Having in some way offended the tyrant, he had been compelled to flee for his life; and, after wandering southward, had found safety and protection among the colonists. Here he had learnt to make himself a useful member of civilised society, though a lingering regard for ancient habits influenced him still to retain the costume of his native country—the country of the Zooloo Kaffir.

SWARTBOY AND CONGO. Page 12.

No one could have blamed him for this; for, as he stood with his ample leopard-skin *kaross* suspended togalike from his shoulders, the silvery skirt draping gracefully to his knees, and his metal rings glittering under the blaze of the camp-fire, a noble picture he presented,—a savage but interesting picture. No one could blame Congo for wishing to display his fine form in so becoming a costume.

And no one did. No one was jealous of the handsome savage.

Yes,—one. There was one who did not regard him with the most amiable feelings. There was a rival who could not listen to Congo's praise with indifference. One who

liked not Congo. That rival was Swartboy. Talk of the rivalry that existed between the hunters Hendrik and Groot Willem, of that between Klaas and Jan. Put both into one, and it would still fall far short of the constant struggles for pre-eminence that were exhibited between the rival "whips," Swartboy the Bushman, and Congo the Kaffir.

Swartboy and Congo were the only servants with the expedition. Cooks or other attendants the young yägers had none. Not but that the rich landdrost,—for it must be remembered that Von Bloom was now chief magistrate of his district,—and the wealthy boor could have easily afforded a score of attendants upon each trio of hunters. But there were no attendants whatever beyond the two drivers. This was not on the score of economy. No such thing. It was simply because the old soldiers, Hendrik Von Bloom and Diedrik Van Wyk, were not the men to pamper their boys with too much luxury.

"If they must go a-hunting, let them rough it," said they; and so they started them off, giving them a brace of wagons to carry their *impedimenta*—and their spoils.

But the young yägers needed no attendance. Each knew how to wait upon himself. Even the youngest could skin an antelope and broil its ribs over the fire; and that was about all the cookery they would require till their return. The healthy stomach of the hunter supplies a sauce more appetising than either Harvey or Soyer could concoct with all their culinary skill.

Before arriving at their present camp the young yägers had been out several weeks; but, although they had hunted widely, they had not fallen in with any of the great game, such as giraffes, buffaloes, or elephants; and scarce an adventure worth talking about. A day or two before a grand discussion had taken place as to whether they should cross the great river, and proceed

farther northward, in search of the camelopard and elephant, or whether they should continue on the southern side, jäging springboks, hartebeests, and several other kinds of antelopes. This discussion ended in a resolve to continue on to the north, and remain there till their time was up,—the time of course being regulated by the duration of college and school vacations, and leave of absence from the "Corps."

Groot Willem had been the principal adviser of this course, and Hans his backer. The former was desirous of jäging the elephant, the buffalo, and giraffe,—a sport at which he was still but a novice, as he had never had a fair opportunity of hunting these mighty giants of the wood; while Hans was equally desirous of an exploring expedition that would bring him in contact with new forms of vegetable life.

Strange as it may appear, Arend threw in his vote for returning home; and, stranger still, that the hunter Hendrik should join him in this advice!

But almost every thing can be explained, if we examine it with care and patience; and the odd conduct of the two "cornets" was capable of explanation.

Hans slyly hinted that it was possible that a certain brunette, Wilhelmina, might have something to do with Hendrik's decision; but Groot Willem, who was a rough plain-spoken fellow, broadly alleged, that it was nothing else than Trüey that was carrying Arend's thoughts homeward; and the consequence of these hints and assertions was, that neither Hendrik nor Arend offered any further opposition to going northward among the elephants, but, blushing red to the very eyes, both were only too glad to give in their assent and terminate the discussion.

Northward then became the word:—northward for the

land of the tall giraffe and the mighty elephant!

The young yägers had arrived on the southern bank of the Orange River, opposite to a well-known “drift,” or crossing-place. There chanced to be a freshet in the river; and they had encamped, and were waiting until the water should fall and the ford become passable.

Chapter Three.

How Congo Crossed a "Drift."

Next morning, by break of day, our yägers were astir, and the first object upon which they rested their eyes was the river. To their joy it had fallen several feet, as they could tell by the water-mark upon the trees.

The streams of South Africa, like those of most tropical and sub-tropical countries, and especially where the district is mountainous, rise and fall with much greater rapidity than those of temperate climes. Their sudden rise is accounted for by the great quantity of water which in tropical storms is precipitated within a short period of time—the rain falling, not in light sparse drops, but thick and heavy, for several hours together, until the whole surface of the country is saturated, and every rivulet becomes a torrent.

Of these storms we have an exemplification in our summer thunder-showers—with their big rain-drops, when in a few minutes the gutter becomes a rivulet and the rut of the cartwheel a running stream. Fortunately these "sunshiny" showers are of short duration. They "last only half-an-hour," instead of many hours. Fancy one of them continuing for a whole day or a week! If such were to be the case, we should witness floods as sudden and terrible as those of the tropics.

The quick fall in the streams of South Africa is easily accounted for—the principal reason being that the clouds are their feeders, and not, as with us, springs and lakes. Tropic rivers rarely run from reservoirs; the abrupt cessation of the rain cuts off their supply, and the consequence is the sudden falling of their waters. Evaporation by a hot sun, and large absorption by the dry

earth, combine to produce this effect. Now the young yägers saw that the "Gareep" (such is the native name of the Orange River) had fallen many feet during the night; but they knew not whether it was yet fordable. Though the place was a "drift" used by Hottentots, Bechuanas, traders, and occasionally "trek-boors," yet none of the party knew any thing of its depth, now that the freshet was on. There were no marks to indicate the depth—no means by which they could ascertain it. They could not see the bottom, as the water was of a yellow-brown colour, in consequence of the flood. It might be three feet—it might be six—but as the current was very rapid, it would be a dangerous experiment to wade in and measure its depth in that way.

What were they to do then? They were impatient to effect a crossing. How were they to do so in safety?

Hendrik proposed that one of them should try the ford on horseback. If they could not wade it, they might swim over. He offered to go himself. Groot Willem, not to be outdone by Hendrik in daring, made a similar proposal. But Hans, who was the eldest of the party, and whose prudent counsels were usually regarded by all, gave his advice against this course. The experiment would be too perilous, he said. Should the water prove too deep, the horses would be compelled to swim, and with so rapid a current they might be carried far below the "drift,"—perhaps down to where the banks were high and steep. There they should not be able to climb out, and both horse and rider might perish.

Besides, urged Hans, even should a rider succeed by swimming to reach the opposite side in safety, the oxen and wagons could not get over in that way, and where would be the use of crossing without *them*? None whatever. Better, therefore, to wait a little longer until they should be certain that the river had subsided to its usual level. That they could ascertain by the water

ceasing to fall any further, and another day would decide the point. It would only be the loss of another day.

Hans's reasoning was good, and so was his counsel. Hendrik and Groot Willem acknowledged this, and agreed to act upon it; but for all that, Groot Willem, who was longing to get among the giraffes, buffaloes, and elephants, felt a strong desire to attempt the crossing; and Hendrik, too, was similarly inclined, from the sheer love of adventure—for Hendrik's fault was that of being over-courageous.

Both would have risked the river—even to swimming it—had it been practicable for the teams to have crossed, but as that was not believed possible, they agreed, though with rather a bad grace, to wait upon the water another day.

But, after all, they were not to wait a day,—scarcely an hour. In an hour from that time they had crossed the drift—wagons, oxen, and all—and were trekking over the plain on the opposite side!

What had led to their so suddenly changing their resolution? How had they ascertained that the drift was fordable? For a knowledge of that fact they were indebted to Congo the Kaffir.

While engaged in their discussion as to the depth of the river, the latter had been observed standing upon the bank and throwing large pebbles into the stream. Thinking it was merely some freak or superstition on the part of the savage, none of them had taken any notice of him, Swartboy excepted. The Bushman was watching the Kaffir, with glances that bespoke a keen interest in his movements.

At length a loud scornful laugh, from Swartboy, accompanying a series of rather rough phrases, directed

the attention of the young yägers upon the Kaffir.

“My footy, Congo! ole fool you! b’lieve you tell depth so? tink so, ole skellum? Ha! ha! ha! you bania groot ole humbug! Ha! ha! ha!”

The Kaffir took no notice of this rather insulting apostrophe, but continued to fling his pebbles as before; but the young yägers, who were also watching him, noticed that he was not throwing them carelessly, but in a peculiar manner, and their attention now became fixed upon him.

They saw that each time as the pebble parted from his fingers, he bent suddenly forward, with his ear close to the surface, and in this attitude appeared to listen to the “plunge” of the stone! When the sound died away, he would rise erect again, fling another pebble *farther out than the last*, and then crouch and listen as before?

“What’s the Kaffir about?” asked Hendrik of Groot Willem and Arend, who, being his masters, were more likely to know.

Neither could tell. Some Zooloo trick, no doubt; Congo knew many a one. But what he meant by his present demonstration neither could tell. Swartboy’s conjecture appeared to be correct, the Kaffir was *sounding the depth of the drift*.

“Hilloa, there! Congo!” cried Groot Willem. “What are ye after, old boy?”

“Congo find how deep drift be, baas Willem,” was the reply.

“Oh! you can’t tell that way; can you?”

The Kaffir made answer in the affirmative.

"Bah!" ejaculated Swartboy, jealous of the interest his rival was beginning to excite; "da's all nonsense; ole fool know noffin 't all 'bout it,—dat he don't."

The Kaffir still took no notice of Swartboy's gibes—though they no doubt nettled him a little—but kept on casting the pebbles, each one, as already stated, being flung so as to fall several feet beyond the one that preceded it. He continued at this, until the last pebble was seen to plunge within a yard or two of the opposite side of the current, here more than a hundred yards wide. Then raising himself erect, and turning his face to the young yägers, he said in firm but respectful tones—

"Mynheeren, you drift may cross—now."

All regarded him with incredulous glances.

"How deep think you it is?" inquired Hans. The Kaffir made answer by placing his hands upon his hips. It would reach so high.

"My footy!" exclaimed Swartboy, in derision. "It's twice dar depth. Do you want drown us, ole fool?"

"May drown *you*—nobody else!" quietly replied the Kaffir, at the same time measuring Swartboy with his eye, and curling his lip in derision of the Bushman's short stature.

The young yägers burst out into a loud laugh. Swartboy felt the sting, but for some moments was unable to retort.

At length he found words—

"All talk, you ole black, all talk! You make groot show,—you berry wise,—you want wagon sweep off,—you want drown da poor oxen,—you pretend so deep. If tink so, go wade da drift,—go wade yourself! Ha!"

Swartboy thought by this challenge he had put the finisher on the Kaffir. He believed that the latter would not dare to try the ford, in spite of his assertion about its depth. But Swartboy was doomed to disappointment and humiliation.

Scarcely had he uttered the sneering challenge when the Kaffir, having bent a glance upon the rest, and seeing, that they regarded him with looks of expectation, turned round and dashed down the bank to the edge of the water.

All saw that he was bent upon crossing. Several of them uttered cries of warning, and cautioned him to desist.

But the Zooloo spirit was roused, and the savage did not heed the warning cries. He did not hurry madly into the current, however; but set about the business with caution and design. They saw him stoop down by the edge of the water, and the next moment rise erect again, holding in his hands a large stone that could not have weighed much less than a hundredweight. This, to the astonishment of all, he raised upon the crown of his head, and, holding it in that position, marched boldly into the water!

All saw the object of his carrying the stone,—which was, of course, to enable him by its additional weight to stem the strong current! In this he was quite successful, for although the water at certain places rose quite to his waist, in less than five minutes he stood high and dry on the opposite bank.

A cheer greeted him, in which all but Swartboy joined, and another received him on his return; and then the oxen were inspanned, and the horses saddled and mounted, and wagons, oxen, dogs, horses, and yägers, all crossed safely over, and continued their route

northward.

Chapter Four.

A Brace of "Black Manes."

If the young yägers had met with but few adventures south of the Gareep, they were not long north of it before they fell in with one of sufficient interest to be chronicled. It occurred at their very first camp after crossing.

They had chosen for their camp the side of a "vley," in the midst of a wide plain, where there chanced to be both grass and water, though both of a rather indifferent kind. The plain was tolerably open, though here and there grew clumps of low bushes, and between these stood at intervals the dome-shaped houses of white ants —those of the *Termes mordax*—rising to the height of several feet above the surface.

They had just outspanned and permitted their oxen to wander upon the grass, when the voice of Swartboy was heard exclaiming—

"De leuw! de leuw!"

All looked where Swartboy pointed. There, sure enough, was a lion,—a large "schwart-fore-life," or *black-maned* one,—right out upon the plain, and beyond the place where the oxen were browsing.

There was a clump of "bosch" just behind the lion. Out of this he had come at sight of the oxen; and, having advanced a few yards, he had lain down among the grass, and was now watching the animals as a cat would a mouse, or a spider the unconscious fly.

They had scarcely set their eyes upon him when another

was seen issuing from the "bosch," and, with stealthy trot, running up to the side of her companion. *Her* companion, I say, because the second was a lioness, as the absence of a mane and the tiger-like form testified. She was scarcely inferior in size to the lion, and not a bit less fierce and dangerous in any encounter she might chance to fall in with.

Having joined the lion, she squatted beside him; and both now sat upon their tails, like two gigantic cats, with full front towards the camp, and evidently eyeing the oxen with hungry looks.

Horses, hunters, drivers, and dogs, were all in sight; but what cared the lions for that? The tempting prey was before them, and they evidently meditated an attack,—if not just then, whenever the opportunity offered. Most certainly they contemplated supping either upon ox-beef or horse-flesh.

Now these were the first lions that had been encountered upon the expedition. "Spoor" had been seen several times, and the terrible roar had been heard once or twice around the night-camp; but the "king of beasts" now appeared for the first time *in propria persona*, with his queen along with him, and of course his presence was productive of no small excitement in the yäger camp. It must not be denied that this excitement partook largely of the nature of a "panic."

The first fear of the hunters was for their own skins, and in this both Bushman and Kaffir equally shared. After a time, however, this feeling subsided. The lions would not attack the camp. They do so only on very rare occasions. It was the camp *animals* they were after, and so long as these were present, they would not spring upon their owners. So far there was no danger, and our yägers recovered their self-possession.

But it would not do to let the carnivorous brutes destroy their oxen,—that would not do. Something must be done to secure them. A kraal must be made at once, and the animals driven into it. The lions lay quietly on the plain, though still in a menacing attitude. But they were a good way off—full five hundred yards—and were not likely to attack the oxen so close to the camp. The huge wagons —strange sight to them—no doubt had the effect of restraining them for the present. They either waited until the oxen should browse nearer, or till night would enable them to approach the latter unobserved.

As soon, then, as it was perceived that they were not bent upon an immediate attack, Groot Willem and Hendrik mounted their horses, rode cautiously out beyond the oxen, and quietly drove the latter to the other side of the vley. There they were herded by Klaas and Jan; while all the rest, Swartboy and Congo included, went to work with axe and bill-hook in the nearest thicket of "wait-a-bit" thorns. In less than half-an-hour a sufficient number of bushes were cut to form, with the help of the wagons, a strong kraal; and inside this, both horses and oxen were driven,—the former made fast to the wheel-spokes, while the latter were clumped up loosely within the enclosure.

The hunters now felt secure. They had kindled a large fire on each side of the kraal, though they knew that this will not always keep lions off. But they trusted to their guns; and as they would sleep inside the canvass tents of their wagons, closing both "voor" and "achter-claps," they had nothing to fear. It would be a hungry lion, indeed, that would have attempted to break the strong kraal they had made; and no lion, however hungry, would ever think of charging into a wagon.

Having made all secure, therefore, they seated themselves around one of their fires, and set about cooking their dinner, or rather dinner-supper, for it was to

include both meals. Their journey prevented them from dining earlier.

They chanced to have little else than *biltong*, or dried meat, to cook. The long wait by the drift had consumed their stock of fine springbok venison, which they had laid in some days before. It is true they had venison in camp, but it was that of the "reitbok," or reed-buck—so called from its habit of frequenting the long reeds by the banks of rivers; and it was while they were journeying through a belt of these after crossing the drift, that this one had been shot by Hendrik. A small antelope the reitbok is—the *Antilope eleotragus* of naturalists. It stands less than three feet in height, formed much like the springbok, but with a rougher coat of hair, of an ashy grey colour, and silver white underneath. Its horns, however, are not lyrate, as in the springbok, but rise first in the plane of its forehead, and then curve boldly forward to the tips. They are about twelve inches in length, wrinkled at the base, prominently ringed in the middle, and smooth near the points. The reitbok, as its name implies, inhabits the reedy bottoms by the margins of streams and rivers, and its food consists of plants growing in humid and marshy situations. Hence its flesh is inferior to that of most South African antelopes, and it was not a favourite with the young yägers. Although it had been brought along, they preferred even the dry biltong, and it was left to the less delicate appetites of Swartboy and Congo.

Now the hunters, Hendrik and Groot Willem, would have gone out to look for a springbok, or some other game, but the presence of the lions prevented that; and so the boys were obliged to content themselves with a slice of the biltong; and each, having cut him a short stick for a spit, set about broiling his piece over the coals.

During all this time the lion and lioness kept the position they had taken on the plain, scarce once having changed

their attitude. They were waiting patiently the approach of night.

Groot Willem and Hendrik had both advised making an attack upon them; but in this case they again gave way to the more prudent counsel of Hans, strengthened, perhaps, by his reminding them of the instructions they had received from both their fathers at setting out. These instructions were,—never to attack a lion without good reason for so doing, but always to give the "ole leuw" a wide berth when it was possible to do so. It is well known that the lion will rarely attack man when not first assailed; and therefore the advice given to the young yägers was sound and prudent? and they followed it.

It wanted yet an hour or two of sunset. The lions still sat squatted on the grass, closely observed by the hunters.

All at once the eyes of the latter became directed upon a new object. Slowly approaching over the distant plain, appeared two strange animals, similar in form, and nearly so in size and colour. Each was about the size of an ass, and not unlike one in colour,—especially that variety of the ass which is of a buff or fulvous tint. Their forms, however, were more graceful than that of the ass, though they were far from being light or slender. On the contrary, they were of a full, round, bold outline. They were singularly marked about the head and face. The ground colour of these parts was white, but four dark bands were so disposed over them as to give the animals the appearance of wearing a headstall of black leather. The first of these bands descended in a streak down the forehead; another passed through the eyes to the corners of the mouth; a third embraced the nose; while a fourth ran from the base of the ears passing under the throat—a regular throat-strap—thus completing the resemblance to the stall-halter.

A reversed mane, a dark list down the back, and a long black bushy tail reaching to the ground, were also characters to be observed. But what rendered these animals easily to be distinguished from all others was the splendid pair of horns which each carried. These horns were straight, slender, pointing backwards almost horizontally. They were regularly ringed till within a few inches of their tips, which were as sharp as steel spits. In both they were of a deep jet colour, shining like ebony, and full three feet in length. But what was rather singular, the horns of the smaller animal—for there was some difference in their size—were longer than those of the larger one! The former was the female, the latter the male, therefore the horns of the female were more developed than those of the male—an anomaly among animals of the antelope tribe, for antelopes they were. The young yägers had no difficulty in distinguishing their kind. At the first glance they all recognised the beautiful "oryx," one of the loveliest animals of Africa, one of the fairest creatures in the world.

Chapter Five.

Lions Stalking the Gemsbok.

On seeing the "gemsbok"—for by such name is the oryx known to the Cape colonists—the first thought of the young yägers was how they should kill or capture one of them. Beautiful as these creatures looked upon the plain, our hunters would have fancied them better on the spit—for they well knew that the venison of the gemsbok is delicious eating—not surpassed by that of any other antelope, the eland perhaps excepted.

The first thought of the yägers, then, was a steak of gemsbok venison for dinner. It might throw their dinner a little later, but it would be so much of a better one than dry biltong, that they were willing to wait.

The slices of jerked meat, already half-broiled, were at once put aside, and guns were grasped in the place of roasting-sticks.

What was the best course to be pursued? That was the next question.

It would scarce be possible to stalk the gemsboks. They are among the most wary of antelopes. They rarely approach near any cover that might shelter an enemy; and when alarmed they strike off in a straight line, and make for the open desert plains—their natural home. To stalk them, is a most difficult thing, and rarely attempted by the hunter. They can only be captured by a swift horse, and after a severe chase. Even from the swiftest horse they often make their escape; for in the first burst of a mile or two they can run like the wind. A good horse, however, has more "bottom" than they, and if well managed will in time overtake them.

The hunters having seized their guns, next thought of their horses. Should they saddle and ride out after the gemsboks? That would have been their course at once, and without further consideration, had they not observed that the antelopes were coming directly towards them. If they continued in the same course much longer, they, the yägers, need not stir from the spot. The game would approach within shot and save them the trouble of a chase. This would be very agreeable, as the hunters were hungry, and their horses tired after a hard day's journeying.

There was some probability that the gemsboks would give them the chance they wished for. The camp was well hidden among the bushes. The smoke of the fire alone showed its situation, but the antelopes might not perceive this, or if so, might not regard it as a thing to be feared. Besides, as Groot Willem and Hendrik observed, the vley was close by, and both believed the antelopes were on their way to the water. The student Hans, however, corrected them in this belief, by telling them that the oryx is an animal *that never drinks*,—that it is quite independent of springs, streams, or vleys,—one of those creatures which Nature has formed to dwell in the desert, where no water exists! It was not likely then that the gemsboks were coming to the vley. The hunters need make no calculation on that.

At all events, they were certainly approaching the camp. They were heading straight for it, and were already less than a thousand yards from the spot. There would scare be time to saddle before they should come within shot, or else start off alarmed at the appearance of the smoke. The hunters, therefore, gave up all thoughts of a chase; and, crouching forward to the outer edge of the grove, they knelt down behind the bushes to await the approach of the antelopes.

The latter still kept steadily on, apparently unconscious of danger. Surely they had not yet perceived the smoke, else they would have shown symptoms either of curiosity or alarm! The wind was blowing in the same direction in which they marched, or their keen sense of smell would have warned them of the dangerous proximity of the hunter's camp. But it did not; and they continued with slow but unaltered pace to approach the spot, where no less than six dark muzzles—a full battery of small arms—were waiting to give them a volley.

It was not the destiny of either of the gemsboks to die by a leaden bullet. Death, sudden and violent awaited them, though not from the hand of man. It was to come from a different quarter.

As the yägers lay watching the approach of the antelopes, their eyes had wandered for a moment from the lions; but a movement on the part of these again drew attention to them. Up to a certain period they had remained in an upright attitude, squatted upon their tails, but all at once they were observed to crouch flat down, as if to conceal themselves under the grass, while their heads were turned in a new direction. They were turned towards the gemsboks. They had caught sight of the latter as they approached over the plain; and it was evident that they contemplated an attack upon them.

Now if the antelopes continued on in the same course, it would carry them quite clear of the lions, so that the latter would have no advantage. A gemsbok can soon scour off from a lion, as the latter is at best but a poor runner, and secures his prey by a sudden spring or two, or else not at all. Unless, therefore, the lions could obtain the advantage of getting within bounding distance of the antelopes without being seen by them, their chances of making a capture would be poor enough.

They knew this, and to effect that purpose—that of

getting near—now appeared to be their design. The lion was observed to crawl off from the spot in a direction that would enable him to get upon the path of the gemsboks, between them and the camp. By a series of manoeuvres,—now crawling flat along the grass, like a cat after a partridge; now pausing behind a bush or an ant-heap to survey the game; then trotting lightly on to the next,—he at length reached a large ant-hill that stood right by the path in which the antelopes were advancing. He seemed to be satisfied of this, for he stopped here and placed himself close in to the base of the hill, so that only a small portion of his head projected on the side towards the game. His whole body, however, and every movement he made, were visible to the hunters from *their* ambush in the grove.

But where was the lioness? She was no longer by the *bosch* where first seen. Where had she gone? Not with the lion? No. On the contrary, she had gone in a direction nearly opposite to that taken by him. Their eyes had been busy with his movements, and they had not noticed hers. Now, however, that the lion had come to a halt, they looked abroad for his mate, and saw her far out upon the plain. They saw that she was progressing in the same way the lion had done,—now crawling among the grass, now trotting swiftly from bush to bush, and pausing a moment behind each, but evidently bending her course so as to arrive *in the rear* of the antelopes!

The "strategy" of the lions was now perceived. They had evidently planned it before separating. The lion was to place himself in ambush upon the path, while the lioness swept round to the rear and forced the antelopes forward; or should the latter become alarmed and retreat, the lion could then show himself in pursuit, and run the frightened game back into the clutches of the lioness.

The thing was well calculated, and although it was likely

to rob the hunters of their game, they had grown so interested in the movements of the carnivora and their intended victims, that they thought only of watching the spectacle to its end.

The ambuscade was well planned, and in a few minutes its success was no longer doubtful. The gemsboks advanced steadily towards the ant-hill, occasionally switching about their black bushy tails; but that was to rid their flanks of the flies, and not from any apprehension of danger.

The lioness had completed the great *détour* she had made, and was now seen crouching after them, though still far to the rear.

LIONS STALKING THE GEMSBOK. Page 34.

As the antelopes drew near the ant-hill, the lion was observed to draw back his head until it was nearly concealed under his black shaggy mane. They could not possibly have seen him where he lay, nor he them, and he now appeared to trust to his ears to inform him of their approach.

He waited till both were opposite, and broadside toward him, at the distance of less than twenty paces from the hill. Then his tail was seen to vibrate with one or two quick jerks, his head shot suddenly forth, his body spread out apparently to twice its natural size, and the next moment he rose like a bird into the air!

With one bound he cleared the wide space that separated him from the nearest of the gemsboks, alighting on the hind-quarters of the terrified animal. A single blow of his powerful paw brought the antelope on its haunches; and another, delivered almost at the same

instant, stretched its body lifeless on the plain!

Without looking after the other, or seeming to care further about it, the lion sprang upon the body of his victim, and, clutching its throat between his jaws, commenced drinking its warm blood.

It was the bull gemsbok which the lion had pulled down, as this was the one that happened to be nearest the hill.

As the lion sprang upon her companion, the cow of course started with affright, and all supposed they would see her the next moment scouring off over the plains. To their astonishment she did no such thing. Such is not the nature of the noble oryx. On the contrary, as soon as she recovered from the first moments of alarm, she wheeled round towards the enemy; and, lowering her head to the very ground, so that her long horns projected horizontally in front, she rushed with all her strength upon the lion! The latter, in full enjoyment of his red draught, saw nothing of this manoeuvre. The first intimation he had of it was to feel a pair of spears pierced right through his ribs, and it is not likely he felt much more.

For some moments a confused struggling was observed, in which both lion and oryx seemed to take part; but the attitudes of both appeared so odd, and changed so rapidly, that the spectators could not tell in what manner they were combating. The roar of the lion however had ceased, and was now succeeded by the more shrill tones of the lioness, who, bounding forward upon the spot, mixed at once in the mêlée.

A single touch of her claws brought the cow oryx to the earth, and ended the strife; and the lioness now stood over the victims screaming her note of triumph.

Was it a note of triumph? There was something odd in its tone—something singular in the movements of the

creature that uttered it—something strange about the whole thing. Why was the lion silent? His roar had ceased, and he lay embracing the carcass of the bull gemsbok, and apparently drinking its blood. Yet he was perfectly without motion, not a muscle could be seen to move, not a quiver of his tawny hide betokened that he breathed or lived! Was he dead?

Chapter Six.

An Angry Lioness.

Certainly there was something mysterious about the matter. The lion still kept his position; no motion could be observed, no sound escaped him; whereas the lioness uttered incessantly her shrill growling, at the same time pacing to and fro, round and round, the confused heap of bodies! She made no attempt to feed, though her prey lay bleeding before her. Surely her lord was not the cause of her abstinence! Did he insist upon having both the carcasses to himself?

Sometimes it is so. Sometimes an old male plays the selfish tyrant, and keeps the younger and weaker members of his family off, till he has gorged himself, permitting them to make a "second table" of his leavings.

In the present instance this was not likely. There were two whole carcasses,—large fat carcasses,—enough for both. Besides, the lioness was evidently the lion's own mate—his wife. It was scarcely probable he would treat her so. Among human beings instances of such selfishness,—such a gross want of gallantry, are, I regret to say, by no means rare; but the young yägers could not believe the lion guilty of such shabby conduct—the lion, Buffon's type of nobility! No such thing. But how was it? The lioness still growled and paced about, ever and anon stooping near the head of her partner, which was not visible from the camp, and placing her snout in contact with his as if kissing him. Still there was no sign of any response, no motion on his part; and, after watching for

a good while without perceiving any, the hunters at length became satisfied that the lion was dead.

He was dead—as Julius Caesar or a door-nail, and so, too, was the brace of gemsboks. The lioness was the only living thing left from that sanguinary conflict!

As soon as the hunters became satisfied of this, they began to deliberate among themselves what was best to be done. They wished to get possession of the venison, but there was no hope of their being able to do so, as long as the lioness remained upon the ground.

To have attempted to drive her off at that moment would have been a most perilous undertaking. She was evidently excited to madness, and would have charged upon any creature that had shown itself in her neighbourhood. The frenzied manner in which she paced about, and lashed her sides with her tail, her fierce and determined look, and deep angry growl, all told the furious rage she was in. There was menace in her every movement. The hunters saw this, and prudently withdrew themselves—so as to be near the wagons in case she might come that way.

They thought that by waiting awhile she would go off, and then they could drag the antelopes up to camp.

But after waiting a good while, they observed no change in the conduct of the fierce brute. She still paced around as before, and abstained from touching the carcasses. As one of the yägers observed, she continued to “play the dog in the manger,”—would neither eat herself, nor suffer anybody else to eat.

This remark, which was made by little Jan, elicited a

round of laughter that sounded in strange contrast with the melancholy howl of the lioness, which still continued to terrify the animals of the camp. Even the dogs cowered among the wheels of the wagons, or kept close to the heels of their masters. It is true that many of these faithful brutes, had they been set on, would have manfully battled with the lioness, big as she was. But the young yägers well knew that dogs before the paws of an angry lion are like mice under the claws of a cat. They did not think of setting them on, unless they had themselves made an attack; and that, the advice of Hans, coupled with the counsels they had received before leaving home, prevented them from doing. They had no intention of meddling with the lioness; and hoped she would soon retire, and leave the game, or part of it, on the ground.

After waiting a long while, and seeing that the lioness showed no symptoms of leaving the spot, they despaired of dining on oryx venison, and once more set to broiling their slices of biltong.

They had not yet commenced eating, when they perceived a new arrival upon the scene of the late struggle. Half-a-dozen hyenas appeared upon the ground; and although these had not yet touched the carcasses, but were standing a little way off—through fear of the lioness—their hungry looks told plainly what their intention was in coming there.

Now the presence of these hideous brutes was a new point for consideration. If the lioness should allow them to begin their feast upon the antelopes, in a very short while scarce a morsel of either would remain. The yägers, although they had resigned all hope of dining on the

gemsbok venison, nevertheless looked forward to making their supper of it; but if the hyenas were permitted to step in, they would be disappointed.

How were the brutes to be kept off?

To drive them off would be just as perilous an undertaking as to drive off the lioness herself.

Once more Groot Willem and Hendrik talked about attacking the latter; but, as before, were opposed by Hans, who had to use all his influence with his companions before he could induce them to abandon the rash project.

At this moment an unexpected proposal put an end to their discussion.

The proposal came from Congo the Kaffir. It was neither less nor more than that he himself should go forth and do battle with the lioness!

"What! alone?"

"Alone."

"You are mad, Congo. You would be torn to pieces!"

"No fear, Mynheeren. Congo the leuw kill without getting scratch. You see, young masters."

"What! without arms? without a gun?"

"Congo not know how use one," replied the Kaffir, "you see how I do 'im," he continued. "All Congo ask you not come in way. Young masters, here stay and Congo leave

to himself. No danger. Mynheeren, Congo fear if go yonder help him—leuw very mad. Congo not care for that—so much mad, so much better—leuw no run away."

"But what do you intend to do, Congo?"

"Mynheeren soon all see—see how Congo kill lion."

The hunters were disposed to look upon the Kaffir as about to make a reckless exposure of his life. Swartboy would have treated the proposal as a boast, and laughed thereat, but Swartboy remembered the humiliation he had had in the morning on account of similar conduct; and though he feared to be farther outstripped in hunter-craft by his rival, he had the prudence upon this occasion to conceal his envy. He bit his thick lips, and remained silent. Some of the boys, and especially Hans, would have dissuaded Congo from his purpose; but Groot Willem was inclined to let him have his way. Groot Willem knew the Kaffir better than any of the others. He knew, moreover, that savage as he was, he was not going to act any foolish part for the mere sake of braggadocio. He could be trusted. So said Groot Willem.

This argument, combined with a desire to eat gemsbok venison for supper, had its effect. Arend and Hans gave in.

Congo had full permission to battle with the lioness.

Chapter Seven.

How Congo the Kaffir killed a Lioness.

Congo had now become an object of as great interest as in the morning. Greater in fact, for the new danger he was about to undergo—a combat with an enraged lioness—was accounted still greater than that of fording the Gareep, and the interest was in proportion. With eager eyes the young yägers stood watching him as he prepared himself for the encounter.

He was but a short while in getting ready. He was seen to enter the Van Wyk wagon, and in less than three minutes come out again fully armed and equipped. The lioness would not have long to wait for her assailant.

The equipment of the Kaffir must needs be described.

It was simple enough, though odd to a stranger's eye. It was neither more nor less than the equipment of a Zooloo warrior.

In his right hand he held a bunch of *assegais*,—in all six of them.

What is an "assegai?"

It is a straight lance or spear, though not to be used as one. It is smaller than either of these weapons, shorter and more slender in the shaft, but like them armed with an iron head of arrow shape. In battle it is not retained in the hand, but flung at the enemy, often from a considerable distance. It is, in short, a "javelin," or

"dart,"—such as was used in Europe before fire-arms became known, and such as at present forms the war weapon of all the savage tribes of Southern Africa, but especially those of the Kaffir nations. And well know they how to project this dangerous missile. At the distance of a hundred yards they will send it with a force as great, and an aim as unerring, as either bullet or arrow! The assegai is flung by a single arm.

Of these javelins Congo carried six, spanning their slender shafts with his long muscular fingers.

The assegais were not the oddest part of his equipment. That was a remarkable thing which he bore on his left arm. It was of oval form, full six feet in length by about three in width, concave on the side towards his body, and equally convex on the opposite. More than any thing else did it resemble a small boat or canoe made of skins stretched over a framework of wood, and of such materials was it constructed. It was, in fact, a shield,—a Zooloo shield—though of somewhat larger dimensions than those used in war. Notwithstanding its great size it was far from clumsy, but light, tight, and firm,—so much so that arrow, assegai, or bullet, striking it upon the convex side, would have glanced off as from a plate of steel.

A pair of strong bands fastened inside along the bottom enabled the wearer to move it about at will; and placed upright, with its lower end resting upon the ground, it would have sheltered the body of the tallest man. It sheltered that of Congo, and Congo was no dwarf.

Without another word he walked out, the huge *carapace* on his left arm, five of the assegais clutched in his left hand, while one that he had chosen for the first throw he

held in his right. This one was grasped near the middle, and carried upon the balance.

No change had taken place in the situation of affairs out upon the plain. In fact, there had not been much time for any. Scarce five minutes had elapsed from the time the Kaffir stated his purpose, until he went forth to execute it. The lioness was still roaming about, uttering her frightful screams. The hyenas were still there. The moment the Kaffir was seen approaching, the cowardly hyenas fled with a howl, and soon disappeared under the bosch.

Far different with the lioness. She seemed to pay no regard to the approach of the hunter. She neither turned her head, nor looked in the direction he was coming. Her whole attention was absorbed by the mass of bodies upon the plain. She yelled her savage notes as she regarded them. She was no doubt lamenting the fate of her grim and swarthy partner, that lay dead before her eyes. At all events, she did not seem to notice the hunter, until he had got within twenty paces of the spot!

At that distance the Kaffir halted, rested his huge shield upon the ground—still holding it erect—poised the assegai a moment in his right hand, and then sent it whizzing through the air.

It pierced the side of the tawny brute, and hung quivering between her ribs. Only for a moment. The fierce animal doubled round upon herself, caught the shaft in her teeth, and broke it off as if it had been a straw!

The blade of the assegai still remained in the flesh, but the lioness waited no longer. She had now perceived her enemy; and, uttering a vengeful scream, she sprang

towards him. With one tremendous bound she cleared three-fourths of the space that lay between them, and a second would have carried her upon the shoulders of the Kaffir; but the latter was prepared to receive her, and, as she rose to her second leap, he disappeared suddenly from the scene! As if by magic he had vanished; and had not the boys been watching his every movement, they would have been at a loss to know what had become of him. But they knew that under that oval convex form, whose edges rested upon the earth, lay Congo the Kaffir. There lay he, like a tortoise in its shell, clutching the straps with all his might, and pressing his carapace firmly against the ground!

The lioness was more astonished than the spectators. At the second leap she pitched right down upon the shield, but the drum-like noise made by her weight, and the hard firm substance encountered by her claws, quite disconcerted her, and springing aside she stood gazing at the odd object with looks of alarm!

She stood but for a moment, and then, uttering a savage growl of disappointment, turned tail upon it, and trotted off!

This growl guided Congo. The shield was raised from the ground—only on one side, and but a very little way at first—just enough to enable the hunter to see the stern of the retreating lioness.

Then the Kaffir rose quickly to his feet, and, holding the shield erect, prepared for the casting of a second assegai.

This was quickly thrown and pierced the animal in the flank, where shaft and all remained sticking in the flesh.

The lioness turned with redoubled fury, once more charged upon her assailant, and, as before, was met by the hard convex surface of the shield. This time she did not immediately retreat, but stood menacing the strange object, striking it with her clawed hoofs, and endeavouring to turn it over.

Now was the moment of peril for Congo. Had the lioness succeeded in making a capsize, it would have been all up with him, poor fellow! But he knew the danger, and with one hand clutching the leathern straps, and the other bearing upon the edge of the frame, he was able to hold firm and close,—closer even "than a barnacle to a ship's copper."

After venting her rage in several impotent attempts to break or overturn the carapace, the lioness at length went growling away towards her former position.

Her growls, as before, guided the actions of Congo. He was soon upon his feet, another assegai whistled through the air, and pierced through the neck of the lioness.

But, as before, the wound was not fatal, and the animal, now enraged to a frenzy, charged once more upon her assailant. So rapid was her advance that it was with great difficulty Congo got under cover. A moment later, and his ruse would have failed, for the claws of the lion rattled upon the shield as it descended.

He succeeded, however, in planting himself firmly, and was once more safe under the thick buffalo hide. The lioness now howled with disappointed rage; and after spending some minutes in fruitless endeavours to upset the shield, she once more desisted. This time, however,

instead of going away, the angry brute kept pacing round and round, and at length *lay down within three feet of the spot*. Congo was besieged!

The boys saw at a glance that Congo was a captive. The look of the lioness told them this. Though she was several hundred yards off, they could see that she wore an air of determination, and was not likely to depart from the spot without having her revenge. There could be no question about it,—the Kaffir was in "a scrape."

Should the lioness remain, how was he to get out of it? He could not escape by any means. To raise the shield would be to tempt the fierce brute upon him. Nothing could be plainer than that. The boys shouted aloud to warn him of his danger. They feared that he might not be aware of the close proximity of his enemy.

Notwithstanding the danger there was something ludicrous in the situation in which the Kaffir was placed; and the young hunters, though anxious about the result, could scarce keep from laughter, as they looked forth upon the plain.

There lay the lioness within three feet of the shield, regarding it with fixed and glaring eyes, and at intervals uttering her savage growls. There lay the oval form, with Congo beneath, motionless and silent. A strange pair of adversaries, indeed!

Long time the lioness kept her close vigil, scarce moving her body from its crouching attitude. Her tail only vibrated from side to side, and the muscles of her jaws quivered with subdued rage. The boys shouted repeatedly to warn Congo; though no reply came from the hollow interior of the carapace. They might have

spared their breath. The cunning Kaffir knew as well as they the position of his enemy. Her growls, as well as her loud breathing, kept him admonished of her whereabouts; and he well understood how to act under the circumstances.

For a full half-hour this singular scene continued; and as the lioness showed no signs of deserting her post, the young yägers at length determined upon an attack, or, at all events, a feint that would draw her off.

It was close upon sunset, and should night come down what would become of Congo? In the darkness he might be destroyed. He might relax his watchfulness,—he might go to sleep, and then his relentless enemy would have the advantage.

Something must be done to release him from his narrow prison,—and at once.

They had saddled and mounted their horses, and were about to ride forth, when the sharp-eyed Hans noticed that the lioness was much farther off from the shield than when he last looked that way. And yet she had not moved,—at all events, no one had seen her stir—and she was still in the very same attitude! How then?

“Ha! look yonder! the shield is moving!”

As Hans uttered these words the eyes of all turned suddenly upon the carapace.

Sure enough, it was moving. Slowly and gradually it seemed to glide along the ground, like a huge tortoise, though its edges remained close to the surface. Although impelled by no visible power, all understood what this

motion meant,—Congo was the moving power!

The yägers held their bridles firm, and sat watching with breathless interest.

In a few minutes more the shield had moved full ten paces from the crouching lioness. The latter seemed not to notice this change in the relative position of herself and her cunning adversary. If she did, she beheld it rather with feelings of curiosity or wonder than otherwise. At all events, she kept her post until the curious object had gone a wide distance from her.

She might not have suffered it to go much farther; but it was now far enough for her adversary's purpose, for the shield suddenly became erect, and the Kaffir once more sent his assegai whirring from his hand.

It was the fatal shaft. The lioness chanced to be crouching broadside towards the hunter. His aim was true, and the barbed iron pierced through her heart. A sharp growl, that was soon stifled,—a short despairing struggle, that soon ended, and the mighty brute lay motionless in the dust!

A loud "hurrah!" came from the direction of the camp, and the young yägers now galloped forth upon the plain, and congratulated Congo upon the successful result of his perilous conflict.

The group of dead bodies was approached, and there a new surprise awaited the hunters. The lion was dead, as they had long since conjectured,—the sharp horns of the oryx had done the work; but what astonished all of them was, that the horns that had impaled the body of the great lion still remained sticking in his side. The oryx had

been unable to extricate them, and would thus have perished along with her victim, even had the lioness not arrived to give the fatal blow!

This, both Congo and Swartboy assured the party, was no uncommon occurrence, and the bodies of the lion and gemsbok are often found upon the plains locked in this fatal embrace!

The cow gemsbok, yielding the more tender venison, was soon skinned and cut up; and as the delicious steaks spurted over the red coals of their camp-fire, the young yägers became very merry, and laughed at the singular incidents of the day.

Chapter Eight.

A Short Chat about Lions.

Before going to supper the hunters dragged the carcasses of both lion and lioness close up to the camp-fire. A good pull it was, but they managed it by attaching strong "rheims" of raw hide around the necks of the creatures, and sliding them with the grain of the hair.

Their object in bringing them to the fire was, that they might have light to skin them,—not that they deem the lion-hides of any great value, except as trophies of their expedition—and they were not going to leave such trophies on the plain. Had the lions been permitted to remain all night where they had been killed, the hyenas would have eaten them up before morning,—skins and all. It is a fable which tells that the hyena will not eat the dead lion. The filthy brute will eat anything, even one of his own kind,—perhaps the most unpalatable morsel he could well find.

Of course the oryx were also brought up to the camp to be skinned and cut up. The bull, as large and heavy as a dead ass, gave them a good pull for it. But it afforded Groot Willem an opportunity of exhibiting his enormous strength; and the big boy, seizing the tow-rope, dragged the oryx after him with as much ease as if it had been a kitten at the end of a string of twine.

Both the gemsboks were regularly "butchered" and cut into quarters, to be carried to the next camp, and there dried. They would have dried the meat on the spot, but the water where they had halted was not good, and they

did not wish to remain there another day.

The horns of the oryx are also esteemed trophies of the chase, and those of both that were killed being perfect specimens—long, handsomely ringed, and black as ebony—were added to the collection which the young yägers were forming, and stowed safely away in the wagons. The heads, with the skins left on, were carefully cleaned and preserved, at no distant day to become ornaments in the *voor-huis*, or entrance-hall, either of the Von Bloom or Van Wyk mansions.

All these matters being arranged, the yägers sat down to supper around the camp-fire. The roast ribs and steaks of the gemsbok venison proved delicious, and the whole party, as already stated, were contented and merry. Of course lions were the subject of conversation, and all laughed again and again whenever they thought of Congo and his encounter.

All of them, little Jan and Klaas excepted, had stories to tell of adventures with lions, for these animals were still to be found in the Graaf Reinet, and both Groot Willem and Arend had been present at more than one lion-hunt. Hans and Hendrik had met them in many an encounter during the great elephant expedition, and Swartboy was an old Hottentot lion-hunter.

But Congo seemed to know more of the lion than even Swartboy, though the latter would have gone wild had such a thing been hinted at by any one of the party; and many a rival story of strange interest fell from the lips of both Kaffir and Bushman at that same camp-fire. Some of the party had heard of a mode of lion-hunting practised by the Bechuana tribes, and, indeed, in Congo's own country. There was nothing very novel about the

mode. A number of people,—naked savages they were,—attacked the lion wherever they met him, either in the bush or on the open plain, and there fought him to the death. These people carried for arms only the assegai, and, as a sort of defensive weapon, a mop of black ostrich-feathers fastened upon the end of a slender stick, and somewhat resembling a large fly-brush. The object of this was to disconcert the lion when rushing upon the hunter. By sticking it in the ground at the right moment, the lion mistakes the clump of ostrich-feathers for his real assailant, and, charging upon it, permits the hunter to escape. Such a *ruse* is far inferior to the trick of the carapace, but that singular mode of defence against the lion was only practised by such cunning hunters as Congo.

Now, as already stated, the plan practised by the Bechuana savages had nothing very novel or strange in it. Any strangeness about it consisted in the fact of the imprudence of such a mode of attack; for it was said that the hunters did not stand off at a distance and cast their assegais, on the contrary, they retained these weapons in their hands, and used them as spears, approaching the lion close enough to thrust them into his body! The consequence was, that in every encounter with their terrible antagonist, several hunters were either killed or badly mangled. This was the thing that appeared strange to our young yägers. They could not understand why any hunters should attack the fierce lion thus boldly and recklessly, when they might avoid the encounter altogether! They could not understand why even savages should be so regardless of life. Was it true that any people hunted the lion in that way? They asked Congo if it was true. He replied that it was.

Now this required explanation,—and Congo was requested to give it, which he did as follows.

The hunters spoken of were not *volunteers. They did not attack the lion of their own will and pleasure, but at the command of the tyrant that ruled them*. It was so in Congo's country, where the sanguinary monster, Chaaka, had sway. The *whole people of Chaaka were his slaves*, and he thought nothing of putting a thousand of them to death in a single morning to gratify some petty spleen or dislike! He had done so on more than one occasion, often adding torture. The tales of horrors practised by these African despots would be incredible were it not for the full clear testimony establishing their truth; and, although it forms no excuse for slavery, the contemplation of such a state of things in Africa lessens our disgust for the system of American bondage. Even the atrocious slave-trade, with all the horrors of the "middle passage," appears mild in comparison with the sufferings endured by the subjects of such fearful tyrants as Chaaka, Dingaan, or Moselekatse!

Congo related to the young yägers that it was customary for Chaaka's people to act as the herdsmen of his numerous flocks, and that when any of his cattle were killed by a lion,—a frequent occurrence,—the unfortunate creatures who herded them were commanded to hunt the lion, and bring in his head, or *suffer death* in case of failure; and this sentence was sure to be carried into effect.

This explained the apparently reckless conduct of the hunters.

Congo further stated that he had been compelled to take part in several of these lion-hunts, in each of which the

lives of men were sacrificed. He spoke of one in particular where no less than ten hunters had been killed before the lion was *captured*;—captured, not killed, for on this occasion the despot had taken a whim into his head, and ordered the fierce animal to be *taken alive*! His command was, that if the lion were not brought before him alive, and without a wound or scratch, every man engaged in the hunt should suffer death! As the unfortunate hunters well knew the threat was no idle one, they caught the lion in their naked arms, and succeeded in tying him, but not until ten of their number had fallen victims to their involuntary zeal!

To these and other tales of lions did the young yägers listen as they sat around the blazing camp-fire.

Chapter Nine.

The Unicorn.

The oryx next became the subject of conversation, and Swartboy could tell more about it than any one. Of the oryx Congo knew very little, as the region most frequented by this beautiful antelope lies farther west than the country of the Kaffir tribes. Its headquarters are in the land of the Namaquas, though it is thinly scattered all around the borders of the Great Kalihari Desert.

The oryx is a desert-dwelling antelope, can live without water, and grows fat even on the plants that thinly vegetate over the barren soil. It is a bold creature—often beats off the lion, or kills him by impalement on its long bayonet-like horns. Of the truth of this fact our yägers had that day had proof. The oryx when hunted does not, like many other antelopes, make for either water or cover. It strikes in a straight line for its desert home, trusting to its heels for safety. And its confidence in them is seldom misplaced. A swift horse alone can overtake and bring it to a stand; unless it be very fat, and then it is more easily "blown."

An interesting point occurred in the conversation about the oryx.

Arend and some of the others had read in several books of travellers that the oryx was supposed to be the fabled "unicorn," derived from Egyptian sculptures. They asked if this was the case. Their question was not put to Swartboy, you may be sure, but to Hans the naturalist, of course.

Hans regarded the supposition as a very silly one. A mere fancy of some early South African traveller, that had been repeated, parrot-like, in the books of other travellers and the writings of several closet-naturalists. The supposition of the oryx being the original of the unicorn rested only upon the fact that its horns when seen *en profile* appear as but one; and the unicorn is so figured on the Egyptian sculptures. Now this argument can be advanced in favour of several other antelopes, and therefore falls at once to the ground as regards the oryx.

Hans mentioned several reasons why the gemsbok could not be the "fabled unicorn." Its form, and particularly the shape of its head, are quite unlike the sculptures of that famous creature. Its horns, both in length and "set," even when seen *en profile*, differ altogether from that of the unicorn, which points forward, whereas the horns of the oryx extend backward almost horizontally, and sometimes even touching the flanks of the animal.

"No," continued Hans; "if the Egyptian unicorn be not a fable—if it be the representation of any animal in Africa, that animal is the gnoo; and I regard it as something singular that the resemblance between the gnoo—I mean the common species, not the 'brindled'—and the fabled unicorn, has not long since been noticed by naturalists and travellers.

"I should fancy that no one could look upon the pictures of both without being struck by this resemblance. Their forms, both of head and body, the elegant rounding of limb, the split hoof, the long tufted tails, the proud arching necks, with full flowing mane,—all these points go to show that the gnoo was copied for the unicorn. The

one horn is the only circumstance that appears to invalidate my theory, but even in this respect the gnoo bears a much greater resemblance to the unicorn than does the oryx. The horns of the gnoo are set in such a manner that it often appears a *unicorn*. Their tips do not rise above the level of the skull; and in consequence of this, and also from the manner in which the animal frequently carries its head, only one horn is visible, the other being, inconspicuous against the dark ground of the head and mane. Often only half the horn appears at a distance, and is then seen pointing forward and 'set,' very similarly to the brow ornaments of the unicorn.

"The horn of the unicorn is usually represented quite straight in modern paintings; but this is not correct, according to the Egyptian sculpture, where a curve is given,—a positive imitation of the curve in the horns of the oryx! Even though it were straight, this would scarce invalidate my theory, for the horns of the young oryx are straight also, and we might suppose a young one to be represented.

"I do not beg the question in this way, however," continued Hans, "for I know that whatever animal the Egyptians meant on their sculptures must have been well known to them, and it is not likely that they would have pictured a specimen of immature age. The singular character of the gnoo, its odd and eccentric habits, as well as the eccentricity of its form and appearance, must have drawn attention to it from the earliest times, and such an animal would not fail to be pictured by the Egyptians. As to the one horn, I regard the existence of that, either as the result of imperfect observation on the part of the Egyptian sculptors, or, what is more likely, a want of knowledge of their art. Egyptian sculpture is at

best but a rude affair, and the peculiar curve and set of the oryx horns are difficult to depict. Even in this very hour of high art, our painters do not give the most correct delineation of the head of a gemsbok. So, you see, I make out a tolerably clear case, that the gnoo of South Africa is the original of that mysterious celebrity—the *unicorn*."

The naturalist had fairly established his point, to the satisfaction of all the young yägers, who then asked him some questions about the unicorn mentioned in the Bible.

"As to the unicorn of Scripture," replied Hans, "that is a very different affair. There can be no mistake about the animal meant by Job when he wrote, 'Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?' This is, in reality, a unicorn—the *one-horned rhinoceros*."

Resuming the subject of the oryx, Hans informed his companions that this animal formed the type of a genus of animals called *Oryx*, of which there were three other species,—the "addax," the "abu-harb," and the "algazel."

The "addax" (*Oryx addax*) is a native of Central Africa generally, and is nearly as large as the oryx; but its horns, instead of being straight, are twisted spirally. They are smaller in the female, which is agreeable to the usual disposition of these appendages, though contrary to that of the horns of the gemsbok. The colour of the addax is greyish-white over the body, and reddish-brown upon the head and neck, with a white patch across the face. It is not gregarious, but lives in pairs on the sandy deserts, for traversing which its broad hoofs are

peculiarly adapted. It was known to the ancients, and Pliny speaks of it under the name *Strepsiceros*.

The "abu-harb" (*Oryx leucoryx*) is also a large powerful antelope, with long sharp horns slightly curved backward. Its colour is cream-white, with a brown mark on the forehead, another on the cheeks, and a rust-brown colour over the neck and throat. In form it bears a good deal of resemblance to the oryx, and was really the animal known by this name to the Greeks and Romans. But naturalists now apply the name "oryx" to the gemsbok or Cape oryx, (*Oryx Capensis*).

The "abu-harb" is a native of Kordofan and Sennaar, and it is one of those that are found upon the sculptures of Nubia and Egypt. Unlike the addax, it is gregarious in its habits, and lives in large herds.

The fourth species of oryx is the "algazel," (*Oryx algazella*). This is also a native of Central Africa, but less is known of it than of any of the other three; and there are naturalists who regard it as merely a variety of the "abu-harb."

When Hans had finished his learned discourse, it was full time for retiring to rest, so the whole party crept into their wagons, and went to sleep.

Chapter Ten.

The Camel-Birds.

On leaving the “drift” where they had crossed the Orange River, our hunters “treked” in a north-easterly direction. Had they gone due north they would soon have reached the rim of the Great Kalihari Desert—the Säara of Southern Africa. Of course they could not have penetrated this, and would necessarily have been compelled to head in a new direction, either to the east or west. But they had long since determined on an easterly course, as the region lying to the eastward of the desert had the reputation of being a grand country for the large animals—the buffalo, the elephant, and the camelopard; and the rivers in that part were filled with huge sea-cows (hippopotami) and gigantic crocodiles. That was the very country the young yägers wanted to be in.

They were not travelling without a guide. Congo was their guide. He knew every inch of the route. He had promised to bring them into a country abounding in elephants and giraffes; and no doubt was entertained that the Kaffir would keep his promise.

Next day they were on the move at an early hour. They made a long day’s march, and, halting a little before sunset, outspanned in a grove of mokhala-trees, standing upon the very edge of a bleak desert, that stretched before them as far as they could see,—and indeed much further. This desert had a very arid and parched appearance, the only vegetation upon it being solitary plants of the arborescent aloe, with its large

coral-red flower-spike, palm-like zamias, some species of cactus-like euphorbias, and here and there small clumps of *Acacia horrida*, or "wait-a-bit" thorns, as these bushes are jocosely termed, from the disposition of their curved spines to hook upon the clothes of any one passing them.

Both plants and bushes grew far apart, and wide tracts of the plain appeared without even any of these to vary its brown monotony. It was a sort of outlying spur of the Kalihari Desert, and they would have to cross it before they should reach the country promised by their guide. There would be *fifty* miles without vley, spring, or stream —*fifty* miles from water to water.

They had outspanned by the last spring, which gurgled out among the roots of the mokhala-trees upon the very edge of the desert. There they intended remaining for a couple of days to dry the flesh of the gemsboks, and also to recruit their animals and prepare them for the long waterless journey of the desert,—a perilous passage.

It was near sunset when they had finished "outspanning," having formed their camp in the centre of the mokhala grove, and not far from the spring.

Hans, in a contemplative mood, had wandered to the edge of the grove; and, seating himself under one of the trees, whose full umbrella-like top cast a fine shade, was gazing out upon the wide treeless waste.

He had not been long in this situation, when his attention was attracted to three upright forms that appeared upon the plain at the distance of some hundred yards from the grove. They were bipeds, for he saw them from head to heel. Not human bipeds, however, but

birds. They were *ostriches*.

The merest child could have told that much—anybody—for who does not recognise the great African ostrich at the first glance? The size and form of the *Struthio camelus* are too peculiar to admit of its being taken for any other bird. The American "rhea," or the Australian "emeu," might pass for its half-grown young, but a full-sized African ostrich is not to be mistaken for any of its pigmy relatives, either in Australia, New Zealand, the Indian archipelago, or America. It is the great bird of birds—the biggest that carries feathers.

Of course Hans knew the three to be ostriches the moment his eye rested upon them—a cock and two hens. This was easily told, for there is as much difference between the male and female of these birds, as between the brilliant peacock and his dingy spouse. The greater size of the former; the deep black colour of his body contrasting strongly with the snow-white plumes of his wings and tail,—and in the desert these *are* snow-white—distinguish him at once from his female companions. Their colour is a nearly uniform greyish brown, and they want those splendid jet and snowy plumes that adorn the back of their lord and master, and which have been from all time so highly prized as ornaments by both savage and civilised people.

A cock and two hens they were, that presented themselves before the eyes of the young naturalist.

They were marching slowly along. They were not affrighted. They evidently had seen nothing of the camp. How could they, as it was behind the trees in the centre of the grove? They occasionally bent their long necks to one side or the other, and cropped a leaf, or picked up a

seed, but then continued their course. From their following a straight line Hans concluded they were not feeding in the regular way, but bent towards some point, perhaps to their night resting-place.

When first observed, they were coming in a side direction, that is, transversely to the direction in which Hans himself was facing. In a short time they had passed before him, and were now widening the distance, and getting farther off into the desert.

Hans at first thought of calling to the others, who were all busy about the wagons, and had not seen the ostriches. He was thinking also of some plan by which the birds might be captured or killed.

After a moment's consideration, he gave up the idea of either one thing or the other. The sight of an ostrich was nothing new to any of the party. Jan and Klaas might have cared for it, but both were tired after their long hot ride, and had already fallen asleep on the grass. Better not disturb them, thought Hans.

As to the killing or capturing the ostriches, after a moment's reflection, Hans also gave up that design. The birds were already passing—to have stalked within shot upon the naked plain would have been impossible, for Hans well knew the wary nature of the ostrich; and to have attempted a chase with their tired horses would have been equally idle.

Hans, therefore, held his peace, and sat still; following with his eyes the retreating forms of the three great camel-birds.

Their long strides soon carried them far off, but before

they had receded half-a-mile, the eyes of the naturalist were removed from them, and turned on a different object.

Chapter Eleven.

The Smallest of Foxes.

The object which now fixed the attention of the naturalist was a quadruped,—a very small one, not bigger than a medium-sized cat, but altogether different in form and proportions. Unlike the cats, it had a long sharp snout, and a thick bushy tail. It stood higher upon its legs, too, than do animals of the cat kind, but the most remarkable *feature* about it was its ears. These were remarkable for their length, which was out of all proportion to the size of the creature. Its whole body was barely one foot long, and yet the ears stood full six inches above the crown of its head! They stood quite erect, broad, stiff, and pointed, and ending in an acute angle at the tips.

Its colour was a beautiful Isabella above, and cream-white underneath. No; the creature was not like a cat, nor a dog neither, though it was more like the latter than the former. But there is an animal related to the canine family to which it bore a very strong resemblance, and that is the fox, for it *was* a fox, the very smallest in the world, the "caama" of Southern Africa. And yet, correctly speaking, it was not a fox neither, but a *fennec*.

What is a "fennec?"

That is an interesting question, and one about which naturalists have bothered their brains a good deal. It is an animal of which there are several species existing throughout Africa; and of which the celebrated traveller Bruce,—who, everybody thought, *lied* so largely, but

about whom conceited ignorance has since changed its opinion,—first gave an account.

It differs from the foxes in several respects, but the most remarkable difference is found in the form of the eye. In the true foxes the pupil is linear or elliptical, while that of the fennec is round, thus showing the difference of habit—for the foxes are in reality *nocturnal* animals, while the fennecs are *diurnal*. Some species of foxes, however, are twilight prowlers, and one or two of the fennecs are also crepuscular.

It is, therefore, scarce possible to draw a line of demarcation between the two. The fennecs, however, have been formed into a separate genus, termed *Megalotis*, from the extreme size of their ears. It is to be hoped that the question is thus settled that has so much bothered the closet-naturalists; who, taking their ideas from the anatomy of the fennec, have classed it according to their several fancies; one making it a dog, another a cat, a third a fox, a fourth a civet, a fifth a hyena, and a sixth placing it among the galagos!

Let us call it a "fennec," or diurnal fox, and say farther that although there are several species of *true foxes* in Africa, and several of *jackal-foxes*, there are also several of fennecs. Three are well known. The fennec of Bruce, (*Megalotis zerda*), first described by that traveller as seen by him in Abyssinia, but also indigenous to South Africa; the "zabora," (*Megalotis famelicus*), a native of Nubia and Kordofan, and supposed to be the animal represented on Egyptian temples, which has been taken for the figure of the jackal; and the "caama fennec," (*Megalotis caama*).

A fourth species, "Lalande's zerda," (*Megalotis Lalandii*),

has been “hooked out” of this genus, and made to form one of itself, (*Agriodus*), not because its habits in anywise differ from the *Megalotides*, but because it chances to differ slightly from them in the form and arrangement of its “ivories.”

Now of all these fennecs the one which was passing before the eyes of Hans was the “caama,” the smallest of the whole tribe either of fennecs or foxes.

Crouching just like a fox, now trotting nimbly a few paces, now halting and squatting close to the ground, as though fearful of being observed, the little creature passed on.

What was it after? What prey was it in pursuit of?

On watching it for a few moments, Hans saw to his great surprise that it was after the ostriches!

It was going the same way they had gone, its sharp snout set towards, and its eyes evidently bent upon, them. Whenever they stopped it did the same, squatting down as it did so, as if to avoid their observation; and when they moved on, it also trotted forward, halting at intervals behind stones and bushes and earnestly regarding the birds in advance. Beyond a doubt it was trailing them! But what could this little creature want with the ostriches? Certainly not to attack them, though it was following after them just as a fox would a covey of partridges.

It could not be that, however; as a kick from the mighty leg of one of these birds would have hoisted the fennec fifty yards over the plain, like a ball from a cricket-bat.

No; it could not be following them with hostile intentions,—puny pigmy that it appeared beside the big camel-birds!

For what, then, was it trailing them? Of course it was not running on the scent, but the view. On their track it certainly was, and as certainly was it "dogging" them. For what purpose?

This was just what the naturalist Hans wished to know; and he remained closely observing the movements of this miniature "microscopic" fox.

Talking of a microscope reminds me that Hans at that moment took out of his pocket a telescope,—a small one, which he habitually carried. This he did, because, in a few minutes, the ostriches were very distant over the plain, and their pursuer the fennec was no longer visible to the naked eye. With the glass, however, Hans could still make it out, and could see that it was manoeuvring just as when it passed him. All at once the ostriches came to a stop; and, after an apparent consultation among themselves, the cock squatted down, and his long legs were no longer seen. He was flat down upon his breast, and even through his small pocket-glass Hans could tell that his body looked more spread and bulky than before. Was he covering eggs? Was there a nest? The appearance of the ground about the sitting bird favoured that belief. There was a slight prominence around the body of the bird having the semblance of a bird's nest; but Hans knew that the nest of the ostrich is of very simple construction,—a mere cavity scratched out in the sand, and scarce to be recognised from any great distance. Several white objects lying around the spot led Hans to the conclusion that there *was* a nest. These

objects did not seem larger than "jack-stones," but Hans, calculating well the distance that separated them from his eye, believed them to be ostrich-eggs, and therefore as large as paving-stones. Hans knew that around the nest of the ostrich scattered eggs are usually found—said by some to be there laid as a deposit for the food of the expected progeny during their early days of chickhood!

The two hens, after moving about awhile also squatted down, but they appeared only to kneel with their great legs doubled under them; whereas the cock sat low and flat upon his breast. This only more convinced Hans that there was a nest, and that the cock ostrich was taking his turn of duty, while the hens were simply gone to roost in the usual manner.

That the cock covered the eggs was nothing surprising to the young naturalist, who knew that it is the habit of the male of these birds to do so, and that he usually takes his turn during the night, when it is colder, and his greater size and strength are required to keep the eggs warm, as well as to protect the nest from prowling beasts of prey. One or other of the hens would very likely relieve him about daybreak. Of course both the hens were mothers in prospective of the future brood, as the cock ostrich is a terrible "Mormon;" and frequently does the polygamous on a large scale, having sometimes as many as a dozen wives. Our old fellow was rather a moderate Mormon, as he appeared to be satisfied with two—though bigamy, no doubt, is quite as sinful as polygamy.

Hans concluded that there was a nest, and full of eggs in process of being hatched. It was no evidence against this, that the birds had been away from it together. The

day had been a very warm one, and during the middle part of the day—particularly in hot weather—the ostrich wanders away from its eggs, leaving the sun to do its work for it. The hotter the country, the less does the ostrich require to "set;" and in parts of Africa within the torrid zone where the heat reaches a very high degree, the ostrich has very little to do with the hatching of its eggs, but buries them in the burning sand, and makes the sun its "incubator!"

But what had become of our fennec—poor little fellow?

So asked Hans of himself, as he swept the plain with his telescope. While watching the late movements of the birds, he had altogether forgotten the beast.

After a time he was just able to make out its small whitish body stretched upon the ground, under the lee of a little bush, and apparently resolved upon passing the night there. Had there been any hole near, it would have preferred lodging in that—for the fennec is an animal that makes its home in a "burrow."

Night had suddenly come on, and the darkness prevented Hans from observing farther the movements of either beast or bird; so putting up his glass, he rejoined his companions in the camp.

Chapter Twelve.

The Wingless Birds.

Hans, on returning to the camp, gave an account of what he had seen. All were interested in the relation, but particularly the boys Klaas and Jan, who were not over satisfied that they had not themselves been witnesses of the affair. Hans might very well have told them of it. They wouldn't have minded being waked up to see the ostriches, especially as they passed so near. It wasn't every day one could get such a view of these fine birds—they were so shy no one could get near them, and Hans might very well have come into camp and told them, or called them, Klaas and Jan, to the spot. Hans didn't care whether they ever saw any thing worth seeing—he didn't.

So grumbled Klaas and Jan, because Hans had not waked them out of their sweet *siesta*, to see three ostriches stalking over the plain, and not doing any thing in particular.

But boys are boys, and so long as they *are* boys, they will feel a wonderful interest in birds—especially when these birds stand nearly ten feet high, and weigh three hundred pounds, as ostriches do.

Had it been a buffalo, or a giraffe, or even an elephant, neither Klaas nor Jan would have so much cared. Beasts are all very well in their way, and may interest full-grown hunters, like Hendrik and Groot Willem, but for "boy hunters," with light fowling-pieces and Number 5 shot, birds are the game—though their Number 5 shot would hardly have tickled an ostrich.

No matter for that. They wanted to see the great camel-bird. Hans ought to have apprised them. It was "right

mean" of him not to do so,—right mean, said Jan, and Klaas backed the opinion.

How long they might have grumbled, and given vent to their reproaches, can only be guessed at; but the conversation turning upon ostriches assumed a very pleasing character; and Klaas and Jan, becoming deeply interested in it, soon got over their little "miff" with Hans —especially as it was he who was now interesting them. Upon the subject of ostriches. Hans had read a good deal, and was well acquainted with the character and habits of these most interesting birds.

Swartboy stood next in his knowledge of the ostrich, for Swartboy in early life had been a "dweller of the desert,"—the home of the Bushman as well as the great camel-bird. Swartboy was only too happy at the opportunity thus offered of showing off his knowledge, for the late wonderful performances of his Kaffir rival had quite thrown him into the shade.

So what with Hans's book-knowledge and Swartboy's practical experience, the young yägers became pretty well acquainted with the whole "history" of the bird.

"The ostrich," said Hans, "is an African bird, though also found in the adjacent countries of Asia. Several species of birds somewhat like it, belonging to South America, Australia and the islands of the Indian Archipelago, have been called 'ostriches' in the language of travellers. I shall have a word about these presently.

"All over the African continent, as well as Arabia, Syria, and Persia, dwells the ostrich, wherever there are desert plains—for this bird is peculiarly a denizen of the desert, and never makes its home in wooded, marshy, or even fertile districts.

"It has been known from the earliest times, and must have been more numerous in the days of Heliogabalus than now, since that tyrant had the brains of six hundred ostriches served up at a single feast!"

"Oh, the glutton!" exclaimed Jan.

"What a gourmand!" echoed Klaas.

"I should think after the feast he had more brains in his stomach than in his head," quietly remarked Arend.

"No doubt of it," added Hendrik.

Hans continued:—

"The ancients knew the ostrich as the 'camel-bird,' (*Struthio camelus*). This name was given to it on account of its fancied resemblance to the camel; and in its hoof-like two-toed feet, its long naked thighs and neck, and the pad or cushion on its chest, corresponding to the callosity on the breast of the camel, it does bear a resemblance to this animal. Like it, too, the ostrich is formed for the desert. Aristotle and Pliny described the ostrich as half bird, half quadruped."

As soon as Hans had given the more scientific part of the natural history of the ostrich, Swartboy's knowledge of the habits of the bird was produced, and from both were collected the details that follow.

Ostriches are gregarious—flocks of *fifty* may be seen upon the plains, peacefully associating with zebras, quaggas, wildebeests, blue wildebeests, and several other plain-frequenting antelopes.

The males are polygamous, and usually have from two to six wives. These lay twelve to sixteen eggs each, in a nest which is only a hole scooped out in the sand about

six feet in diameter. Not more than half the eggs are deposited in the nest. The others lie scattered around, and are never hatched.

Swartboy alleged that these were intended to feed the young when they came out of the shell: but Hans dissented from this opinion. The naturalist believed that those scattered about were superfluous eggs, which were not deposited in the nest because one bird could not cover all that the whole family of hens would lay; and that once the "setting" was complete, the superfluous eggs were dropped about anywhere.

There is a good deal of probability in this conjecture of the young naturalist.

It is certain that the scattered eggs are those last laid, and that the birds continue to drop them after the incubation has commenced, but whether they form the food of the young is a disputed point. One bird can cover from thirty to forty, placed as they usually are upon their ends, and Swartboy said that he had often found this number in a nest, but more frequently thirty was the "setting."

The male takes part in the incubation, sitting during the night; when his greater size and strength enable him the better to protect the eggs from cold. The "hens" relieve one another during the day, but when the sun is hot all leave the nest to itself, for hours at a time.

Hans stated, that in the more tropical regions the eggs are forsaken for long spells, and the hot sand and *sun* do the work of the parent birds; and that on this account the period of incubation is not fixed, but ranges from thirty to forty days.

The young when hatched are well developed, and in a

day or two become as large as guinea-hens, leaving the nest and running about in charge of the parent birds.

At this period the old ones are very careful of their offspring. When an enemy approaches, the hen that has charge of the flock will endeavour to attract the intruder upon herself, making a feint of being wounded, spreading and drooping her wings, and tumbling from side to side along the ground, while the cock draws off the chicks in an opposite direction! Partridges, wild ducks, and many other birds, do the same.

The eggs of the ostrich are of a dull white colour. They are not all of equal size, nor are the birds either. A medium-sized ostrich-egg is six inches long, and weighs about three pounds. It is excellent eating when broiled among hot cinders, and is a meal for a man,—some say two, some three, while others allege that it is not enough for one. But "a meal for a man" is a very uncertain standard, and depends a good deal on the capacity of the man's stomach and the state of his appetite. A better standard is found in the estimate that one ostrich-egg is equal in quantity to twenty-four of the common domestic fowl.

The shells of the ostrich-eggs are very strong, and used by the Bushmen and other natives of the desert as water-vessels—the only vessels that some of them have.

A full-grown cock ostrich stands over nine feet in height, and weighs three hundred pounds. The legs of such a bird are immensely thick and muscular, and the thigh-joint equals in size the largest leg of mutton.

The ostrich is thought to be the swiftest runner in creation, but there are doubts about this. Certain it is that it cannot be overtaken by a horse in a fair tail-on-end chase; but the bird makes "doubles" in running, and

by observing these, the mounted hunter sometimes gets near it by making a cut upon it, and delivers his fire as it passes. To run an ostrich down, however, is considered an impossibility, even by the Arab on his fleet steed. Its bottom is equal to its speed, as it can keep up the pace for hours together.

The muscular strength of its great long legs is well adapted for running fast and far; and while on the run, its hoofs make a clatter like those of a trotting horse, while large stones are flung violently to the rear! When at full speed it spreads its white wing-plumes, raising them over its back, but this is only done to balance it, as it could not fly a single yard.

Its principal weapon of defence is the leg with its hoof-like foot. With this it can kick like a mule, and the blow will break a man's leg, or send the breath out of his body, as would the kick of a horse!

But the principal security of the ostrich lies in its splendid power of vision, combined with its peculiar habitat. It is always on the naked plain, with nothing to interrupt the view, and its keen eye enables it to perceive an enemy long before the latter can get near enough to do it an injury. So sharp is its sight, it can see even farther than it can be seen, large as it is!

A most difficult matter it is to get within shooting distance of these wary birds. Sometimes a shot is obtained by lying in wait for them at vleys, or springs, where they come to drink. Many people deny that they ever drink, as they are met with at great distances from water; but it should be remembered that what may appear a great distance to a tired traveller may be nothing to a fleet ostrich, who can fling the miles behind like a race-horse.

Others have observed the ostrich come to drink at a particular place once every day; and it is well known that in captivity they swallow large quantities of water. After drinking they do not run so well, and hunters take advantage of this and run them down after leaving the pool.

There are hunters residing upon the desert karoos, who hunt the ostrich as a profession. The feathers are of considerable value, as well as the skin, which is tough and strong, and tans into a fine species of leather, out of which jackets and other garments are made. A skin without the feathers is worth about one pound sterling; and the long white plumes of the wings and tail,—of which there are five-and-forty (the finest are from the wings,)—are often sold for a shilling apiece on the spot.

Groot Willem observed that the ostrich may be easily domesticated, and he had frequently seen tame ones about the kraals of the frontier boors. They are a useless pet, however; and, although quite harmless as far as man is concerned, they become troublesome in the farm-yard, where they trample the poultry to death, and sometimes gobble up chicks and young ducks, not from any carnivorous propensity, but on account of their extreme voracity: an old rag would be swallowed in the same way.

The proper food of the ostrich is tops of shrubby plants, with grain and seeds, though they "bolt" many odd and indigestible substances. They are fond of salt, like most wild animals, and are often seen in large flocks around the salt-pans, or "salines," many of which exist upon the desert plains of Africa.

The flesh of the young ostrich is very palatable, but that of an old bird is rather tough and rank. Their eggs, however, are esteemed a delicacy, though some think

them heavy.

The voice of the ostrich under ordinary circumstances is a deep sonorous chuckle, though at times it gives out a roar resembling that of the lion. When wounded or brought to bay, it hisses like an enraged gander.

So much for the ostrich; and now Hans proceeded, as he had promised, to say a word or two about its relatives.

The "rhea" is its South American representative, but it has been lately discovered that there are two distinct species in South America, the "nandu," (*Rhea Americana*), and the "petise," or Darwin's rhea, (*Rhea Darwinii*). They resemble each other in form, colour, and general habits, but differ in size and geographical range. The nandu is the larger, and dwells upon the wide plains of La Plata, whereas the petise is confined to the southern part of Patagonia.

The nandu resembles the African bird in form, and its dingy brown colour is not far from that of the hen ostrich. Its size, however, is much less, being only five feet in height. The plumes of its wings are less beautiful and valuable than those of its African cousin, though they are also a marketable article, being used for fly-brushes and other household implements.

The habits of the rhea show a great similarity to those of the *Struthio*, and it is quite a folly to make separate genera of them.

The rhea is gregarious, polygamous, scoops a slovenly nest in the ground, hatches from twenty to thirty eggs, scatters many others around, runs swiftly when pursued, hisses and kicks violently when assailed, and is shy and wary. All these are habits of the ostrich. The rhea, however, has some peculiarities. It feeds upon small fish

cast up on the mud banks of rivers, and on roots and grass. It also takes freely to the water, and can cross rapid streams by swimming. The gauchos hunt it with both *lazo* and *bolas*.

Darwin's rhea is less in size, but very similar in colour, form, and habits. It also swims well, and frequents plains near the coast. It is beyond doubt a very closely allied species to *Rhea Americana*, but a bird of a colder habitat.

The nandu is not found in North America, nor any species of bird allied to the ostrich. In this respect Nature has neglected the vast desert plains of prairie-land.

Even in South America the range of the rhea is limited, and does not extend to the equator, though it comes much farther within the tropics than is generally imagined. It has lately been seen on the savannahs of the Madeira River, far to the north of the La Plata plains.

Another cousin of the ostrich is the "emeu," (*Dromanis Novae Hollandiae*). I give the clumsy title of the closet-naturalists, though there is no reason in the world why this bird should be separated from the genus of either ostrich or rhea, except to confuse the student of natural history.

In form and habits it resembles both, and in colour it is quite like the rhea. It is, however, a much taller bird—standing seven feet—and a full-grown male approaches the standard of a hen ostrich.

It has all the characteristics of the ostrich—is gregarious, polygamous, nestles on the ground, shy, wary, runs swiftly, swims well, kicks so as to kill a dog or break the leg of a man, utters an odd drumming note, and lays eggs nearly as large as those of the ostrich, but of deep

green colour. The eggs of the rhea are of a bluish cast.

It is supposed that, like the rhea, there are two species of emeu—another and smaller one having been reported as existing in the northern parts of the great island of Australia.

In the peninsula of Malacca and the islands of the Asiatic Archipelago, the ostrich has a representative that differs from it more than either rhea or emeu. This is the cassowary, (*Cassuarius cassoar*). Its body is covered with a thick coat of feathers of a deep black colour, and so disposed as to present a hairy appearance, while its head and neck are naked, the skin of these parts being of the loveliest blue-purple and scarlet blended together.

The cassowary differs from the ostriches in many respects. It is not a bird of the desert, but dwells in fertile districts and feeds upon soft succulent herbage. It resembles the ostriches, however, in most of its habits. Like them it defends itself by kicking, deposits its eggs on the ground, and leaves them to be hatched by the sun; is bold when assailed, is fleet and strong, and altogether may be regarded as one of the most interesting of the tribe, or of birds in general.

Hans mentioned the “apteryx,” or kiwi-kiwi, only to say that there were two species of it very much alike, both natives of New Zealand, both nocturnal and burrowing in their habits; and Hans added that he did not regard them as belonging to the ostrich family at all, any more than the “auks” or “penguins.” Thus ended the talk about the wingless birds.

Chapter Thirteen.

The Fennec and the Ostrich-Eggs.

Before retiring to rest, the young yägers had resolved upon a pleasant performance for the morrow—that was, a "surround" of the ostriches. They had planned it that Hendrik and Groot Willem should go first, and ride a large circuit around, so as to get far beyond the nest. Arend and Hans would start shortly after taking different sides, while Klaas and Jan should cover the direction towards the camp. In this way the six, widely separated from each other, would enclose the birds in a circle; and when the latter became alarmed and started to run, they were to be "headed" by whoever was nearest, and turned back to the opposite side. This is the mode practised by the South African hunters, and is the only way by which the ostrich can be tired out and run down, for on such occasions, if the "surround" be well managed, the bird becomes confused, runs from one side to the other, and at length suffers itself to be captured or shot. It is a dangerous matter, however, to approach too near the game even when "blown" or wounded. A wounded ostrich has been known to send the hunter sprawling, and break a leg or an arm, or a pair of ribs, by one fling of its muscular limb! Hans, in his usual prudent way, had cautioned his companions to beware of this danger.

They all went to rest with feelings of pleasant anticipation for the morrow. They had high hopes they would either kill or capture the old cock, and pluck his snow-white plumes to add to their "trophies."

The only drawback upon their plans appeared to be their number. They had doubts whether six could surround the ostriches, so as to head and turn them—especially as of

the six two were little boys mounted on small ponies, for the chargers ridden by Klaas and Jan were of this character.

It was resolved, however, that Congo and Swartboy should help to form the circle. They had no horses, but both were active afoot, and either could run quite as fast as the ponies. The one armed with his assegais, and the other with his tiny bow and poisoned arrows, they would be well worth a place in the ring; and the ostriches would thus have eight, instead of six, points in the compass closed up against them. Add to this, that there were the six buck-dogs to assist them, and it will be acknowledged that their prospect of capturing the ostriches was not so bad.

Sad to say, their hopes of a brilliant day's sport ended in complete disappointment. All their fine plans were frustrated by a singular occurrence.

A hyena during the night had stolen into camp, and had eaten up the girth and part of the flaps of Hendriks saddle; and before the damage could be repaired the ostriches had gone off from the nest.

They were still around it when the hunters arose, but the delay in mending the saddle was fatal to the plan of a "surround." The morning was a hot sultry one, and the birds leaving their business to the sun, went early away. Just as the boys were mounting, they saw them move off in long strides towards the opposite side of the plain.

They were soon out of sight of the naked eye; but Hans followed them with his glass, until that also failed to keep them in view.

It was a great disappointment to everybody, just as it would be to a field of fox-hunters, who, after getting into

the saddle, had found themselves driven back to their stables by frost and snow. Hendrik was particularly out of temper, on account of the ill luck that had befallen his saddle; and if a hyena had shown itself at that moment, it would have stood a fair chance of getting a bullet into its body. All the others, though in a less degree, shared Hendrik's uncomfortable reflections.

All six sat chafing in their saddles, not knowing what to do.

"Let us ride out to the nest," proposed Arend. "At all events, the eggs have not 'stole away.' We'll get them, and, by the way, I shouldn't object to an omelette for breakfast," (they had not yet breakfasted:) "I'm tired enough of venison and dry biltong. What say you?"

"By all means," rejoined Groot Willem; "let us bring in the eggs, and breakfast on them—that is, if they're not too far gone. I should like an egg for breakfast myself. Come on then!"

"Stop!" cried Hans; "stop a moment, yägers! Perhaps we'll not be disappointed—we may have a chase yet."

Hans had the glass to his eye as he spoke.

"What!" inquired several; "are they coming back?"

Hans made no reply for a moment. He could not be looking after the ostriches. His telescope was pointed in the direction of the nest. The birds were not there!

"It is it!—it is! the very creature itself!" exclaimed Hans, in a half-soliloquy.

"What is it? what creature?" demanded the boys.

"The fox!" replied Hans.

"What fox!"

"Why, the fennec—the same I saw last night—yonder it is, though you can't see it with the naked eye. I can barely make it out with the glass. It is up close by the nest of the ostriches, and appears busy about something."

"The eggs, I warrant," suggested Groot Willem.

"A fox-chase! a fox-chase!" exclaimed Hendrik, partially recovering temper.

"A fox-chase!" echoed Klaas and Jan.

"A fox-chase be it then," assented Hans; and all six set their horses in motion, whistling to the buck-dogs to follow.

They headed directly for the ostriches' nest. They were not going to make a circuit for such an insignificant creature as the little fennec. They knew that it could only escape them by getting to a hole, as they had dogs that could trail and run it down go where it would. It was probable that its burrow was not very near. It had evidently strayed away from home, and "dogged" the ostriches to their nest, so as to get at their eggs. Swartboy alleged that such was its habit—that it was fonder of eggs than any other food—and that the eggs of the great bird were its particular favourites. That it was constantly roving about in search of ostrich-nests; and as these are very difficult, even for a fox to find, the fennec, when it suspects that the ostriches are laying, will follow them for miles to discover the nest—just as Hans had seen this one do.

Swartboy had given all this information on the preceding night, which, of course, explained the mystery of such a

small creature running upon the trail of the great ostriches. It was not *them*, but *their eggs*, it wanted.

Now there was still a mystery Swartboy had not explained; and that was, how this animal, when it found the eggs, was able to *get at their contents*? The shell of the ostrich-egg is thick and strong. It requires a considerable blow with some hard weapon to break it, and how a puny creature, like the little fennec, could effect a breach was a mystery to all, but especially to the naturalist Hans. The fennec was no stranger to him. He had seen many of them in captivity. He knew something of their anatomy. He knew that their skulls were destitute of the ridge in which the temporal muscles are inserted, and that consequently they were weak-jawed animals—much more so than the common fox. It was not possible for them to have broken the shell of an ostrich-egg with their jaws. He knew that it was equally impossible for them to effect that purpose with the claws of their feet—the soles of which are covered with soft wool, as in the Arctic fox—a peculiarity considering that the fennec is an inhabitant of the hottest climes, and one quite unexplained by naturalists!

From the strength and structure of the animal, Hans believed it could no more have got at the contents of an ostrich-egg than it could have eaten its way into the heart of a bomb-shell.

Swartboy was here at fault. He only knew that it *did* get at the contents, white and yolk; but *how* he had never observed. He could not tell. He could not solve the mystery.

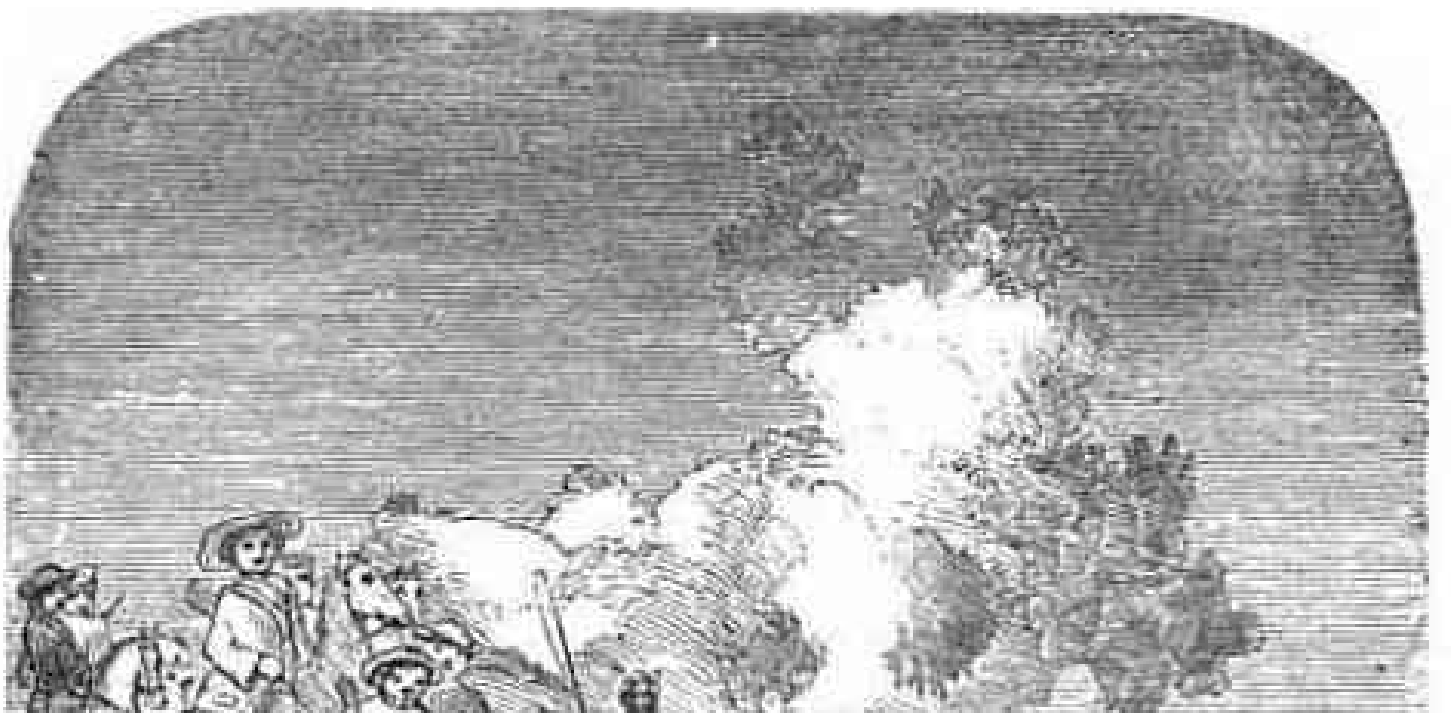
They had not long to wait in doubt about this matter. In less than ten minutes after, the fennec himself presented the solution before the astonished eyes of the young yägers.

When they had ridden up within some three hundred yards of the nest the little animal came under the view of all, and they pulled up to watch his manoeuvres. He was so busy about his own affairs, that he had not perceived their approach. The ground was covered with soft sand, so that the hoofs made no noise, and with all his keen sense of hearing—for he possesses that in proportion to his large ears—he had not caught a sound. He was hard at work, and never looked towards them. In fact, he was seen to raise his head at intervals, and look towards the point whither the ostriches had gone, and all his gazing was in that direction. The party had, therefore, a good view of the animal without being observed by him; and they watched his manoeuvres with interest.

Swartboy and the Kaffir held the dogs in their leashes, and all remained silent as statues.

Now what was the little fennec doing?

At first the spectators were puzzled to make out, but presently all was explained.



THE FENNEC AND THE OSTRICH EGGS. Page 89.

When they first saw him he was at a distance of several yards from the nest, and going farther from it, on the opposite side to that where the hunters had halted. His tail was towards them, and the fore-part of his body appeared to be raised as if his paws rested upon something. This something was seen to be an ostrich's egg. He was pushing it before him along the ground, using his feet alternately, and forcing the *egg* to turn. This action was similar to that of some unfortunate

fellow on the tread-mill, except that it was voluntary on the part of the fennec.

Now why was he rolling the *egg*? Did he mean to transport it in that way to his burrow? It would have been an arduous task, as it was not likely his subterranean dwelling was anywhere in that neighbourhood.

But he had no such design. His intention was to eat his breakfast on that very spot, or at all events very near it; and the spectators soon saw where his table was to be spread, for some of them now remembered an odd story they had heard of the caama, and already suspected his design.

About three or four yards from his snout lay a stone. It was a boulder of small dimensions, some twelve inches in height, but quite large enough for the fennec's purpose. It was evident that he had a purpose with this stone, for he was rolling the egg directly towards it. Those who had guessed his design were not disappointed. When his snout was within about three feet of the stone, the fennec made a sudden rush forward, carrying the egg along by a rapid motion of his feet, until the hard shell came in contact with the harder rock.

A "crash" reached the ears of the hunters, and, looking attentively, they saw that the egg was broken into "smithereens!"

The breakfast of the fennec was now before him, and he at once set about eating it, but the hunters were hungry too, their patience could hold out no longer, and spurring their horses and letting slip the dogs, they galloped forward.

It was a short run for a fox to give. The creature had hardly made good a couple of hundred yards, before the buck-dogs threw him; and it was just as much as Swartboy could do, aided by his jambok of hippopotamus-hide, to save his beautiful skin from their jaws.

The eggs were soon collected. Those in the nest had "gone too far," as Groot Willem had feared: some contained chicks, and others were addled. But of the ones scattered about several turned out quite fresh, so that the hunters had omelette for breakfast, as they had wished.

Swartboy showed them how to cook the eggs to perfection. This mode was to set one end in the ashes, break a hole in the other, and then with a little stick keep stirring the contents until they were sufficiently broiled. That is an omelette of ostrich-eggs.

Chapter Fourteen.

The Blauw-Boks.

After all, the young yägers were not to be disappointed in a chase. If the fox of South Africa gives but poor sport, there are plenty of other animals, neither so weak-limbed nor short-winded; and one of this kind it was their fortune to fall in with on that same day, and almost within the hour.

On the other side of the mokhala grove from that on which the ostriches had been observed, lay a wide open plain. It was not a desert, although it approached so near to one,—separated from it only by a belt of timber. It was a prairie or natural meadow, the grass—perhaps from contrast with the broad brown expanse on the other side—having an extremely fresh green look.

It was a large plain, though not limitless to the view. In the distance could be seen a wood of the giraffe-acacia, or "cameel-doorns," bounding the horizon; and several clumps of these trees, with their umbrella-like heads and feathery fronds of pale green, stood isolated upon the plain, giving the scene altogether an interesting aspect. A very park appeared this plain, with wide open pastures between its groves and coppices, many of which were of such regular forms that one would have fancied they had been planted to adorn it.

So lordly a park, such rich pastures, could not be untenanted; nor were they. There was no mansion, no house, not a trace of a human being to be seen, but for all that the plain had its denizens. Many forms could be distinguished upon or around it, both of winged and wingless creatures. Birds and quadrupeds of rare and

beautiful kinds made this fair scene their home.

Over its greensward stalks the "secretary," the true serpent-eater, hunting among the grass for his glittering prey. Even without using his wings, he need not fear any of the crouching *carnivora*, as his long legs suffice to carry him far beyond reach of either hyena, jackal, wild dog, guepard, or leopard. Swift is he, almost as the great ostrich itself,—so swift as to have earned from the Arabs the singular *sobriquet* of the "Devil's horse."

Not far off another tall bird stands erect upon the plain, but of very different character and habits. This is the "pauw" or "wild peacock,"—a peacock only in the phraseology of the boors, for the bird is a bustard, and the largest of his tribe—the *Otis kori*.

Running from copse to copse, or feeding over the plain, may be seen flocks of the pearly guinea-fowl, (*Numida meleagris*), whose constant chattering grates harshly on the ear, resembling the metallic clanking of machinery, or the sharpening of a hundred saws.

From tree to tree flutter gaudy parrots, green pigeons, and soft cooing doves, and over flowery shrubs flit numerous species of tiny "honey-suckers,"—the African representatives of the humming-birds. Some trees carry the pensile nests of the weaver-bird, (*Ploceus*), hanging from their branches like large fruits, while many of the cameel-doorns are loaded with the vast thatch-like republican dwellings of the sociable grosbeak, (*Loxia socia*).

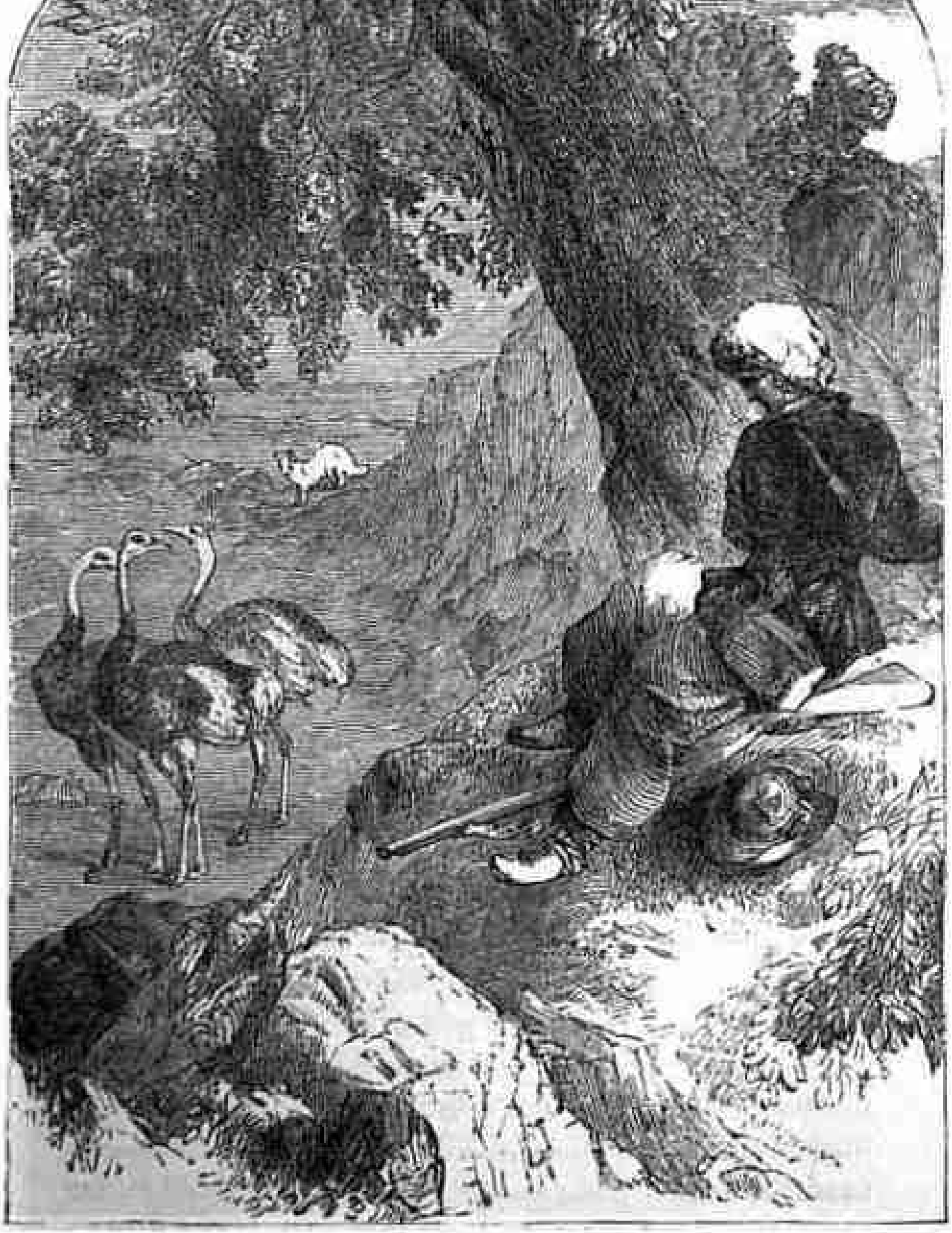
But birds are not the only tenants of this fair scene. Quadrupeds, as bright and beautiful as they, haunt its verdant glades, or repose under the grateful shadow of its acacia-groves.

In a few hours' ride one might see graceful antelopes of many species. The nimble springbok—the gazelle of South Africa—might be observed trooping over the sward, or bounding high in air either in sport or alarm—the orange "hartebeest," and the purple "sassybe," might be seen—the shaggy-maned eccentric gnoo, scouring the plain in circles—droves of quaggas, or of the still more beautiful "zebra of the plains," (*Equus Burchellii*), might be seen too, crouching around the copses, the leopard, fair but fearful to look upon; and still more fearful to behold the tawny tyrant of the scene—the lion.

All these creatures, and many more of equal interest, might come under the eye of the traveller or hunter during a single day's ride through that wild domain.

Thus full of life, what a contrast did this beautiful meadow present to the monotonous waste of wilderness, that stretched away from the opposite side of the grove to the far horizon!

Baulked in their projected "surround" of the ostriches—disappointed by the "poor sport" which the fox had afforded, the hunter-boys were determined not to be "choused" out of a chase. Some sort of one they would have, if it were only a brush after springboks, for these, they knew, they could find at any time. They were aware of the existence of the fine plain—the edge of which came up within a few hundred yards of their camp. They had pastured their cattle there on the evening before; and conjectured that it must be the haunt of many kinds of game. For this reason they now resolved upon making an excursion to that quarter, to hunt whatever might turn up.



HANS AND THE CAMEL BIRDS. Page 94.

They came to this determination, only after their return from the ostriches' nest; but as they had made up their minds to it before eating breakfast, they did not off-saddle, but kept their horses ready for being mounted.

As soon as the meal was over, they took once more to their saddles and rode off, the buck-dogs following at the heels of their horses. Congo and Swartboy stayed by the camp.

They had not far to go, before coming in view of their game; and rare game that was.

They were scarce yet a hundred paces from the camp, and just about to ride out from the timber, when Hendrik, in the advance, suddenly reined up his horse, making a sign for the others to do the same. All pulled up in a breath, and sat in their saddles, gazing out through the leaves. Though still within the shadow of the grove, all had a good view of the open plain; and before them was a sight that would have warmed the hearts of older hunters than they.

Out upon the plain, and directly in front of them, was a herd of noble antelopes. They were neither gnoos, nor springboks, nor hartebeests, nor any of the common kinds that the party had already met with, and had hunted to their satisfaction. Indeed, they were of a species that none of the six had *ever seen* before, and they only knew them to be antelopes from the make of their bodies, the shape of their horns, and other points characteristic of these animals.

They were antelopes of large size, standing nearly four feet high, having sabre-shaped horns curving gently backward and ringed to within six inches of their tips. Their general colour was ashy grey, tinged with raven-

blue—the blue tint being caused by the deep black colour of the skin shining through the hair.

Although none of the party had ever seen such antelopes before, Hans, and also the hunters Hendrik and Groot Willem, guessed what kind they were. They were of a kind that once ranged the Graaf Reinet, and even as far south as the Cape itself, though there they were never common. That was long before any of the young yägers had ever fired a gun or mounted a horse, but as these remembered having heard their fathers talking of this animal—of its blue colour, of its long curving horns, of its fine outline of form, as well as bold fierce character—they recognised those before them by the descriptions they had heard. They could be no other than *blue-bucks*, or *blauw-boks* in the language of the boors.

Hans, after eyeing them a moment, gave this as his opinion. The species was the blauw-bok, the *Aigocerus leucophea* of modern systematists.

Now of the group of antelopes to which the general name *Aigocerus* has been given there are five species—all large noble animals, and all inhabitants of South Africa, and particularly the countries adjacent to the Great Orange River.

First, there is the "waterbuck," (*Aigocerus ellipsiprymnus*), which stands nearly four feet in height, is of bluish grey colour, frequents the banks of rivers, takes the water freely—whence its trivial name—swims well, is bold, fierce, strong, and dangerous, when bayed or wounded.

Secondly, there is the "takhaitze," (*Aigocerus barbatus*), nearly as large as the waterbuck, but distinguished by a long beard and mane. The character of the waterbuck for fierceness and daring also belongs to the takhaitze, and

both are swift runners. The latter, however, is less attached to the water, and frequents a hilly region, browsing goat-like upon the leaves of the acacia.

The third of this genus is the "roan antelope," (*Aigocerus equinus*), a strong fierce animal, with horns curving backwards as in the blue-buck, but thicker, and more rapid in the curve. It is an antelope not of the plains, but a dweller in the hilly region.

The "sable antelope" (*Aigocerus niger*) is by far the most beautiful animal of the group. It is not many years since this antelope was made known to science, having been discovered in South Africa by a keen British sportsman. It is one of the largest of the race, standing four feet six inches in height, and carrying a pair of scimitar-shaped horns over three feet in length. Its colour is a deep glossy black or sable—whence its specific appellation—though it is white underneath with white markings about the head and neck. None of the antelopes of this group are of common occurrence even in their native haunts. None of the species can be called gregarious—that is, they do not appear in large herds, like the springboks, gnoos, hartebeests, or bonteboks—though small troops of less than a dozen—families, in fact—may be seen together. Oftener they are met with in pairs, or single individuals, and they are all scarce in the regions they inhabit when compared with the vast herds of the more social kinds.

The blue-buck is now one of the very rarest of the group, so much so that some naturalists believe it to be extinct. That is not likely. Africa is a large country.

Now all this information was furnished by philosopher Hans. He did not offer it just then—that is when they came in sight of the herd of blue-bucks; though he would, likely enough, had the others been inclined to

listen to him.

But they were not. The hunters Hendrik and Groot Willem were gazing with eyes wide open, admiring the beautiful proportions of the blauw-boks, which promised them a glorious run.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Brush after the Blue-Bucks.

As already stated, there were seven antelopes in the herd. One, an old buck, larger than any of the rest, and having horns over three feet long, was in the advance acting as leader. When first observed, they were approaching the grove of mokhalas—perhaps to reach the water by the spring. So thought the yägers, and held a hurried consultation about it, as they watched the advance of the animals. Hurried it was, and abruptly terminated, for before they could come to any definite plan of action, one of the buck-dogs, a young and half-trained animal, sprang forward out of cover, and opened his bay right in the faces of the antelopes.

The whole seven wheeled round in their tracks, and obedient to a snorting signal of the leader, started back in the direction they had come, going at top speed.

Of course all idea of stratagem was foiled by the unexpected behaviour of the dog. A straight tail-on-end chase was the only course left the hunters to follow; and, plying the spur, all the six shot out of the timber, and rode "view halloo" over the open plain.

A splendid chase it was for several minutes—the seven blue-bucks in advance, the dogs in the middle, and the "field" following in the rear. A splendid chase, indeed!

But only for a few minutes did dogs, hunters, and game, maintain these relative positions. The horsemen spread first. The ponies of Klaas and Jan fell to the rear, and were soon distanced. Then lagged the philosopher Hans, whose cob, though steady under fire, and a good roadster, was no hunter; and, next, the handsome Arend,

—who might have taken a better place, for his steed was a good one. But Arend cared but little for hunting, and less for hard riding under a hot sun; and having permitted himself to get so far behind that the view of the chase was no longer interesting, he reined up under the shade of a cameel-doorn, and commenced fanning himself with the gauntlet of his military glove!

There were two, however, who still rode to the dogs with the keen ardour of sportsmen—Hendrik and Groot Willem; and from a feeling of rivalry, as already hinted at, each was determined to be in at the death.

Both were well mounted, though very dissimilarly. The horse that Hendrik rode was a beautiful coal-black, of medium size, with a dash of the Arab in him—just enough to make of him what is termed a "hunter,"—a breed the finest in the world, and for all purposes, except *race-course gambling*, finer even than the Arabian itself.

Groot Willem's horse differed widely from this kind; and the same description that has been given of Groot Willem, or one very similar, would answer for his steed.

In size, he bore the same proportion to Hendrik's hunter that his rider bore to Hendrik—that is, he was a full half bigger; but his own members were out of all proportion with each other.

His body was flat and gaunt, and his limbs long and bony. His neck also was of an immense length, without the slightest semblance of a curve; and his head was angular and "bumpy," like that of a giraffe. He had other points of similarity to this singular quadruped, in his rough awkward gait, and long-stumped thin-haired tail; and the young yägers, in view of these resemblances, had jocosely christened him "Groot-Kameel," (Great Camel). He was about as ugly a horse as could have

been found in all the land of the boors; and yet his owner, Groot Willem, would not have exchanged him for the handsomest horse in Africa.

Notwithstanding his ugliness, he was a good horse. In jockey phrase, "a bad 'un to look at, a good 'un to go." Groot Willem was no man for appearances. He liked performance better than promise; and the "Great Camel" was the type of that idea—he promised nothing, but performed amazingly. Many a quagga, and wildebeest and sassybe, had he ridden down; many a stanch buck-dog had he tired out and passed in the chase with the heavy weight of Groot Willem on his back. No wonder the latter felt a high regard for his well-trained hunting horse.

Hendrik had an equal affection for his beautiful black; and as no opportunity had yet offered of a fair trial between the two steeds, a good deal of talk had passed about their respective merits as regarded speed and "bottom." On the question of beauty nothing could be said. Hendrik had the advantage there; and even Groot Willem acknowledged it, at the same time that he sneered at *that* being considered a "merit" in a horse.

The chase of the blauw-boks seemed to offer the chance of a fair trial. The animals had taken across the open plain, which would lead the hunters several miles at least, as the game was not one to be run down in a hurry. In a ride like that before them, it would be seen which backed the best steed.

Both riders were determined to make the most of their horses. Both were wary hunters, and, instead of dashing forward at break-neck speed, it could be seen that each was "going cunning," and saving their steeds for the final burst. Hendrik felt that in speed for a mile or two he could have headed the "Camel" easily enough. But the

bucks had got a good start, and it was not likely he could overtake them within that distance. He held up, therefore, riding gently, lest in the end the great horse of his rival might come out too strong for him.

For some distance the two galloped "cheek by jowl," the dogs far in the advance, and the bucks still running together before them. The latter did not seek to escape into the bushes, though they passed near several large copses. They kept in the open plain, in a course nearly direct. Stag-like they were running for some water—as antelopes of the *aigocerine* group habitually do.

But the dogs did not husband their speed, some of them were young and foolish, although very swift; and before the bucks had passed over a mile of ground, two or three of their canine pursuers pushed them so closely that the herd broke, and the antelopes, in their terror, forsook each other, and ran wildly in various directions.

The character of the hunt was now quite altered. The pack split up just as the game had done, each dog following the antelope that seemed nearest him, and in a few moments the chase was scattered all over the plain.

The two hunters had now a choice, whether each should pursue a separate game, or both take after the same. But neither thought for a moment of separating from the other, except by *heading* him. The spirit of rivalry, though silent, was strongly felt by both. Even the very horses seemed to be actuated by a similar feeling, eyeing each other askance, as they galloped side by side!

The antelope that both were determined to follow was easily selected from the rest. The old buck that hitherto led the herd had now gone off by himself, followed by a pair of the stanchest dogs. *His* horns were the meteors that gleamed in the *eyes* of our hunters, and beckoned

them on.

Without exchanging a word with each other, both rode after the buck.

Chapter Sixteen.

Groot Willem gets a Tumble.

The chase was now one of exceeding interest, and had become a simple trial of speed between horses, dogs, and antelope. The buck had kept on in a direct line, when the others broke away from him. He had been foremost at the time, and had no need to turn out of his course. Besides he knew where he was running to. Terror had driven the others out of their senses, and they had fled without design, while the old buck, not losing his "presence of mind," kept on for the water.

A dark belt seen ahead was a forest fringing some stream or river. That was the point he was making for, but a wide plain must be crossed before he could wet his hoof in any water. Over this plain now swept the chase.

Oddly enough, the two dogs that had chosen the buck for their game were rival dogs—that is, each hunter was owner of one of them, and regarded him as a favourite; and all three kinds, dogs, horses, and riders, seemed to be on their mettle, and were doing their very best.

Do not fancy there was any ill-feeling between Groot Willem and Hendrik. Nothing of the sort. Each loved his horse and his dog, and wished them to excel—each had his hunter reputation at stake in the result—and each had resolved upon carrying the head and horns of that blue-buck in triumph to the camp!

Notwithstanding all this, there was no "bad blood" between the boys. Nothing of the sort.

Beautifully the buck ran. Lightly he leaped over the turf, his limbs at each spring stretching to an almost

horizontal line, with head high in air and horns curving backward to his flanks. Well and beautifully he ran!

Sometimes he gained on his pursuers, as the nature of the ground favoured his hoofs; but again the strong buck-dogs howled upon his heels, and the hunters galloped but a hundred yards behind him. The blue of his back soon changed to a deeper tint, as the sweat poured through his sable skin, and the froth in large flakes clouted his neck and shoulders. His red tongue hung dripping from his jaws, and the hunters might have heard his hard breathing but for the panting of their own steeds.

Five miles did they go in that wild gallop—five miles without drawing rein or changing pace!

The woods were near—perhaps the water! The buck would gain them if not hard pressed—there might be a deep reach of some large river—the blauw-bok can swim like a duck—he would plunge in—they could not follow—they would lose him!

With such fears the hunters spurred their horses for a final burst. Their speed had proved nearly equal. Now was the time to try their "bottom."

Both shot forward at the fresh touch of the steel; but at the second or third spring the ground under the "Great Camel" gave way, and the huge horse with his heavy rider rolled headlong to the earth!

He had broken through the burrow of the *aard-wolf*!

Hendrik, who had shot a little ahead, heard the confused noise behind, and, looking over his shoulder, saw Groot Willem and the "Camel" struggling together over the turf. A more attractive object, however, was in front of him—

the panting buck—and without making halt, or staying to inquire whether his fellow-hunter was hurt—a pardonable neglect among sportsmen—he pressed his wearied horse still forward and onward.

In five minutes after, the buck stood to bay by the edge of the timber, and the dogs rushed up and sprang at him. It was a fatal spring for one of them—the favourite of Groot Willem. The luck was against him, as it had gone against his master. A single "gowl" came from his throat, as he was flung back off the sharp horns of the antelope. It was the last note he ever uttered, for in a moment more he had kicked his last kick, and lay lifeless upon the plain!

And very likely Hendrik's favourite would have shared the same fate; but his master at this moment riding near, caused the blue-buck a fresh alarm, and he broke bay, and dashed into the bushes followed by the dog.

Hendrik now lost sight of the chase, though he could hear the breaking branches, as the strong antelope made his way through the thicket, and the baying of the dog still told him the direction in which the game was going.

Putting his horse to a more moderate pace, he followed through the *bosch*, as well as he could. He expected every moment to hear the hound bark, the signal that the buck had again stood to bay, but he was doomed to disappointment. No such sound reached his ears.

He began to think that the buck was lost, and that, after all the chances in his favour, he would return to camp with no better story to tell than his rival. He was becoming exceedingly chagrined with the turn things had taken, when, to his further chagrin, he heard a loud plunge, as of some heavy object falling into deep water. He knew it was the buck. Another plunge!—that was the

dog.

There was a river ahead—the antelope had taken to it, and would now escape to a certainty. The water seemed near—there was an open tract that led in that direction. Perhaps he might be in time. Perhaps he might get to the bank before the buck could reach the opposite shore. A bullet from his rifle might yet secure the game.

Without hesitating a moment he again spurred his horse, and galloped down the hill in the direction of the water.

There *was* a river, and in a few seconds' time Hendrik was on its bank. He had arrived at a place where the water was deep and the current still, but the rippling wave on the surface guided him. Two objects were seen above the surface moving rapidly across. They were the horns of the buck and the head of the buck-dog!

Hendrik had no time to alight. Before he could steady his horse, the blauw-bok had got out of the water, and was climbing up the opposite bank. There was just time for a hurried shot. The broad back of the antelope offered a fair mark, and the next moment a tuft of the hair near the spine, was seen to fly up like a spark, while a red stream spouted from the spot. The crack of a rifle explained this phenomenon; and before its echoes had died away, the antelope came tumbling down the slope, and lay motionless by the edge of the water.

The horns were Hendrik's!

Chapter Seventeen.

A Tough Struggle.

The horns were Hendrik's!

So thought Hendrik, when, at the crack of his rifle, he saw the buck roll backward down the bank into the very jaws of the buck-dog.

He was mistaken, however—as he had reason to think the moment after—when the antelope, instead of lying still where it had fallen, rose to its feet again, beat off the dog with its horns, and springing over him, once more plunged into the river! The dog bounded after, and, swimming faster than the antelope, overtook it near the middle of the stream, seizing it by the quarters as he got within reach. The strong buck soon shook him off, and turning short upon his persecutor, struck at him in the water. Two or three times the hound was under its horns, but the water yielding saved Hendrik's favourite from destruction, although more than once he was forced under the surface.

This struggle was kept up for some moments. The river ran red, blood pouring from the wound of the bullet, as well as from the flanks of the antelope, lacerated by the tusks of his canine assailant. The blood of the hound also helped to colour the current—for the sharp horns of the buck had been used to some purpose, and several gashes appeared in the hide of the dog, from which the crimson flood streamed copiously.

After delivering his fire, Hendrik had alighted, not with the intention of reloading, but merely to secure his prize, which, as he supposed, had been finished by the shot. He was about tying his bridle to a branch; but, before he

had succeeded in making a knot, the renewed struggle on the opposite bank, followed by the plunge, caused him suddenly to drop the reins and again lay hold of his rifle.

He loaded with all haste, and ran forward to the bank.

There was a fringing of willow-bushes along the edge of the river. In the saddle Hendrik had been able to look over them, and at that elevation commanded a view of the water. Afoot he could not see it, except obscurely through the tops of the willows. He could only see that the water was waving with eddies and covered with frothy bubbles. He could hear that a struggle was going on between buck and buck-dog, but the combatants had got close in to the willows, and the leaves prevented Hendrik from seeing either of them.

At one place there was a break in the willows, where the bank sloped downward to the water's edge. It was a mere pathway, made by wild animals in going to drink. On both sides of it the bushes grew thick, forming a narrow lane or alley.

Hendrik's eye fell upon this path, and the next moment he was hastening down it. The antelope from the river had also noted the path. It was the place easiest of access from the water, as there the bank was more shelving than at any other point; and just at the time the hunter rushed into it from the woods, the buck was entering its opposite end from the water!

Both were going at full speed, and in five seconds' time they met face to face in the narrow pathway!

There was no chance for either to make way for the other. The close thicket on each side prevented that. There was no chance for either to retreat; the impetuosity with which they were running rendered it

impossible for either to give back or even halt. They must meet with a fearful collision!

Such a meeting would be entirely to the advantage of the buck, and, perhaps, to the total destruction of the hunter.

Hendrik saw this, and would have aimed at the buck and fired had time been allowed him. But so sudden and unexpected was the encounter that he had not even time to get his rifle to the level, before the animal was too near to admit of such delay.

He fired wildly without taking aim. The bullet scored the back of the antelope, only to add to its fury; and with head lowered and scimitars set, it rushed onward upon the hunter.

It was a moment of peril for Hendrik. Another moment, and he would have been impaled upon the sharp horns; but at that instant, as if guided by an impulse of instinct, he dropped his rifle, and ran forward towards the buck, as if to fling himself upon its horns!

That was far from being his intention, however. When within about three feet of these horns, he gave a sudden bound and rose like a springbok into the air!

HENDRIK'S ESCAPE FROM THE BLUE BUCK. Page 111.

That spring saved him. Before he came down again the horns had passed under him, and he fell heavily across the back of the buck.

The hind-quarters of the antelope sank under his weight, and Hendrik slipped off; but before he could recover his

feet, the furious animal had turned, and was again springing upon him where he lay.

It would have been all up with Hendrik, had he been left to himself at that moment. But succour was nigh.

The buck-dog had reached the spot; and just as the antelope was making his rush, the dog sprang forward, and, seizing it by the throat, hung fast.

Hendrik received the blow, but the weight of the dog hanging to the throat of the antelope prevented the latter from giving it with effect, and the hunter was but slightly injured.

In an instant the buck kicked the dog off with its hoofs, and flung him to the ground. In another instant it would have finished him with its horns; but Hendrik, from the sharp blow he had received, was now as angry as the antelope itself, and was not going to see his favourite hound killed before his eyes without making an effort to save him. Warmed to the conflict, he thought no longer of retreating; and, drawing his hunting-knife, he sprang forward upon the antelope, that, engaged with the dog, chanced to stand broadside towards him. With his left hand the hunter grasped one of the horns near its tip; and, using this as a fulcrum, he turned round upon it, and thrust the long blade between the ribs of the buck!

It was a home-thrust—for the animal fell dead at Hendrik's feet before he could let go his hold upon the horn. The blade had passed through its heart.

As soon as Hendrik had cooled a little from the conflict, he thought of Groot Willem, who had not yet come up. He began to fear that the latter might have received some serious injury, and he determined to ride back to the spot, letting the buck lie where it had fallen. He

could return for it afterwards. Fortunately his own well-trained horse had not run off—though left with trailing bridle—and Hendrik was soon mounted and riding back on the spoor of the chase.

There was one thing that mystified Hendrik not a little. While battling with the buck he had heard the loud report of Groot Willem's roer. What could he have fired at? Had any of the other antelopes come in his way? or was it a signal of distress? Hendrik was mystified and felt some apprehension.

He had not far to go to satisfy himself. On reaching the edge of the timber, he saw Groot Willem mounted and about starting forward to rejoin him. This was a joyful sight to Hendrik, as the fact that Groot Willem was once more in the saddle and the "Camel" upon his legs again, was good *primâ facie* evidence that neither had sustained any very serious damage.

Nor had they, as Hendrik ascertained by riding up to the spot. Groot Willem was not so badly hurt as Hendrik himself, for the latter had one of his arms well scored by the horns of the buck. Groot Willem's temper, however, was severely ruffled; and though Hendrik was very much inclined to laugh at the accident, he forbore doing so, out of regard for his friend's feelings.

Hendrik now inquired about the report he had heard.

Was it the roer? Groot Willem answered his question in the affirmative, by a simple nod, at the same time pointing to an odd-looking animal that lay dead upon the ground, with all the appearance of having been freshly killed.

Hendrik rode forward, and, bending down in his saddle, for some moments regarded the animal.

A rare and singular creature it was. It was about the size of a large terrier, but shaped very differently. It had the drooping hind-quarters that distinguish the hyenas, and altogether the look of these animals; but its muzzle was much more slender and pointed, its back more rounded, and its limbs not so stout as those of the hyena's. It was a more agreeable creature to look upon, and although its hair was long, it had a soft woolly appearance. The general colour of the hair was grey with a reddish tinge, and with black bands running transversely to the body of the animal. This as much as anything else caused it to resemble the hyena—that is, the species known as the "striped hyena," (*Hyena striata*).

It was not a hyena, however, but one of those odd animals that seem to belong to no class of creatures, but form a connecting link between several. South Africa is especially prolific in such eccentric forms, both among its birds and quadrupeds. As an illustration of this, we might mention the wild-hound, the hyrax, the zerda, the fennec, the gnoo, and the aard-vark; and among birds, the serpent-eater, the bateleur eagle, and several other kinds. Most of these odd animals are only represented by a single species, and that only to be found in South Africa.

Now the creature that lay stretched out before the eyes of Hendrik was just one of these zoological puzzles, that has occupied the attention of the systematists for a long while. Some have classed it among dogs, others with hyenas, some make a civet of it, and others a fox. With all these animals it has affinities, both in habits and anatomical structure, but it is not near enough to any to be regarded either as dog, fox, civet, or hyena; and hence a genus has been created for itself—the genus *Proteles*. It was a *proteles* that lay upon the ground —*Proteles Delalandii*,—so called from its first describer, the traveller De Lalande.

Hendrik and Groot Willem knew the animal by the name of "aard-wolf," or earth-wolf, so called because it lives underground in a burrow of its own making. They knew it well enough, for it is common through all South Africa—even in the settled districts, though on account of its nocturnal and burrowing habits it is not often seen. It makes itself known to the boor by its evil propensities; and although he may rarely get his eyes upon it, as it is never abroad by day, he is often called upon to witness the dire effects of its midnight marauding.

The sheep of South Africa are of a singular breed—singular on account of their large fleshy tails, consisting of a mass of almost pure fat which often weighs several pounds, and is used by the colonial housewives in many operations of cookery. Now these tails, hanging to the ground are the favourite *bonne-bouche* of the aard-wolf, whose jaws, not strong like those of the hyena, compel him to feed upon soft substances. It is, therefore, no uncommon thing for the vee-boor to get up in the morning, and find several of his best sheep divested of their valuable tails, and all through the voracity of the aard-vark.

It was not likely that either Groot Willem or Hendrik was ignorant of the aard-vark. Neither were they. Hendrik did not ride up to examine the animal out of curiosity. He had seen such before, and killed them too. His object in bending over it was to see where Groot Willem's bullet had hit.

"Where had the creature come from?" he inquired.

Groot Willem replied that it had issued from its burrow—the hole that had caused the "Camel" to stumble. That it had come out, just as he, Groot Willem, recovered his feet; and that, provoked at it for having been the cause

of his misfortune, he had sent a bullet through it, otherwise he would not have reckoned it worth his powder and lead.

This explained the report of the roer.

Hendrik and Groot Willem were now about to return for the buck, with the intention of carrying as much of the meat to camp as they could manage upon their horses; when Hans and Arend came up, and the four rode off together.

They quartered the antelope, and each having packed a quarter upon his croup, they set out for the camp.

All of them were in good spirits, except perhaps Groot Willem, who had two reasons for feeling out of sorts,—the loss of his dog, and the loss of a little of his hunter-fame. And he was not permitted to forget his accident so easily, for although Hendrik had forborne to give him further chagrin, yet Hans and Arend did not deal so delicately with him, but both laughed heartily at his unfortunate tumble.

Chapter Eighteen.

The Arrow-Poison.

Klaas and Jan had long since ridden their ponies back to camp, and having off-saddled, remained by the wagons.

For all that they were not idle—that is, they were not without something to interest and amuse them. Swartboy was the genius worshipped by Klaas and Jan, for there was no bird in all Africa that Swartboy could not either snare or trap; and in his hours of leisure, when the oxen were kraaled and off his hands, he was in the habit of showing the two young "mynheers" how to construct many a sort of decoy and trap for the fowls of the air.

Upon this day in particular, however, they were more than usually interested in the Bushman's proceedings, as his attention was turned to capturing,—not a fowl of the air, but of the earth,—an ostrich.

Swartboy had resolved to pluck the plumes out of the old cock that had been seen, and whose dwelling had been so rudely approached and plundered in the morning.

But how was Swartboy to capture the cock?

It was not his intention to take him alive. That is a difficult matter, and can only be managed by men mounted upon fleet horses, and then after a very long and troublesome chase.

Swartboy had no wish to take the ostrich alive. The bird would be of no use to him in that way, as the skin and plume-feathers were the spoils upon which the Bushman's thoughts were bent, or rather the rix-dollars which these would yield on Swartboy's return to Graaf

Reinet. Therefore he did not intend to *catch* the old cock, but *kill* him, if he could.

But how was the Bushman to accomplish this? Would he borrow the rifle from Hendrik, or the great elephant-gun—the "roer"—from Groot Willem, and shoot the ostrich? Not likely. Swartboy was no shot, that is, with fire-arms. He knew nothing about them; and with either rifle or roer he could scarcely have hit an elephant, much less an ostrich!

But if Swartboy knew not how to manage a gun, he had a weapon of his own that he did know how to manage,—his bow. With that tiny bow,—scarce a yard in length,—and those small slender arrows, the Bushman could send a missile as deadly as the leaden bullet of either rifle or roer.

Looking at the light reed, with its little barbed head and feathered shaft, you would scarcely believe it possible that such a weapon could bring down the big strong ostrich; and yet with a similar shaft had Swartboy often levelled the great camelopard in the dust. A deadly and dangerous weapon was the Bushman's arrow.

But what rendered it so? Not its size, and surely not the force with which it could be projected from that tiny bow? Neither. There was something besides the strength of the bow and the weight of the arrow to make it a "deadly and dangerous weapon." There was *poison*.

Swartboy's arrows were true Bushman weapons,—they were poisoned. No wonder they were deadly.

The use of the bow among savage nations all over the earth, and the great similarity of its form and construction everywhere, may be regarded as one of the most curious facts in the history of our race. Tribes and nations that appear to have been isolated beyond all

possible communication with the rest of the world, are found in possession of this universal weapon, constructed on the same principle, and only differing slightly in details—these details usually having reference to surrounding circumstances. When all else between two tribes or nations of savages may differ, both will be found carrying a common instrument of destruction,—the bow and arrows.

Can it be mere coincidence, like necessities in different parts of the world producing like results, or is this possession of a similar weapon among distant and remote peoples a proof of unity or communication between them in early times?

These inquiries would lead to a long train of reflections, which, however interesting, would here be out of place.

But an equally or still more curious fact is that of *poisoned* arrows. We find here and there, in almost every quarter of the globe, tribes of savages who poison their arrows; and the mode of preparing and using this poison is almost exactly the same among all of them. Where there is a difference, it arises from the different circumstances by which the tribe may be surrounded.

Now the knowledge of arrow-poison, as well as the mode of preparing it and the habit of using it, belong to tribes of savages so completely isolated, that it is not probable —hardly possible, in fact—that either they or their ancestors could ever have communicated it to one another. We cannot believe that there ever existed intercourse between the Bushman of Africa and the Chuncho of the Amazon, much less between the former and the forest tribes of North America; yet all these use the arrow-poison and prepare it in a similar manner! All make it by a mixture of vegetable poison with the subtle fluid extracted from the fang-glands of venomous

serpents. In North America, the rattlesnake and moccason, with several species of roots, furnish the material; in South America, the "wourali," or "curare," as it is indifferently called, is a mixture of a vegetable juice with the poison extracted from the glands of the coral-snake, (*Echidna ocellata*), the "boiquira" or "diamond rattlesnake," (*Crotalus horridus*), the lance-headed "viper," (*Trigonocephalus lanceolate*) the formidable "bushmaster," (*Lachesis rhombeata*), and several other species. In South Africa, a similar result is obtained by mixing the fluid from the poison-glands of the puff-adder, or that of various species of *naja*, the "cobras" of that country, with the juice from the root of an Amaryllis, called *gift-bol* (poison-bulb) in the phraseology of the colonial Dutch. It is out of such elements that the Bushman mixes his dangerous compound.

Now our Bushman, Swartboy, understood the process as well as any of his race; and it was in watching him mixing the ingredients and poisoning his arrows that Klaas and Jan spent the early portion of that day.

All the ingredients he carried with him; for whenever a "geel coppel," (*Naja haje*), or a "spuugh-slang," (*Naja nigra*), or the "puff-adder," (*Vipera arretans*), or the horned viper, (*Cerastes caudalis*,)—whenever any of these was killed on the route—and many were—Swartboy took care to open the poison-gland, situated behind their fangs, and take therefrom the drop of venom, which he carefully preserved in a small phial. He also carried another ingredient, a species of bitumen obtained from certain caverns, where it exudes from the rocks. The object of this is not, as supposed by some travellers, to render the charm "more potent," but simply to make it glutinous, so that it would stick securely to the barb of the arrow, and not brush off too easily. A similar result is obtained by the South American Indians from a vegetable gum.

The gift-bol, or poison-bulb, was easily obtained, as the species of Amaryllis that yields it grew plentifully near. But Swartboy had not trusted to this chance, as during past days he had plucked several of the roots, and put them away in one of the side-chests of the wagon, where many other little knick-knacks of his lay snugly stowed.

Klaas and Jan, therefore, had the rare chance of witnessing the manufacture of the celebrated arrow-poison.

They saw Swartboy bruise the gift-bol, and simmer it over the fire in a small tin pan which he had; they saw him drop in the precious snake-venom; they saw him stir it round, until it became of a very dark colour, and then, to their great astonishment, they saw him try its strength *by tasting*!

This seemed odd to both, and so may it to you, boy reader,—that a drop of poison, the smallest portion of which would have killed Swartboy as dead as a herring, could be thus swallowed by him with impunity! But you are to remember that poisons, both vegetable and mineral, are very different in their nature. A small quantity of arsenic taken into the stomach will produce death, and yet you might swallow the head of a rattlesnake, fangs, poison-gland, and all, without the slightest danger.

On the contrary, if a single grain of the latter were to enter your blood, even if it were only scratched in with a pin, its effects would be fatal, while other poisons may be introduced into the blood without any fatal result.

Swartboy knew there was no arsenic or any species of "stomach-poison," if I am allowed to use such a phrase, in his mixture. It was only "blood-poison," which he might *taste* with impunity.

The bitumen was the last thing put into the pan; and when Swartboy had stirred it a while longer, and sufficiently thickened it, so that it would adhere to the barbs, he took down a quiver of arrows already made, and dipped each of them into the poison. As soon as the barbs had cooled, and the poison became well dried, the arrows were ready for use, and Swartboy intended that some of them should be used on that very day. Before the sun should set, he designed sending one or more of them through the skin of an ostrich.

Chapter Nineteen.

Decoying the Old Cock.

It was not the process of mixing the arrow-poison, so much as the use to be made of it, that interested Klaas and Jan. They knew that the Bushman intended to try its effect on an ostrich that afternoon. More than that, Swartboy had promised they should actually see how he managed matters, and witness the death of the ostrich. With such a prospect before them, the boys were in high spirits all the fore-part of the day.

It was to be late in the afternoon, near sunset, in fact, before the sport should come off. Of course not till the return of the ostriches to their nest—for it was there the drama was to be enacted. The nest and its environs were to be the scene of the tragedy—the time a little before sunset. Such was Swartboy's "programme."

Of course Swartboy had leave from the older boys to go upon almost whatever expedition he pleased, but certainly upon this one, since Klaas and Jan were so interested about it. Indeed, some of the others would have liked to take part in the affair, but for certain reasons that could not be.

Some of the hunters had doubts as to the result. They knew the poisoned arrow would kill any ostrich. They did not doubt that. But how was Swartboy to get near enough to discharge one of his tiny shafts into the bird's body? That was the question that puzzled them. He proposed doing so in broad daylight. Indeed there was no other time for him. All knew that before night the ostriches would return to their nest—as soon as the sun was low, and it became cooler,—but they knew also that the birds having found out what had happened in their

absence would start off in alarm, and abandon the nest altogether.

Swartboy, therefore, would have no darkness to shelter him from their gaze. How was he to approach them within the range required for his small bow—that is, within less than fifty yards?

Did he intend to place himself in ambush and wait for their return? If he did, it must be near the nest, else he would have but a poor chance. There was no knowing in what direction the birds might come back, or which way they would scamper off again.

Now for Swartboy to conceal himself near the nest, all believed to be an impossibility. There was not a bit of cover within five hundred yards of the spot—neither bush nor stone big enough to conceal the body of a man from creatures less wary than ostriches, but from these a cat could not have hidden her carcass within a circle of a thousand yards diameter. As to Swartboy's sinking a "shooting-hole" and lying await in that, the boys never thought of such a thing. A shooting-hole surrounded by bushes might do for a lion, or a rhinoceros, or an elephant, but no ostrich could be bamboozled by any such *ruse*; for these birds—that on account of their appearance have been called stupid by some superficial observers—are in reality the very reverse. The slightest alteration in the form of the ground, either around their nests or near it, would be noted by them, and would prevent them from approaching it, except after such a reconnoissance as would defeat all Swartboy's plans. But he had no thought of a shooting-hole—nothing of the sort.

What plan, then, had he in his mind? The boys could not guess; and Swartboy, like all cunning hunters, did not care to tell his plans to everybody. He preferred letting

them discover them by his acts; and as all of them were hunters themselves and boys of good breeding, they did not persecute him with idle questions, but watched his preparations in silence.

Now one of his preparations, made before starting, was to take the little fennec that had been killed in the morning, and "truss" it with a number of skewers, in such a way that it stood upright upon its legs, and at a short distance looked as if it was "alive and well!"

This was Swartboy's last act, before setting out for the ostriches' nest.

When it was finished, Swartboy observed that the sun was low enough, and taking the fennec under his army and his bow in his hand, he struck off over the plain.

The boys were to be spectators of the affair, but that was rather in a figurative sense. There were two pocket telescopes, and when Swartboy promised that Klaas and Jan should be witnesses of the thing, he had these telescopes in his mind. For certain reasons he could not take any of the boys along with him, and from the wary character of the game they could not go near enough to observe it with the naked eye. To have done so would have driven the ostriches out of Swartboy's reach, for it has been already stated that these far-seeing birds can sight an enemy farther off than they can themselves be seen.

The telescopes, therefore, must be brought into play, and as Klaas and Jan begged to have the use of them, it was arranged that the two boys should climb into a tree, and describe what they saw to the rest, who stood below. That would be witnessing a spectacle by a sort of *second sight*, as Arend jocosely remarked.

Klaas and Jan were therefore hoisted up into a camel-thorn acacia; and, seating themselves on its branches, prepared their telescopes for use.

The elevation enabled them not only to see the nest, for that was visible from the ground, but the surface of the plain to a considerable distance beyond. They would thus be enabled to note every movement either Swartboy or the ostriches should make.

Now it has been stated that within a circle of five hundred yards radius from the nest, there was no cover that would have concealed a cat. With the exception of a stone here and there—none of them larger than a quartern loaf—the sandy surface was perfectly smooth and level as a table.

The boys had noticed this in the morning. Hendrik and Groot Willem had taken good notice of it, for they, as well as Swartboy, had thought of "waylaying" the ostriches on their return, but had given up the idea, from the fact of there being no cover to conceal them from the eyes of the wary birds.

But just outside the circumference mentioned, there was a chance of cover—a bush that by tight squeezing might have sheltered the body of a man. Both Hendrik and Groot Willem had seen this bush, but on account of its great distance from the nest they had never thought of its being used as a cover. Five hundred yards off,—it might as well have been five miles. Even had it been on the side by which the ostriches had gone off, and by which they, the hunters, conjectured they would return, the bush might have served. A shot might have been obtained as the birds came back to the nest. But it was not on that side,—on the very opposite—and in the direction of the camp. Neither Hendrik nor Groot Willem had entertained the idea of lying behind it.

Swartboy had; and to this bush now repaired Swartboy as straight as he could go. For what purpose? To conceal himself behind it, and wait for the ostriches. That was his design.

But what would his arrows avail—poisoned as they were—at the distance of five hundred yards? Ah! Swartboy knew what he was about. Let us record his movements in the words of Klaas and Jan, who watched them narrowly.

"Swartboy has reached the bush," reported Jan; "he lays down his bow and arrows beside it. Now he has gone away from it. He is proceeding in a straight line towards the nest. He has the fox with him. See! he stops again,—a little beyond the bush he has halted—between it and the nest, but nearer the bush."

"Very near the bush," said Klaas; "not twenty yards from it, I'm sure."

"Well, what does he do there?" demanded Hendrik. "He appears to be stooping?"

"He is stooping," replied Jan. "Let me see! He's got the fox in his hands, he is placing it on the ground! He has left it! I declare, it is standing by itself, as if it were alive!"

"It's very clear what he intends by that," said Hans; "I can understand now how he means to get the birds within range."

"And I!" rejoined Hendrik.

"And I!" echoed Groot Willem.

"Now," continued Jan, "he's going on to the nest—he has reached it, and is walking round and round, and stooping

and kicking with his feet. I can't tell what he's about—can you, Klaas?"

"I think," replied Klaas, "he's trying to cover up the broken shells we left there."

"Oh! that's exactly it!" said Jan. "See! he's stooping over the nest, he has lifted an egg in his hand!"

It is to be remembered that only the fresh eggs were brought away in the morning. Those in the nest that had undergone hatching were of course let alone—all except one or two, that had been broken to "try" them.

"He's coming back this way," said Jan. "He has the egg in his hand! Now he has put it down right under the snout of the fox!"

"Ha!" ejaculated Hans, Groot Willem, and Hendrik, "how cunning of old Swart!"

"Now," continued Jan, "he's back to the bush: and now he's squatted down behind it."

After a little while both Klaas and Jan announced that Swartboy was making no further movements, but continued to lie quietly.

Now the secret of Swartboy's strategy lay in his knowledge of a fact in natural history,—a knowledge of the antipathy that exists between the ostrich and the egg-eating fox. Swartboy's experience had taught him the habits of the fennec, and also the hostile feeling of the ostrich towards this enemy. So strong is this feeling on the part of the bird, that whenever it sets its eye upon one of these creatures it will run directly towards it, for the purpose of destroying it. On such occasions the speed of the quadruped will not save it. Unless its burrow be nigh, or some thick bush or cleft among the

rocks offer it a shelter, a single kick from the legs of the mighty bird at once puts an end to its prowling existence.

Swartboy knew all this, and for that reason had he set his decoy. Conspicuously placed, the birds would be sure to see it; and with their nest half plundered, and one of the eggs still under its very nose, they would not be slow in coming up to take revenge upon the poor fennec, the supposed robber, and to them well-known burglar.

"The ostriches are coming!" cried the sharp-sighted Jan, after a long pause.

"Where?" asked Klaas. "I don't see them yet;—where, Jan?"

"Yonder," replied Jan. "Beyond the nest,—far off."

"Oh, now I see!" said Klaas; "just the way they went off in the morning; three of them,—a cock and two hens,—they are the same, I suppose."

"Now they are getting up near the nest," reported Jan; "now they are up to it. See them! What are they doing? they are running about in a terrible way. See! their heads move up and down,—they are striking with their legs. What are they about?"

"I think," rejoined Klaas,—"I declare I think they are *breaking the eggs*."

"Not a doubt of it," remarked Hans. "That is always their way when they return and find the nest disturbed either by a human being or an animal. No doubt that is what they are at."

Hendrik and Groot Willem confirmed this statement by their assent.

“Oh!” exclaimed Jan, “they have left the nest,—they are coming this way,—they are coming towards Swartboy,—how fast they run! Hey—they are upon the fennec! Ho! they have kicked it over! See, they are pecking it with their bills and knocking it about like a foot-ball. Hurrah! such a jolly game as is going on yonder!”

“What is old Swart doing, anyhow? They’re near enough for a shot.”

“He’s doing something,” answered Klaas. “I’m sure I saw him move. Did he not draw his bow yonder?”

“He did,” replied Jan; “he has let off an arrow. I saw his arms move suddenly. See, the ostriches are off again. Ho! they are quite gone!”

It was not so, however; for, although the three ran off on hearing the twang of the Bushman’s bow, they did not run far. After going some quarter of a mile or so, the cock began to droop his wings and run round in circles, the hens all the while following. His movements now became of a very eccentric kind, and it was plain that Swartboy’s arrow had pierced him, and the poison was doing its work. The bird reeled like a drunken man, once or twice fell to its knees, rose again, ran on a piece farther, flapping its wings, and vibrating its long neck from side to side; and then, staggering forward, fell upon the plain!

For several minutes it continued to flutter, kicking out with its strong limbs, and raising the dust as if it had been a buffalo. At length its struggles ceased, and it lay motionless upon the sand.

The two hens still continued near, and from their actions were evidently both surprised and alarmed. They did not, however, attempt to run off, until Swartboy, knowing

they were far beyond the reach of his bow, rose up from his ambush, and walked towards them. Then both took to their heels, and scouring off over the plain, were soon out of sight. Klaas and Jan now reported that Swartboy was stooping over the dead cock, and, as they believed, skinning him.

That was exactly what Swartboy was doing, for, about an hour after, he came into camp carrying the skin upon his shoulders, and with an air of triumph, that plainly said—

“Congo, could you do that?”

Chapter Twenty.

A Brush with the Brindled Gnoo.

The young yägers resolved to stay a couple of days longer by the fountain in the mokhala grove. Their object was to wait until the flesh of the blue-buck—which is excellent eating—should be reduced to biltong. They did not know what chance of game there might be upon their route for the next five or six days. The way was new to all of them—even to the guide Congo, who had only a general knowledge of that part of the country. They were heading for the Molopo River, and Congo knew how to find that well enough; but their route through the interlying country he knew nothing about. There might be plenty of game—there might be a great scarcity of it—he could not tell.

Of course neither could Swartboy. The hunters were now out of the Bushman country and into a territory inhabited by poor tribes of the great Bechuana family. Swartboy's native district lay to the southwest, in the direction of Namaqualand. He had never been so far east in his life, and of course was quite a stranger to the route they were pursuing.

Under these circumstances Hans, who from his age and superior wisdom was looked upon as a sort of leader, recommended that they should not go forward until they had properly jerked the flesh of the blue-buck.

That, with what remained of the gemsbok, would secure them against falling short of provision, should game prove scarce. They would only have to tarry a couple of days longer. That would be sufficient under such a strong sun to dry the biltong properly, whereas if packed without being well cured, the hot weather would spoil it

directly, and they might be left in the lurch without a morsel of meat.

Their stay at their present camp was, therefore, prolonged for two days, during which time the flesh of the blue-buck, with the remaining parts of that of the oryx, hanging in red festoons from the branches of the acacias, became dark, stiff, and hard to the touch, and was then in a condition to keep for several weeks if required.

But the young yägers did not remain constantly by the camp during all the intervening time. The biltong required no watching. It had been hung upon branches, sufficiently high to place it beyond the reach of prowling jackals and hyenas at night, and during the day there was always some one by the camp to keep off the vultures.

On the first of these two days the young yägers mounted, all six, and rode off to the grassy plains, where they had hunted the blue-buck, in hopes of falling in either with this or some other species of antelope.

They were not disappointed. On arriving at the plain, they perceived that it was occupied—not by one, but by several kinds of creatures. Three species of animals were seen upon it. Far out was a herd of small creatures, whose lyre-shaped horns, and yellow dun bodies, told that they were springboks,—a fact made plain by their strange behaviour,—by individuals of the herd now and then bounding up into the air, and throwing open the marsupial folding of skin over their croups, and displaying the long snow-white hair that lines that singular pouch.

Not far from these, and occasionally mixing among them, was a drove of larger animals, whose singular colour and markings could not be mistaken. They were *dauws*, or, in

the clumsy language of the closet naturalists, "Burchell's zebras," (*Equus Burchellii*). It has been already stated that this species differs from the true zebra in several respects. Its ground colour is light sienna, while that of the zebra is nearly white. The stripes upon the former are dark brown, while those of the latter are pure black; but the most characteristic difference in the markings is, that in the true zebra the stripes continue in rings down the legs to the very hoofs, while in the dauw the legs are white. The ears and tail of the zebra are more asinine than those of the dauw, while the tail of the latter is much the longer, as indeed is the body of the animal.

Both are beautiful creatures—perhaps the most beautiful quadrupeds in the world—a fine horse always excepted. But in point of beauty the true zebra certainly excels the "Burchell." They are very different in their habits—the zebra being a mountain-dwelling animal, while the dauw is strictly a denizen of the open plains, in places similar to those frequented by the quagga. Although it never herds with the latter, in habits it resembles their species more than it does the zebra. Observation of this fact by the boor hunters has led to the name among these people of "bonte quagga," (painted quagga.)

The third kind of animals upon the plain was a very remarkable species; so odd in form and movements were they, that no one who had once seen either them, or a picture of them, could afterwards fail to recognise them. The young yägers had never set eyes upon them before, but they had all seen a kindred species, which, except in colour and a few minor details, is very like them. They had all seen the "wildebeest" or "gnoo," and this enabled them at once to recognise the "blauw-wildebeest," or "brindled gnoo," for such they were.

They differ from the common wildebeest in being larger, somewhat heavier in form, scarcely so well shaped about

the head and neck—the latter not curving as in the common species—more shaggy in the mane, the nose-tuft, and the long hair on the throat and breast. In colour they are quite different, being of a dirty bluish tint, variegated with irregular stripes, or "brindles." Hence their trivial names of "blauw" wildebeest and "brindled" gnoo.

The two kinds, "gnoo" and "brindled gnoo," are never found on the same plains; but give place to each other. The range of the latter species extends farthest to the north. They are scarcely ever found alone, but generally accompanied by droves of the dauw; (Burchell's zebra or bonte quagga); and, what is a singular fact, the common species is rarely seen, except in company with the common quagga. Although neither of these keep company with their own congeners they yet live socially with one another, both also herding at times with springboks, hartebeests, and ostriches. A singular and interesting sight it is to see the gnoos, antelopes, and wild asses, curveting and galloping over the plain, now wheeling in circles, now halting in line, anon charging from point to point, like troops of cavalry in a review, while the ostriches stalk about or stand motionless, their tall forms rising high above the rest, as if they were the officers and generals-in-chief of the spectacle! Such a picture is often presented upon the karoo plains of Southern Africa.

As soon as the young yägers came in sight of the plain, they pulled up their horses, and sat for some moments regarding the lively scene that was exhibited upon its surface. The springboks were browsing, though some individuals were constantly in the air bounding up as if for their own amusement. The dauws were trooping about, sometimes halting, and sometimes galloping from point to point, as if in play or alarmed by some intruder. The brindled gnoos, that is the cows, were browsing in a

herd of thirty or forty in number, while the bulls stood around in small groups of three or four individuals, not moving, but apparently keeping a solemn watch over the others, every now and then snorting loudly, and uttering a sharp and peculiar cry, as if intended for some voice of warning or instruction. For hours the old bulls will hold this position, keeping apart from the rest, each little knot of them apparently conversing among themselves, while acting as sentries to the general herd of dauws, antelopes, and their own wives.

After a few minutes' deliberation, the hunters agreed to make their attack upon the herd of gnoos. They formed no plan. Stalking would be of little use, as they believed they would be able to ride down the wildebeest, and get a running shot; and it was to these they designed to give all their attention. The dauws—beautiful creatures as they were—were of no use as *game*, and it was game the party wanted. The springboks did not interest them; but the flesh of the wildebeest would have been a treat to all. It is excellent eating, resembling beef rather than venison—for the gnoo is in reality more of an ox than an antelope.

"Roast beef for dinner!" was the word given by Hendrik, and all the rest echoing this, they charged down upon the wildebeest herd.

They made no attempt at concealing their approach, but dashed directly forward upon the game, the buck-dogs—now only five in number—in the advance, with Hendrik's favourite heading.

In an instant the herds upon the plain were in motion—each species going its own way. The dauws galloped off in a clump, holding a straight course over the plain; the springboks scattering in every direction, as is their wont; while the gnoos, first uniting into an irregular drove, ran

forward some distance in a straight line, and then some broke to right and left, wheeled round, and came scouring back to the rear of the hunters!

In a few minutes the whole appearance of the plain was changed. The zebras had gone out of sight, so, too, the springboks. The gnoos alone remained under the view of the hunters. These were not to be seen in any particular direction. They were everywhere around—some running off before the dogs—some wheeling around to the rear—some galloping past within two or three hundred yards, and then charging forward so near to the horses, that some of the riders thought they meant to attack them. With their fierce little eyes, their sharp curving horns, and black shaggy frontlets, they appeared most formidable enemies, and indeed they *are* so when disposed to make an attack.

When wounded they are dangerous even to a mounted hunter, but one afoot would stand little chance of escape from their frenzied and impetuous charge. One of the oddest circumstances observed by the young yägers was, that the bulls, instead of galloping right away, lingered in the rear of the retreating herd,—now wheeling round to gaze upon the hunters, snorting as they stood—now making a dash forward out of their way, and sometimes two of them facing each other, and engaging in combat! And these combats did not appear to be "shams." On the contrary, the old bulls seemed to butt each other in good earnest, rushing at one another from a distance, dropping upon their knees, and bringing their heads together, till their horns, and the thick bony helmet-like plates that covered their fronts, cracked loudly against each other.

These battles appeared to be real; but, notwithstanding the earnestness of the combatants, they always gave up, and parted from the ground before the hunters could get

within range.

Notwithstanding their carelessness about running away altogether, it was not so easy a matter to get a fair shot at one; and our yägers might have returned to camp empty-handed had it not been for their buck-dogs. These, however, chanced to stick together, and having selected an old bull, soon separated him from the rest, and drove him at full speed across the plain. Hendrik and Groot Willem spurred after, and all the others followed, though falling to the rear as the chase continued.

A RAUSH WITH THE BRINDLED GNOO. Page 140.

Before the bull had gone two miles, the dogs began to pester him, and finding his heels failing he turned suddenly upon his canine pursuers, rushing at one and then another, as they came up, and knocking them over with his horns.

It is possible he would have bayed all *five* successfully; but the approach of the hunters caused him fresh alarm, and he broke bay, and once more stretched himself at full speed across the plain. Another mile would have brought him into some low timber, and he appeared to make for that. He kept ahead of the dogs for awhile longer, but when within about a hundred yards of the thicket, his wind again failed him; and as the buck-dogs were taking an occasional pull at his flanks, he became desperate and once more stood to bay.

The dogs soon ran in, but for awhile he was able to beat off all five, striking then right and left. At length some of them seized him by the throat, while the others clung to his tail and hind-quarters, and the struggle would no doubt have ended soon by their dragging the bull to the

earth; but Hendrik and Groot Willem rode up and ended it sooner by sending a pair of bullets through his ribs.

Chapter Twenty One.

A Battle with a Borelé.

Hans and Arend on this occasion had followed the chase, and were almost "in at the death;" and Klaas and Jan, who from the openness of the ground had had a view of the whole run, shortly after came up, spurring their panting ponies to the very top of their speed.

All six now dismounted to rest both themselves and horses after their sharp gallop, and also to skin the bull. Though Arend was habitually *chef-de-cuisine*, Hendrik and Groot Willem were the butchers; Hans, "the botanist of the expedition," might also be termed its "green-grocer," as his knowledge of botany enabled him to keep the camp-table supplied with many species of esculent roots and vegetables to be found growing wild upon the plains of Southern Africa.

While Hendrik and Groot Willem were flaying off the skin, Hans and Arend were busy with the head and horns, preparing them for preservation. It was nearly as much on account of these as for his meat that they had hunted the gnoo. They would also be trophies in the halls of the Graaf Reinet; for although the horns of the common gnoo are easily had, those of the brindled species are more precious, for the reason that the latter animal inhabits a more remote part of the country.

Klaas and Jan acted as assistants to the other four—now handing a knife, now holding a limb or flap of skin, and making themselves "generally useful." All six, therefore, were engaged.

While thus employed, all of them bending and stooping

one way or another, over the dead bull, and none of them keeping a look-out, a queer sound fell upon their ears that caused them to start all together into an erect attitude. The sound they had heard was a loud snort, followed by a blowing noise, somewhat similar to that made by terrified swine, but much fuller and louder. There was, also, the noise of snapping twigs and breaking branches.

These sounds caused all six to start, and some of them to tremble with fear; and the sight that came under their eyes as they looked up confirmed them in that emotion. In truth, it was a sight that would have inspired with alarm older hearts than theirs.

Breaking through the bushes, and causing the branches to bend and crackle, came a large animal. The tall upright horn upon its snout, its huge heavy body, and strong massive limbs, left them no room to doubt what sort of animal it was. It was a rhinoceros!

There are four species of these in South Africa; but the dark colour of its skin and the double horn proclaimed the one now seen to be the black rhinoceros, or "borelé"—the fiercest and most dangerous of the four.

When the boys first heard it, it was crashing through the bushes close to the edge of the thicket, but they had scarce turned their eyes in that direction before it shot out of the timber, head towards them, and came on at full gallop. Its head was raised high in air, its ears were in motion, and its small but saucy-looking tail was flirted about in a confident manner. Its black eyes gleamed with a malicious expression, and its air was one of anger and menace. The terror inspired by its look was not lessened by the loud snorting and blowing that issued from its fiery nostrils.

The boys saw at once, and to their alarm, that it was charging upon *them*! There could be no doubt about the matter. Its whole appearance denoted that it was bent upon attacking them, for it was heading directly for the spot where they stood. They knew, moreover, that there was nothing odd in that,—they knew that the black rhinoceros will charge upon any creature, whether man, quadruped, bird, or *bush*, without the slightest provocation!

It is needless to say that the boys were in a dilemma, and were aware of it as well. There were they, all six afoot upon the plain, with a fierce borelé rushing up to them, and at less than a hundred yards distance!

Fortunately for them the steeds were all well-trained, and fortunately the riders had had the precaution to fasten them in such a manner that it required but little time to get them free. But for these two circumstances some one of the six must certainly have been lifted upon the death-dealing horn of the borelé.

As it was the horses had been tied all around a tree that stood near. Each had his bridle looped to a small branch, so small that it could be wrenched off in a second of time, but large enough to keep a horse steady for awhile, unless something should alarm and startle him. This was a precaution the hunters had been taught by their fathers, and the knowledge now stood them in stead.

Of course the moment the borelé "hove" in sight, there was an end to the skinning of the gnoo. There was a chorus of cries expressing terror, a flinging away of knives, a sudden rush to the horses, a seizing of bridles, a snapping off of branches, and a simultaneous leaping into six saddles. All these acts did not take ten seconds of time to accomplish, and the last of them was not

accomplished one second too soon; for the riders had just time to turn the heads of their horses to the plain as the borelé came up. In fact, so close to them had he got his hideous snout that several of the horses shied and plunged as they took to flight, nearly dismounting one or two of the riders. To have been unhorsed at that moment would have been a perilous business.

All kept their seats, however, and in a moment more were flying over the plain in a close clump, the borelé snorting at their heels.

Now that they were in their saddles, and galloped freely off, some of the yägers were disposed to laugh. Hendrik and Groot Willem were among the number. They knew that the speed of a rhinoceros is no match for that of a horse, and they would soon get out of his way. They were disposed to regard the chase as a bit of fun rather than otherwise. All at once, however, a thought came into their minds that turned their merry mood into a feeling of new and painful apprehension.

The young yägers were riding in pairs. Hendrik and Groot Willem, mounted on their swift horses, had forged some distance ahead of the others. On turning their faces backward they perceived that the two boys, Klaas and Jan, had fallen considerably to the rear, and that the borelé was pushing them closely. He was not twenty yards behind either, for they rode side by side, as if in a racing gallop. Hans and Arend were further in advance, and these also looking back at the same instant perceived the perilous situation of their younger brothers.

To all four the idea seemed to occur at the same moment, that though a horse can outrun the rhinoceros, a pony *cannot*, and the thought drew from them a simultaneous expression of alarm. Beyond a doubt Klaas

and Jan were in danger. Should the borelé overtake them, their ponies would not save them. The huge brute would gore these animals to death, or impale them at the first stroke of his stout sharp horn. Beyond a doubt the boys were in danger!

So thought their four brothers as they glanced back; and, as they continued to gaze, they became the more convinced of this fearful truth. They saw that the distance between them and the rhinoceros, instead of widening, was gradually growing less—the borelé was gaining upon them!

It was a moment of painful apprehension with all four; but at this moment Hendrik performed one of the neatest manoeuvres that had occurred during the whole expedition. With a wrench upon his bridle he turned suddenly out of his course, and then wheeling round rode backward, calling on Groot Willem to act similarly, but with his head turned to the opposite side.

Groot Willem, as if by instinct, obeyed, and, diverging suddenly from each other, the two wheeled right and left at the same instant. Their horses' heads were now turned to the rear, and after going a pace or two they halted, and got their guns in readiness.

First Hans and Arend swept past between the two halted hunters,—then passed Klaas and Jan upon the frightened ponies, and then came "borelé."

Before the last had got fairly on a line, Hendrik and Groot Willem covered his huge body, fired, and then, galloping round to his rear, commenced reloading.

Both balls took effect, and, though neither brought the brute to the ground, they made a decided alteration in his pace, and in a moment it was perceived that he was

running slower, while the blood flowed freely from his wounds. He still, however, kept on after the ponies; and it is hard to say how far he might have followed them, had it not been that Hans and Arend, exactly imitating the manoeuvre of Hendrik and Groot Willem, now also wheeled right and left, came back a pace or two, halted, and delivered their pieces in the face of the rhinoceros.

Again the bullets took effect, and again did not prove fatal. But the danger, as far as Klaas and Jan were concerned, was over; for the borelé, instead of pursuing the ponies further, turned short on his nearer antagonists, and rushed first upon one, then the other, with all the strength and fury that was left in his body.

Several charges were made by him without effect, as the riders, now faced towards him, were able to spring to one side and gallop out of his way.

For nearly a quarter of an hour the battle was kept up, the four loading and firing as fast as they could under the circumstances.

At length the day was decided by a bullet from the big elephant-gun of Groot Willem, which, penetrating the skull of the huge borelé, sent him rolling over in the dust.

A loud "hurrah!" proclaimed the victory, and the six yägers now rode up and alighted by the huge body of the borelé, that, prostrate and lifeless, no longer caused them alarm.

An axe was obtained from the wagon, and his long anterior horn—a splendid trophy—was hacked off from his snout, and carried away; while another journey was made for the meat and horns of the blauw-wildebeest, which were packed behind the hunters upon the croups of their

horses, and brought safely into camp.

Chapter Twenty Two.

The Interrupted Breakfast.

Next morning the young yägers slept late—because they had nothing particular to do. They did not purpose continuing their journey before the following morning; and on that day they intended to lie up, so that their horses, might rest and be fresh for the *road*.

They rose, therefore, a little later than usual, and breakfasted on the tongue of the brindled gnoo, with hot coffee and hard bread; a stock of which they had brought along in their wagons, and which still held out. It would not have been as great a deprivation to the young yägers to have gone without bread, as it would to you, boy reader. There live many people in South Africa to whom bread is a luxury almost unknown. Many tribes of the native people never eat such a thing, and there are thousands of the frontier Dutch colonists, that do without it altogether. The people of South Africa, both native and colonial, are not an *agricultural* but a *pastoral people*, and therefore pay but little attention to the cultivation of the soil. Their herds of horned cattle, their horses, their flocks of big-tailed sheep and goats, engross all their time, and *agricultural* farming is not to their taste. Although the wealthier among the boors plant a few acres of Kaffir corn—a variety of the "Indian corn," or maize—and sow some bushels of "buckwheat," yet this is principally for their own use. This class also cultivate many kinds of vegetables in their gardens, and have large orchards containing apples, peaches, pomegranates, pears, and quinces, with vineyards for the grape, and enclosures for melons, cucumbers, and pumpkins. But among the poorer classes, and particularly on the remote frontier, such things are hardly thought of;

and their cattle *kraals* are the only enclosures around the dwelling of the "vee-boor," or stock-farmer. Among these people, bread is a rarity, and their staple food is "biltong," and fresh beef or mutton cooked in a variety of ways, and so as to be quite palatable—for the *cuisine* of the boor is by no means to be despised.

In many parts the staple food of the frontier boor is venison—that is, in districts where the ordinary game has not yet been exterminated. Within the frontier districts, springboks are plenty, as also the common wildebeests; and piles of the horns of these may be seen lying around the kraals of every vee-boor. The flesh of the wildebeests, as already stated, is more like beef than venison, and when fat, or cooked in the delicious fat of the great sheep's tails, is excellent eating.

The quagga, which is also common in these parts, is killed for its flesh; but this is rank and oily, and only eaten by the Hottentot servants.

Our young yägers were the children of wealthy parents, and had therefore learnt to eat bread, though on a pinch they could have got along without it. But they had brought several sacks of biscuit with them, and with these and coffee, and the tongue of the blauw-wildebeest, they were making a hearty breakfast.

They were all right merry, chatting over their adventure with the borelé, and laughing at the danger now that it was past.

They were taking their time with their breakfast, eating it leisurely and in no hurry, as they meant to spend the day in a sort of *dolce far niente* manner—loitering about the camp, or perhaps putting in a stitch wherever there should be a weak place in either saddle or bridle, so as to make themselves thoroughly ready for the route. Every

precaution would be required to ensure their safety against the wide stretch of desert they would have to cross.

While in this mood, and about half through with their meal, an announcement was made that was likely to upset all their plans for the day. The announcement came from Congo, who had been loitering out on the desert side of the mokhala grove, and who came running into camp, in breathless haste, to report that a large flock of ostriches were out upon the plain!

The yägers, but particularly Klaas and Jan, bristled up at the news, uttering various exclamations of joy. A sudden change took place in their manner. Their jaws wagged more rapidly; the gnoo-tongue disappeared in larger slices; the coffee was quaffed in big hurried gulps; and the second half of their meal did not occupy the tenth part of the time that had been taken up with the first.

In less than two minutes from the time Congo made his report the breakfast was finished; and in five minutes more the horses were all saddled, bridled, and mounted. Resting the animals was no longer thought of. Everything had gone out of the heads of their riders except an ostrich "surround."

Where was Swartboy to take part in the affair, and to give his advice? All acknowledged that the Bushman knew more about hunting the ostrich than any of them—Congo not excepted. Indeed, this was true in regard to most kinds of *desert* animals, as also of the smaller mammalia and birds. Congo had lived all his life among a people who keep cattle—for the Kaffir nations are not mere hunters, but a pastoral people—and although he knew how to destroy the lion, the leopard, the hyena, and other carnivorous creatures, he was less accustomed

to the killing or capturing of game, since the vast herds of cattle bred and reared in his country render such knowledge but of secondary importance. Not so with Swartboy. The Bushmen have no cattle, except those which at times they steal from their neighbours, the Griquas, Bastaards, and trek-boors; and these are never *kept*, but killed and devoured as soon as they are driven to the Bushmen haunts. The want of domestic animals, therefore, with the necessity of having something to eat, compels the Bushman to use all his ingenuity in the capturing or killing of wild *game*, which among Bushmen includes every living creature from the locust and lizard to the camelopard and elephant!

The natural consequence of such a life must be the arriving at a perfect knowledge of the haunts, habits, and mode of hunting the wild creatures that people their country; and in this very knowledge Swartboy was believed to excel even among his countrymen, for it was known that in his own land he had been considered a "mighty hunter."

Where was Swartboy at that moment? He had not been seen for an hour or more. Congo said that he had driven off the oxen to pasture upon the grass plain to the rear of the camp, and no doubt he was there herding them.

It was proposed that some one should go for him, but this was objected to on account of the loss of time. Congo said that the oxen were a good way off. It would take half-an-hour to bring Swartboy into camp, and before the end of that period the ostriches might be ten miles off.

No; they could not wait for Swartboy. They must proceed without him; and, mounting their horses, the yägers rode off towards the desert plain.

Chapter Twenty Three.

The Ostrich "Surround."

On reaching the edge of the grove they halted to reconnoitre, still keeping under cover of the timber. Congo had reported truly. There *was* a flock of ostriches, sure enough. There were seven of these great birds in one "clump," and an eighth at no great distance from the rest. Of the seven, five appeared to be hens and two of them cocks. The one apart was also a cock. I say *appeared* to be. You will imagine there could be no doubt, since the male and female of these birds are so very unlike in the colour of their plumage. That is true when they have attained to a certain age; but the young males, even when full-grown, do not get the beautiful white feathers all at once, and for a long time can hardly at a distance be distinguished from the females.

That, however, was not the reason why the young yägers were in doubt about their sex. It was because the birds were in a position nearly due east from the point of observation, and the sun being yet only a few degrees above the horizon, his rays fell in such a manner as to prevent them from having a clear view. To use a common phrase, the sun was "in their eyes."

For all that, they could count the ostriches, and believed that of the eight three were cocks and the rest hens.

The seven in the "clump" were stationary; that is, they were not moving away from the spot. Some were stalking leisurely about, occasionally taking a "peck;" and it must have been sand or pebbles they were eating, as there was not the semblance of vegetation near the spot. Some sat squatted upon their "hams," their long legs

doubled underneath; and one or two were lying along the ground, and fluttering in the sand, just as common hens and turkeys do in warm weather. The dust raised by these formed a little cloud that floated around them, and added to the difficulty of distinguishing either their sex or their movements. The seven were at no great distance from the edge of the mokhala grove, and the one that was separate was still nearer. He was going towards them, stooping his head at intervals, and feeding as he went. From this circumstance, the boys conjectured that he had been much nearer, which conjecture was strengthened by Congo, who said, that when he had first observed them, this old cock was not two hundred yards from the edge of the timber, and was then going out, just as now.

Perhaps he had been within shot of the cover. What a pity, thought Klaas and Jan, they had not been earlier on the look-out!

The hunters did not waste many moments in watching the manoeuvres of the birds. Their attention was entirely given to their purpose of surrounding them, and discussing a plan to effect that object. Now these ostriches were not near the nest which had been plundered, and was now deserted; nor was it likely that the were of the family to whom that nest belonged—not even relatives in fact—else they would have heard of the calamity, and would have been comporting themselves in a very different manner from the easy style in which they were taking it. None of the five hens could be they that, but two days before, had witnessed the fall of their plumed lord by the Bushman's arrow, for it was not likely that these would return to that part of the country. The flock now seen had no connection whatever with the nest. The place they were in was at a good distance from the scene of the late tragedy.

The young yägers were glad of this; not that they cared about the matter of relationship, but because the place where the birds were now seen offered superior advantages for a "surround." It was a sort of large bay, where a spur of the desert plain ran into the timber, and was more than half encircled by low woods and thickets of acacia. Only one side—that toward the wide desert—was open. On all other sides there was cover for the hunters.

On this account the latter had very little difficulty in deciding how to act, and in a few minutes their plan was arranged.

Hendrik and Groot Willem, being the best mounted, were to ride to the two most distant points, one of them taking the right side of the great bay, the other the left. They were to keep under cover of the thicket all the way round; and when either arrived at the point where the timber stretched farthest out upon the plain, he was to stop awhile, until the other showed himself on the opposite side. Both were then to gallop towards each other, but not to meet. They were to halt at such a distance from one another as would best enable them to cut off the retreat of the ostriches from the outer plain.

Hans and Arend were respectively to follow in the tracks of Hendrik and Groot Willem; but they were to halt within the edge of the timber when half round, and wait until they should see the others out upon the plain. Then they were to show themselves, and turn the ostriches, should they run their way.

Klaas and little Jan were also to separate and ride some distance from the spot; but the disposal of these boys in their places was taken in hand by the others; and so the whole party started at the same time, three filing off to

the right, and three to the left. Congo's instructions were, not to show himself until he should perceive Hendrik and Groot Willem galloping towards each other. He was then to act just as the others, except that "shanks'-mare" was to be his horse.

Should the ostriches allow time for Hendrik and Groot Willem to get to their stations, the surround would be complete; and it was highly probable that they would have good sport, and either capture or kill some of the giant birds. When thus assailed upon all sides, the ostrich gets confused, and acts in the most stupid manner, being easily turned, and driven about from "post to pillar."

It was a question of time, therefore, and it would take a good while for the surround to be made, as the plain on which the birds were was full three miles wide. Both Hendrik and Groot Willem would have twice that length to ride; and their path lying through bushes, they would be unable to move faster than a walk.

For some time the only one that watched the movements of the ostriches was the Kaffir. The others were making their way through the thicket, and only had a peep now and then, as they passed some place where an opening in the leaves allowed them. They were too anxious, however, to get to their different stands to stop at any place between. All felt that time was precious; for should the game take alarm, and start off to the open plain, the trouble they were taking would be all in vain. None of them, therefore, thought of looking at the birds—only to satisfy themselves that they were still there—until they had reached their respective places.

Chapter Twenty Four.

The Odd Cock.

During all this time Congo watched the movement of the flock as well as the sun in his eyes would allow him.

He noticed that the cock that had been feeding apart from the rest had now got close up to them,—within a few yards; but that the others had arisen at his approach, and, stretching out their long necks, appeared to regard him as a stranger. After a moment all seven turned, as if alarmed at something, and ran away—the odd cock running after, though falling a little in the rear.

The flock only went for twenty yards or so, and then halted, as if they had got over their slight alarm.

The old cock again stalked slowly up, now and then dropping his head to the ground, and pecking up a grain or two of something on his way.

When he got close to the flock a second time, they seemed to take fresh alarm, ran twenty yards farther, and again stopped.

It appeared as if the old cock was a stranger to the rest, and that they considered his presence an intrusion!

Again he approached them, and again they made a short run; this time not in a direct line, but in a circle around him, so that they came back nearly to their original ground. This time, however, only the five hens ran off. Both the cocks remained near the spot; but the movements of these now puzzled Congo not a little.

One of them had squatted down, just as they had been first observed, while the other ran about in very small circles, occasionally fluttering his white plumes, and acting altogether like a drunken man!

After a few minutes the manoeuvres of all appeared to change. The one that had seated himself appeared to *lie* down and remain quiet, while he that had the "staggers" squatted down not far off; and presently a hen came running up and sat down beside him; so that now there remained upon their feet only one cock and four of the hens.

The whole scene puzzled Congo, who was not from an ostrich country, and was but indifferently acquainted with the habits of these birds. No doubt, thought he, the creatures were about some game of their own, such as he had often seen with the "kooran" and partridges.

There were others than Congo puzzled at what was passing among the ostriches.

Klaas and Jan, who had reached their stations sooner than the rest, and who had been observing the odd actions of the birds, were both puzzled as to what they were about; and a little later Hans and Arend had a surprise, and were equally at a loss what to think of the game of "fits and starts" that was going on upon the plain.

But Hans and Arend had not much time to observe. They had both gone far round, and they expected soon to see Hendrik and Groot Willem gallop out from the timber, so they kept their eyes in that direction.

They were not disappointed. A few minutes after both were seen to shoot forth at full speed, and ride in diverging lines, so as to approach each other, and at the

same time get nearer to the ostriches.

As soon as the others saw them, the whole five, Congo included, showed themselves on the open ground, all making towards a common centre—the spot where the ostriches were.

The hunters were now more surprised than ever. As they rode forward, they perceived that several of the great birds were seated, or lying upon the ground. They were basking, no doubt; but, for birds so wary, why did they not spring up and take to flight? They must already have perceived the approach of the horses or heard the sound of their trampling hoofs? Only two of the hens appeared at all alarmed; and these ran in the direction of the outer plain, but turned when they saw Hendrik and Groot Willem. Only one other was upon its feet; and that was the old cock that had kept apart? He was still standing erect, but did not attempt to fly! It was very odd.

This old cock chanced to be nearest to Hendrik and Groot Willem; and going, as they were, at race-horse speed, they were scarce a minute in riding down upon him.

They had got within less than five hundred yards; and, with guns ready, were resolved to give him a tail-on-end chase, and try a flying shot, when, to their tremendous surprise, a loud and terrified yell came from the bird, and the next moment his skin flew from his shoulders, discovering, not a naked ostrich, but a naked Bushman, with his legs chalked white to the very hips! *That Bushman was Swartboy*!

It was, indeed, old Swart dressed up in the skin of the old cock he had lately shot with his poisoned arrow; and it was that same arrow, or half-a-dozen like it, that had been causing the mysterious movements among the ostriches. Five of them already lay around dead or dying;

while the two hens, that had not yet received their billet, during the surprise consequent on Swartboy revealing himself, had managed to escape.

Fortunately for Swartboy he "sung out" at the moment he did. Another half minute, and he would have fared no better than his own victims the ostriches. He acknowledged that he had been badly "scared." In looking after the ostriches, he had never thought of looking for any thing else; and from the manner in which his eyes were placed under the feathers, he could not see very well around. His ears, too, "muffled" up as they were within the skin of the old cock, were of little service to him; so that it was by mere accident he saw the horsemen galloping down upon him. Even then it cost an effort to "cast" his skin, and appear *in propria persona*!

Now, when the young yägers thought of the curious incident that had just taken place, and then looked at the naked body of Swartboy, chalked white from hip to heel, the whole six sat in their saddles and laughed till their very sides ached.

Swartboy, proud of his achievement, looked round him like a conqueror, and then fixing his eyes upon his rival, put the simple but equivocal interrogatory—

"Eh! Congo! ole Kaffir boy! dat you?"

The carapace was eclipsed!

Chapter Twenty Five.

Blesboks and Bonteboks.

Next morning our party inspanned and treked over the desert plain in a north-easterly direction. They were two days in crossing it, and their oxen suffered much from thirst, as during the two days they did not taste water. For themselves they had water enough. Part of the contents of each wagon was a good water-cask, that held eighteen gallons; and these, of course, they had filled before leaving the spring. One of these casks they divided among their horses, allowing them a little over two gallons apiece; but that was nothing for two days' march over such a country. Even the yägers themselves required as much. This statement would not surprise you, if you had ever travelled in a tropical clime and over an arid waterless plain under a hot glaring sun. There thirst is provoked in a short while, and water will quench it only for a few minutes at a time. The appetite constantly returns, and calls for copious draughts; so that a traveller will often consume not glasses, but gallons, of water, in a single day!

Having crossed the desert plain, the hunters now entered upon a country that differed entirely from that they had left behind.

They had arrived in a country of vast extent, upon which stood hills of strange and varied forms. Some were of a rounded, hemispherical shape; others were cones; others had flat-table tops; and still others pierced the sky with sharp needle-like pinnacles. These hills were of various sizes—some approaching the dimension of mountains; but most of them rose directly from the plains, without any *piedmont* or "foothills" intervening between the level

surface and their sloping or precipitous sides. The country bore a very strong resemblance to the plateaux that lie among the Cordilleras of the Andes; and the geological formation of this part of Africa is very similar to the table-lands of Mexico.

Many of the mountains of conical and pyramid form stood isolated upon the plain, some of them bare of vegetation from base to summit. Others, again, carried a dark mantle of forest, that covered only their lower half, above which rose bare peaks of white quartz that under the sun glittered like snow.

The plains between were some of them of vast extent—so wide that at times the mountains that bordered them could be but dimly seen. But there were plains of every size and form. Their surface was covered with a species of grass quite different from that of the region our hunters had hitherto been passing over. It formed a short sward like a meadow lately mown, or a well-browsed pasture-ground, for such in reality it was—well-browsed and closely cropped, and trodden to a hard turf, by the countless herds of wild ruminant animals, of which it was the favourite range. Unlike the long flowing sweet grass upon the plains south of the Orange River, these were covered with a short crisp curly herbage of saltish taste; and in many spots an effervescence of that mineral covered the ground, whitening the blades of grass like a hoar-frost. Salt deposits, or salt-pans as they are termed, were also common, some of them extending for miles over the plain.

The yägers had reached a peculiar country, indeed. They had arrived in the "zuur-veldt," the country of the sour grass—the favourite home of the *blesbok* and *bontebok*.

What are these?

They are two antelopes, whose gracefulness of form, swiftness of foot, but, above all, the lively and striking colour of their bodies, have rendered remarkable.

They belong to the genus *Gazella*, but in many of their habits they differ considerably from the gazelles, though differing so slightly from each other that by both travellers and naturalists they have been regarded identical.

This is not so. They are distinct species, though inhabiting the same country, and following the same mode of life. The blesbok (*Gazella albifrons*) is neither so large nor so brilliantly marked as the bontebok, (*Gazella pygarga*). His horns are of a light colour, nearly white, while those of the bontebok are black. In the colour of the legs there is also a marked difference. The legs of the bontebok are white from the knee down, while those of his congener are only white on the insides—the outsides being brown.

The bontebok is not only one of the loveliest antelopes in Africa, but one of the swiftest. Indeed, there are those who hold that he is *the swiftest*. In size he equals the European stag, and his form is light and graceful. His horns are fifteen inches in length, black, robust at the base, semi-annulated and diverging. They rise erect from the top of his head, bending slightly backward, and then forward at the tips.

But it is the beautiful colouring of his skin which is the principal characteristic of this antelope. In this respect both he and the blesbok bear some resemblance to the antelopes of the *acronotine* group—the hartebeest and sassabye.

The colours of the bontebok are purple violet and brown of every shade—not mingling together, but marking the

body as if laid on by the brush of a sign-painter. Hence the name "bontebok," or "painted buck," as given by the Dutch colonists to this species. First, the neck and head are of a deep brown, with a tinge of the colour of arterial blood. Between the horns a white stripe commences, and after reaching the line of the eyes widens out so as to cover the face to the very muzzle. This mark, or "blaze," is common to both the species, and to one of them has given the trivial name "blesbok," (blaze-buck.)

The back is of a blue lilac colour, as if glazed; and this extends along the sides, so as to remind one of a saddle. Bordering this, and running along the flanks, is a broad band of deep purple brown. The belly and insides of the thighs are of pure white colour; the legs are white from the knees down, and there is a large white patch on the croup. The tail reaches to the hocks, and is tufted with black hair. Such is the colour of the bontebok, and that of the blesbok differs from it only in the points already mentioned, and in its colours being somewhat less marked and brilliant. Both are beautiful creatures, and their skins are much prized by the native savages for making the "kaross,"—a garment that serves them both as a cloak by day and a bed and blankets at night.

The habits of both species are quite similar. They dwell upon the plains of the "zuur-veldt," congregating in vast herds of many thousands that cover the ground with their purple masses.

In this respect they resemble the springboks and other gazelles; but they have habits peculiar to themselves. The springboks, when alarmed, take to flight and scatter off in any direction, whereas the bonteboks and blesboks invariably run against the wind, bearing their noses close along the ground, like hounds upon a trail!

They are fleeter than springboks, and also more shy and wary, as though they knew that their spoils are more valuable to the hunter, and therefore required greater skill and speed to preserve them.

Both species were once common in what are now the settled districts of South Africa, their range extending to the Cape itself. That is now restricted to the “zuur-veldt” districts, north of the Great Orange River.

A few bonteboks are still found within the colonial borders in the district of Swellendam; but their existence there is accounted for by an act of the Government, which places a fine of six hundred rix-dollars upon any one who may destroy them without licence.

Our young yägers had now arrived in the land of the blesbok and bontebok.

Chapter Twenty Six.

Stalking the Blesboks.

When they had got fairly within the boundaries of the blesbok country, the young yägers resolved to make halt for a day or two, and hunt these beautiful antelopes. Not that they desired their flesh, but they wished to strip one or two of them of their bright, parti-coloured robes, to be hung up along with their horns in the halls of Graaf Reinet.

After treking some miles across the plains, they outspanned by a vley, and formed their camp.

The following morning they mounted their horses, and proceeded over the plain in search of the purple antelopes.

They were not long in finding them. That is by no means a difficult thing with an animal that herds together in thousands, provided you chance to be in the district it inhabits; and the yägers were not slow in coming within view of a herd of blesboks.

But how to hunt them was a knowledge which none of the party possessed—whether to let slip the buck-dogs and gallop right into the thick of the herd, or to get within shot by stalking—which of these was the proper manner neither the young yägers nor their drivers knew. In Swartboy's country neither blesboks nor bonteboks are known. They do not range to the western half of South Africa, and the young yägers only knew them by tradition. Their fathers had hunted them years before; but both species had been long since exterminated south of the Orange River.

As for Congo, although their range extended into a part of the Kaffir country, he had never chanced to hunt in that particular district. Of course neither Bushman nor Kaffir were on the ground with the hunters. They had been left in charge of the camp; but the advice of both had been asked at setting out, and it was ascertained that they had none to give.

The hunters were at a loss how to proceed, and held a discussion upon it. Groot Willem thought they should be hunted like springboks,—that is, the hunters should take stand and conceal themselves, while one or two rode round and drove the game upon these—a mode practised with the fallow-deer in the forests of North America, and there termed "driving."

Hendrik believed that they could be "ridden into," and run down by the dogs.

Hans recommended "stalking," with which, plan Arend agreed. Of course no opinion was either asked from or given by the lads Klaas and Jan. Had they been birds, they would have insisted upon their "say" as well as their elder brothers.

But blesboks are not birds, although in less than an hour after they proved themselves to be almost as swift.

Now, as stalking was the mode least likely to give the herd the alarm and seed them off, it could be tried first. Should no one succeed in getting within shot, then Groot Willem's plan might be adopted; and should it also fail to be successful, it would still not be too late to follow Hendrik's advice, and ride right at them.

First, then, for a "stalk."

They were not going to stalk them upon horseback. That would never do, though there are some animals that will suffer a mounted man to approach hearer than one afoot. But blesboks are not of that kind.

All dismounted, therefore, and proceeded on foot in the direction of the herd. Not all, exactly. Klaas and Jan remained on the spot in charge of the dogs and horses. Klaas and Jan were to have no share in the stalk.

The herd was in the middle of a vast open plain—so wide that the mountains on its opposite side were scarcely visible. Upon all that plain not a bush or rock appeared. The grass, as already stated, was short cropped, and smooth as a meadow—not a break in the surface to offer a chance of concealment to the hunter! How, then, could they talk of "stalking" on such ground? They knew that no wild animal, however stupid or negligent, would permit them to walk up within point-blank range and fire at them. How, then, were they going to approach the blesboks, that they had heard were any thing but stupid—on the contrary, were exceedingly shy and watchful of danger? How? That is a peculiar point, and requires explanation.

Although there were neither rocks, nor trees, nor bushes of any kind, nor long grass, nor inequalities in the ground, there was still a species of "cover." Not the best, it is true, but such as would serve a skilful hunter who knew how to take advantage of it. Enough to give hopes to the yägers, else they would not have dreamt of such a thing as an attempt to stalk the blesboks.

Scattered over the plain, and standing at irregular distances of from one to three hundred yards of each other, were numerous singular structures. They were of the form of obtuse cones, or hemispherical, and all of a

light grey colour—the colour of sun-dried mud. On the sides of most of them at their bases could be seen a hole of irregular outlines, and evidently not made by the neat workmen who had built the mounds. Quite the contrary. These entrances to the hollow domes within were not for them. Theirs were underground. These had been made by their enemies—the burglars who had plundered their houses. I am sure I need hardly tell you that the structures thus described were ant-hills, and that the big holes in this side were the work of the long-tongued "aard-vark," or the scaly "pangolin."

The hills in question were dome-shaped, and of moderate size—varying from one to three feet in height. This is by no means as large as many ant-hills found in Southern Africa. Some are four times that height, or still higher; but I have told you elsewhere of these high hills, and that there are different species of ants who construct such curious nests—each species choosing its own style of architecture,—some the cone, or pyramidal form,—some a complete cluster of cones,—some build them of cylindrical shape, and others nearly half-spherical, like inverted tea-basins.

Of these last were the ant-hills now under the eyes of the young yägers. They were the nests of the *Termes mordax*—a species that inhabits all the plains of the "zuur-veldt" country.

The hunters proceeded to stalk forward, their eyes bent upon the antelopes, and their hopes fixed upon the ant-hills.

Of course they did not commence crouching, until they had tried how near the blesboks would allow them to come without cover. This they soon discovered to be about four hundred yards; and although the animals did

not seem to mind their presence at that distance, but continued browsing, yet the moment any one of the four endeavoured to get nearer, the herd, as if mechanically, moved off, and still kept a width of four hundred yards between themselves and the stalkers.

The hunters now began to stalk in earnest, crouching from hill to hill. It was to no purpose. None of the four could get within shot. They separated and took different sides. The same result followed—a failure. Although the herd kept on, and always in the same general direction, they seemed instinctively to avoid whatever ant-heap a hunter had chosen, giving it a "wide berth" which carried them beyond the reach even of Groot Willem's roer! After two hours spent in this fruitless kind of hunting, the plan was abandoned.

The "stalk" would not do; and Hans and Arend were now sneered and laughed at by Hendrik and Groot Willem.

"What could *they* know about hunting? Ha! ha! ha!"

Chapter Twenty Seven.

Driving the Blesboks.

All now returned to their horses. Groot Willem's plan was next to be tried.

They mounted. Klaas and Jan were permitted to take part in this affair. They would do well enough to "drive" the antelopes, while the other four would take stand, and receive them as they came up.

All six rode off towards the herd, which, during the stalk, had moved several miles across the plain.

When as near as they might safely go, without causing the animals to take the alarm, Klaas and Jan were sent to one side, while the stand-men took the other, going to their places by a wide circuit. Of course their horses enabled them to get to their positions in a very little time. It was not necessary that these should be near the herd. As soon as they should conceal themselves behind the hills, Klaas and Jan were to drive the game up; and they were instructed to do so gently, and without causing the bucks to break into flight. The lads were hunters enough to manage that point.

The four having got round to that side of the herd opposite to where the drivers had been sent, tied their bridles together, and, leaving their horses, walked towards the herd. They deployed from each other as they went, so as to cover a good stretch of the plain, and then each choosing an ant-hill, knelt down behind it.

There could be no mistake now. The antelopes, driven by Klaas and Jan, would come their way; springboks

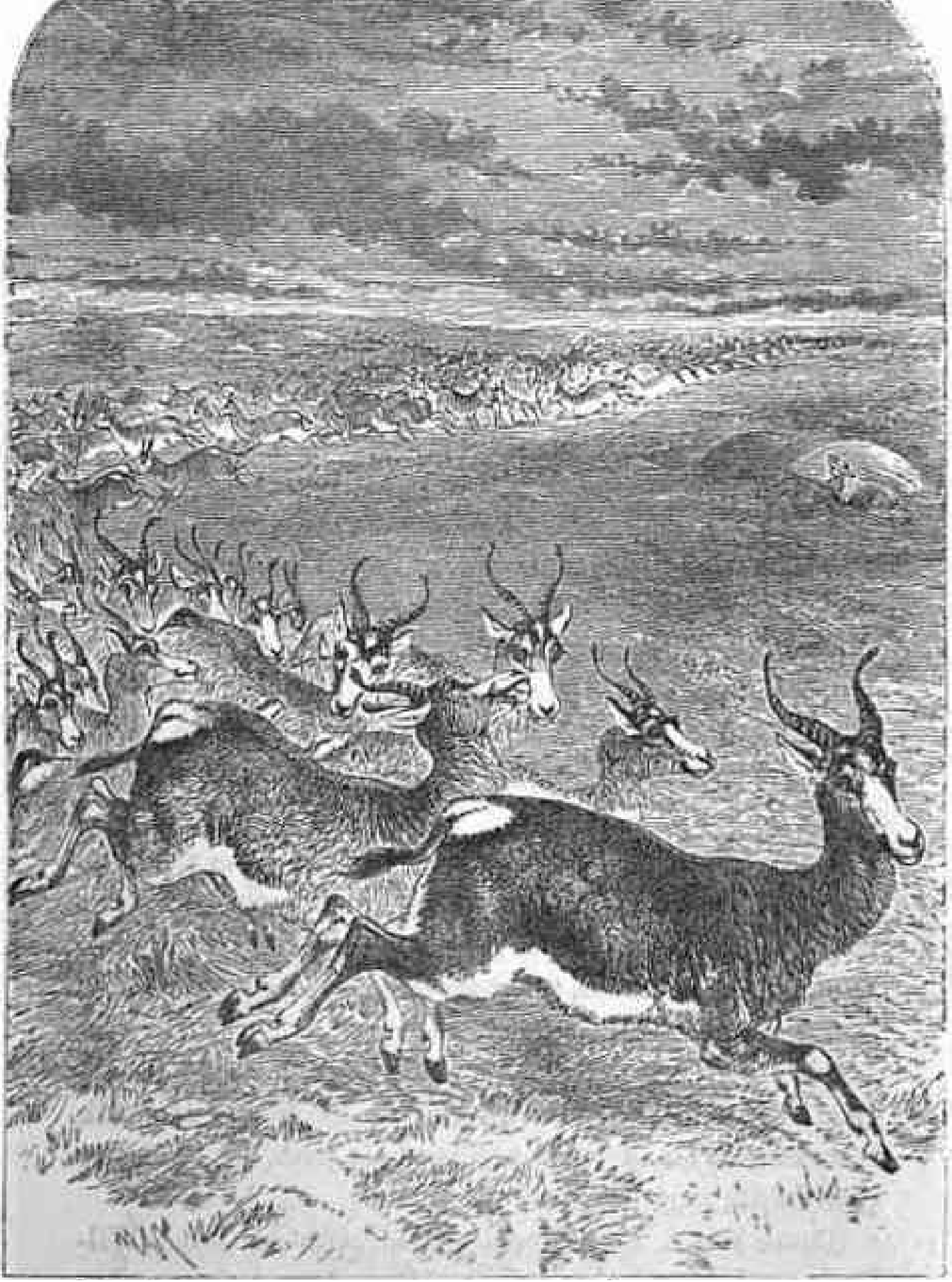
certainly would; and then, "crack! crack!" would go the rifles, and "bang!" Groot Willem's roer.

This gentleman was in particularly high glee. He had recommended this mode in opposition to Hans and Arend; but he did not mind that, for he had rather a contemptuous opinion of the hunter-craft of these two "yägers;" but what he thought of was, that Hendrik had opposed it, and should it prove successful after that opposition, it would be a feather in Groot Willem's *hat*.

That it would succeed he had little doubt. They were all nicely placed. The two boys had got round to the opposite side of the herd, and once these showed themselves a little nearer, the antelopes would face round—they were browsing *towards* the side to which the boys had been sent—and feed in the direction of the concealed hunters. Springboks would do so, said Groot Willem to himself.

But springboks are not blesboks. They differ not only in size and colour, but in many of their habits; and just by a difference in one of these last was Groot Willem destined to disappointment. A curious habit they have—and one which is shared by a few other animals, both of the antelope and deer species—knocked all Groot Willem's fine calculations into "pie."

Instead of turning when Klaas and Jan approached them from the opposite side, as all expected they would do, the stubborn creatures would not be turned, but kept on most determinedly in their original course. It is true that they swerved a little to *get past* the boys; but as soon as they were fairly beyond them, they headed once more in the same direction as before.



Klaas and Jan were at some distance from each other, so as to make a wider front to the drive; but for all that, the blesboks swept past both at such a distance as to give no chance for a bullet, even though sent from the long roer. Neither of the boys fired, as they had been told not to do; and as both behaved discreetly and quietly, the antelopes, after galloping some distance to their rear, slackened their pace, and again commenced browsing.

Groot Willem felt considerably chagrined at the result, and got well laughed at by both Hans and Arend; but what annoyed him still more was a word or two uttered by the rival hunter.

"I knew," said Hendrik emphatically—"I knew it wouldn't do. Do you take blesboks for sheep, to be driven about by a pair of boys mounted on ponies? Bah!"

This was a terrible cut for Groot Willem; but he replied to it by alleging that his plan had not had a fair trial. It was now plain to all that the blesboks *fed up wind*; and, therefore, the *stand-men* should have headed them instead of the *drivers*.

"Let us try it that way. I'll warrant you we'll succeed. If we don't, then we can do as *Master* Hendrik recommends; and we'll see how *his* plan, which is no plan at all, may answer."

There was a slight touch of sarcasm in Groot Willem's tone when he referred to Hendrik, and the emphasis on the "Master," partook strongly of the character of a sneer counter to *his* which Hendrik had given.

There could be no objection to try the thing over again, according to the mode suggested by Groot Willem; and they all assented to his proposal. It *was* plain that the blesboks ran in the "wind's eye," else they never would have "run the gauntlet" against Klaas and Jan, as they had done. Such being the case, the hunters, by laying in wait to windward, would have a decided advantage, and, properly placed, could not fail to reach some of the advancing herd.

Should the scheme turn out differently, then they could follow Hendrik's advice, and ride *tail-on-end* upon the blesboks.

With these ideas, the four galloped away to one side, and, making a wide *détour*, headed the game. Klaas and Jan were left in the rear to follow it up, and force it gently forward.

In good time the stand-men were again placed, and watched the advancing antelopes with interest. The "blaze" upon their faces appeared larger and larger, and their broad, white muzzles gleamed in the eyes of the hunters, almost within range of their guns. But at this moment, the animals raised their graceful necks, uttered a strange, snorting cry, and then, instead of turning to fly back, bounded right forward!

Surely they were coming within range, thought every one, as he knelt with ready firelock behind his sheltering mound. "Good!" muttered Groot Willem to himself. "I'll turn the laugh upon the whole of them—that I shall."

But Groot Willem was destined once more to a humiliating disappointment. As the blesboks came under the lee of each hill that covered a hunter, they suddenly swerved, and swept round him at such a distance as to render shooting at them a perfectly ridiculous thing.

Groot Willem had levelled his roer for a chance shot, when he thought of the unpleasant consequences of a "miss;" and reluctantly bringing down his piece he permitted the blesboks to sweep past.

In a few seconds the herd was far beyond the place where they had passed the hunters; but as no assault had been made upon them, and no gun fired, they quieted down after a while, and once more commenced browsing.

Hendrik was now the proud man of the hour. He would show them how the slow creatures could be galloped into. He would run half-a-dozen of them down before they could clear out of the plain.

"Come on!"

All once again mounted their horses, and rode briskly towards the herd. When near, they moved more slowly and quietly, so as not to startle them.

As soon as they had got within the usual distance of four hundred yards, the bucks moved forward; and then came the "view hilloa!" The dogs were let slip, the horses sprang forward, and the chase swept wildly over the plain.

They had not galloped a mile, before Hendrik discovered his mistake. Both dogs and horses were distanced by the swift antelopes, and both lagged far behind.

One by one the hunters fell into the rear, and drew up their foaming steeds; and in less than twenty minutes time, Hendrik alone, and one or two of the best dogs, held on.

Hans and Arend, believing that it was a hopeless chase

for their horses, gave it up; and Groot Willem *did not wish to succeed*! Of course, Klaas and Jan were with the hindmost; and they all sat in their saddles, watching first the purple backs of the bucks, and then the head and shoulders of Hendrik disappearing among the distant ant-hills!

Chapter Twenty Eight.

Hendrik's Hard Gallop.

On swept the blesboks over the level sward and on galloped Hendrik after them—his horse and dogs running at their utmost speed. For all that, not a yard could either hunter or hounds gain upon the swift antelopes. There was no chance for either to "run cunning." There was no taking "a cut" upon the game. The blesboks made not the slightest double—swerved not a point from their course, but ran in a straight line, dead in the wind's eye. No advantage, therefore, was given by the pursued, or could be taken by the pursuers. It was a simple question of speed between horse, dogs, and game.

The dogs gave up first. They broke down one after another, until only Hendrik's favourite hound kept near. Another mile's running, and he too was used up, and fell to the rear; and now Hendrik galloped alone.

For nearly ten miles he galloped, until the sweat streamed from his horse's flanks, and the froth from his lips, and still the blesboks scoured on before him at too great a distance to be reached by his rifle. On a fresh horse he could easily have overtaken them now, for they ran but slowly. Perhaps he could have closed upon them as it was, but, with all his desire to do so, he was compelled to ride with caution. The burrows of the ant-eater lay in his path, and once or twice, as he was closing upon the game with good prospect of getting near, his horse had stumbled, and lost ground again. This gave the antelopes a decided advantage, as with light hoof they skimmed over these impediments without fear.

And still Hendrik was reluctant to pull up. He thought of

the empty boasting he had made. He thought of the scornful laugh that would greet him on his return. He thought of Groot Willem!

If he could only take back one hide—one pair of horns—all would be well. The laugh would be his. With such thoughts he had been urged forward, in this long and desperate ride.

He began to despair of success. The blesboks seemed to run lightly as ever, while his horse sprang heavily under him. The noble brute must soon give up.

Hendrik at length felt for him, and would have drawn bridle; but while half-resolved to do so, he noticed a range of mountains directly in front of him. They appeared to extend across the plain transversely to his course, or rather two chains met in a sort of angle, quite closing up the plain in that direction. Towards this angle the blesboks were directing their course!

Did they propose taking to the mountain? was the question put by Hendrik to himself. If so, he might find an advantage there. They might come to a stop, and under cover of the rocks and bushes that grew upon the mountain-side, he might be able yet to stalk them.

As Hendrik reflected thus, his eyes wandered along the base of both ranges from the angle where they met to a good distance on each side. To his surprise he perceived that the bases of both ended in a precipitous cliff, with no apparent pass leading up! He was now close enough to see the cliff. Not a break appeared along its whole line!

Hendrik was gratified with this discovery. He was driving the game into an angle, a very *trap*. They would be compelled to turn upon him, and out of such a thick

mass, he could not fail to knock over one. One was all he wanted.

His hopes returned, inspiring him with new vigour; and, uttering a word of encouragement to his horse, he pushed forward.

His ride did not last much longer. Another mile, and it was over.

He had got within five hundred yards of the mountain foot, and less than half that distance from the bucks that still continued to run straight toward the angle of the cliffs. He was now quite sure of a shot. In less than a minute, the herd would be compelled either to stop, or turn back, and meet him in the teeth.

It was time to get his rifle in readiness; and as he intended to fire into the thick mass, he took several small bullets from his pouch, and hastily dropped them into the barrel. He then looked to his percussion-cap, to make sure that all was right. It was so. The copper was properly adjusted on the nipple.

He cocked his gun, and once more looked forward to the game. *Not an antelope was in sight*!

Where were they? Had they sprung up the mountain? Impossible! The precipice could not be scaled? Impossible! Even had they done so, they would still have been seen upon the mountain face. They were not in sight, not one of them! The hunter reined up, his gun dropped back to the withers of his horse, his jaws fell, and for some moments he sat with parted lips, and eyes glaring in wonderment.

Had he been of a superstitious nature, he might have been troubled with some painful feelings at that

moment. But he was not superstitious. Although for a moment or two he could not feel otherwise than astonished at it, he knew there was some natural cause for the "sudden and mysterious disappearance" of the bucks.

He did not pause long in doubt, but proceeded at once to the proper quarter for an explanation. The tracks of the herd guided him to that, and after riding three hundred yards further, the mystery was explained to his full and complete satisfaction.

The angle, after all, was not an angle, for the apex was wanting. There *was* a "thoroughfare" without the slightest obstruction. Although at a short distance the converging cliffs appeared to impinge upon each other, there was an opening between them—a narrow pass that like an isthmus connected the plain over which the chase had gone, with another and very similar one that stretched away on the other side of the mountains. The blesboks must have known it well enough, else they would not have run so direct for the false angle in the cliffs. Hendrik trotted up the pass to convince himself that it was no *cul-de-sac*. After going a few hundred yards, the isthmus widened again, and he saw to his chagrin the violet backs of the bucks far off upon the plain that stretched beyond.

Overcome with disappointment and chagrin, he flung himself from his saddle, and staggering a few paces, sat down upon a boulder of rock. He did not even stop to fasten his horse, but, dropping the bridle over his neck, left the froth-covered and panting steed to himself.

Chapter Twenty Nine.

Hendrik Chased by the Keitloa.

Hendrik's feelings at that moment were not to be envied. His reflections were sharply bitter. He felt mortified and humiliated. He wished he had never set eyes upon a blesbok. A sorry figure would he cut on his return to camp. He had laughed heartily at Hans and Arend. They would reciprocate that laugh, and add interest. He had ridiculed the idea of Groot Willem. Groot would not fail to pay back his scorn.

Besides, he had done his horse no good; perhaps had injured the animal. There stood he, with steaming nostrils and heaving flanks, quite used up. They were nearly twelve miles from camp. He would scarce be able to carry his rider back, and Hendrik even began to entertain doubts about his way.

The thought that he might have lost himself was just entering his mind, when his reflections were interrupted by a sound that caused him to start up from that rock, as nimbly as he had ever risen from a seat in his life.

The same sound seemed to produce a very similar effect upon his horse; for the latter, on hearing it, suddenly jerked up his drooping head, pricked his ears, snorted loudly, and, after dancing about a moment on two, shot off down the pass at full gallop!

Hendrik's eyes did not follow him, nor his thought neither. Both were too busy with an animal that came from the opposite side, and which had uttered the sound that caused such a sudden alarm. The deep bass snort and the bellows-like blowing that followed, were no strangers to the ear of the young hunter. He knew that,

on looking round, he would behold the black rhinoceros;—and he did so. That fierce creature was coming down the pass!

At first sight Hendrik was not so terribly alarmed. He had hunted the rhinoceros more than once, and did not deem it such dangerous sport. He had always been able to avoid the charges of the clumsy quadruped, and to escape out of its way when he desired.

But Hendrik for the moment had forgotten that on such occasions he was seated, not on a boulder of rock, but in the saddle, and it was to his horse that he owed his immunity from danger.

Now that his horse had run off, and he found himself afoot upon the plain, with nothing between him and the rhinoceros but twenty yards of smooth level turf, he became truly alarmed. And no wonder at it—his life was in danger.

His first thought was to run up the rocks, thinking by so doing to get out of the animal's reach. But, on looking towards these, he perceived that they formed a precipice on both sides of the pass, with a wall-like face, that could only have been scaled by a cat! Hendrik could not climb up on either side!

In the pass itself there was no shelter for him. Its bottom was a smooth sward, sloping but slightly. It was but the continuation of the outer plains, that were nearly on the same level. Here and there stood a tree, but they were small ones—mere "brush," and a rhinoceros could have levelled any of them to the ground with his powerful horn. They offered no hope, either for concealment or retreat.

There appeared no chance of escape in any way. To

attempt it by running off would be perfectly useless; for Hendrik knew that a rhinoceros could overtake the swiftest runner, as every South African hunter could testify. Hendrik did not think of it. To add to his ill-fortune, he had left his gun strapped to the saddle, and that was now gone off with the horse; so that his chance of saving himself by the destruction of the rhinoceros was gone also. The only weapon left him was his hunting-knife; but what was a knife against the hide of a rhinoceros? It might as well have been a needle.

There was but one hope of safety; and that was, that the animal might not *see* him. The rhinoceros possesses the sense of sight only in a moderate degree. His eyes are small; and though sharp enough when an object is directly in front of him, they are so placed in his head, that, on account of his stiff neck and huge form, he can see nothing either behind or even at either side of him.

Hendrik had hopes the fierce brute would pass without observing him. From his movements it was evident he had not noticed him as yet, else he would already have charged upon him. The black rhinoceros does not wait to be provoked. His own fierce nature furnishes him with sufficient stimulus, and his fury is habitually directed against creatures the most innocent and unoffending.

To get as far out of his way as possible, Hendrik glided silently up to the cliff, and stood close against the rock.

But if the rhinoceros is not a sharp-sighted animal he is one of the sharpest-scented that lives. With the wind in his favour, he can smell even a "rat" at an almost incredible distance. He is also gifted with a most acute sense of hearing; and the slightest sound, such as the rustling of a leaf or the falling of a footstep, will enable him to guide himself directly to his enemy or his victim. Were the rhinoceros endowed with the power of vision to

the same degree as he is with that of smell and hearing, he would be the most dangerous animal in the world. As it is, he is any thing but a safe neighbour, and many of the poor natives of the country he inhabits, fall victims to his ungovernable temper and brutal strength. Fortunately his eyes are no bigger than they are.

They were big enough, however, to see Hendrik as he stood, his dark form outlined against the cliff, and sharp enough to distinguish him from the rock. The breeze, indeed, blowing in his spread nostrils, had warned him of the hunter's presence, and that had directed his eyes.

As these rested upon the form of the boy, he stopped short in his track, uttered a snorting noise, vibrated his ears, and flirted his saucy little tail over his huge hips. Then placing himself in a menacing attitude, and giving utterance to an angry blowing, he dashed forward upon Hendrik as if the latter had been his enemy for life!

Hendrik's presence of mind was called for at this moment; and it came to his aid. Had he kept his ground five seconds longer, he would have been crushed against the rock, or impaled upon the strong horn of the rhinoceros. But the moment the latter charged, the boy sprang out from the cliff.

He did not attempt to run—that would not have saved him; and fortunately he knew it. He merely stepped out to the more open ground in the middle of the pass, and there stood fronting his assailant. The latter having seen the movement, swerved in his course, so as again to head direct for his intended victim; and without stopping, rushed forward as before.

Hendrik stood still, until the sharp black horn almost touched him. Then bounding to one side, he glided past the rhinoceros, and ran in an opposite direction.

He looked back as he ran; and seeing that the fierce brute had turned suddenly on the failure of his charge, and was close at his heels, he again made stand, confronting the animal as before. Again he waited until the rhinoceros was close up, and repeated the manoeuvre of springing to one side and running behind. This Hendrik had heard was the only way to escape the rhinoceros in open ground. Had he sprung aside a moment too soon, that is, before the sudden bound enabled him to clear the field of the animal's vision, he would certainly have been followed and overtaken; for, unwieldy as the rhinoceros appears, it is nevertheless far more active than it looks, and the horse can barely get out of the way of its sudden and impetuous rush.

Hendrik had got two hundred yards down the pass before it turned again, but the distance was not enough. He was compelled to make stand for the third time, and await the terrible onset of his huge enemy.

As before, he succeeded in getting to his rear, but the rhinoceros seemed to grow wiser, and now wheeled his body at shorter intervals, so that Hendrik's chances of escape were growing less and less after each successive charge. In fact, he was kept dodging and leaping continuously from side to side. To have lost his footings or relaxed his vigilance for a moment, would have been certain and immediate destruction.

Hendrik began to despair. He was already panting for breath, with the perspiration flowing from every pore. His body ached with fatigue. His limbs began to fail him. He could not hold out much longer. There was no reason to believe the powerful brute would desist. It was child's play to him; and he had worked himself into a fearful rage at not being able to strike his victim after so many charges.

Hendrik began to think he was lost for ever. The thoughts of home, of father, of sister, and brothers, of Wilhelmina—rushed across his mind; he would never see them more; he would be killed in that pass, and by the fierce dark monster that was pursuing him. They would never know what had become—Ha! An ejaculation escaped from Hendrik's lips as these sad thoughts coursed through his brain. It was an exclamation of joy.

The struggle between him and the fierce animal had continued for more than a quarter of an hour, and had changed from place to place until they were now about the middle of the pass. Hendrik's sudden exclamation had been caused, by his observing upon the cliffs a sort of ledge or platform about six feet from the ground. It was scarce that width, but it ran along the front of the cliff for a distance of several yards; and, as Hendrik thought, at one end there was a sort of cave or cleft in the rocks. He scarce glanced at this, however; the platform itself was what interested him, and without another thought or look he grasped the edge of the rock and dragged himself up.

The next moment he stood upon the shelf, and looked safely down upon the ferocious brute that was snorting in vain fury below!

Chapter Thirty.

Hendrik in a State of Siege.

Hendrik breathed freely, though he puffed and panted a long time after getting upon his perch. His mind was at ease, however, for he saw at once that the rhinoceros could not reach him. The most it could do was to get its ugly snout over the edge of the rock, and that only by raising itself upon its hind-legs. This it actually did, blowing with rage, and projecting its broad muzzle as close as it could to the feet of the hunter, as if to seize him with its elongated and prehensile lips.

It did so only once. Hendrik was as angry as the rhinoceros, and with juster cause; and now, feeling confident of the security of his position, he bent forward, and with all his might repeatedly kicked the thick lips of the brute with the heels of his heavy boots.

The rhinoceros danced about, uttering cries of rage and pain; but, despite the brutal impetuosity of its nature, it no longer attempted to scale the cliff, but contented itself with rushing to and fro at its base, evidently determined to *lay siege* to the hunter.

Hendrik had now time to contemplate this singular animal. To his surprise he perceived that it was a new species—that is, one he had never seen before, although he had heard of it.

Hendrik knew—for Hans had told him long ago—that there were at least four species of the rhinoceros inhabiting the countries of South Africa between the Tropic and the Cape, and that probably a fifth existed to the north of this line. Of the four, two were *white* rhinoceroses, and two *black*. The white ones were called

respectively “kobaoba” and “muchocho,” the black ones “borelé” and “keitloa.” The white species were both larger than the black ones, but of milder disposition. Their food was principally grass, while the borelé and keitloa browse upon the tender shoots and leaves of bushes. The white ones are “unicorns,” that is, their anterior horn is largely developed—in the muchocho being sometimes three feet in length, and in the kobaoba still longer—while the posterior horn is simply a knob or bony protuberance. There are many other points of distinction between the white and black species, both in form, colour, and habits.

Now, as the one that had attacked Hendrik was a *black* rhinoceros, and was *not* the borelé—for this was the kind they had encountered while hunting the gnoo—it must be the keitloa. That it was not the borelé Hendrik saw by its horns. In the latter the front horn only is developed to any considerable length—never so long as in the white ones—whereas, like with them, the posterior horn is little more than a pointed knob, though longer or shorter in different individuals. Now, the rhinoceros before Hendrik’s eyes had two thick strong horns upon its snout, each one being full fifteen inches in length, and of course nearly equal. The neck, too, was longer, and the lip more pointed and prehensile than in the borelé for Hendrik knew the latter well, as it is one of the most common animals upon the frontier.

Hendrik’s assailant was the keitloa. Although less is known of this species than either the muchocho or borelé—because its district lies farther to the north—yet Hendrik had heard something of its character from Hans, as well as from old hunters. He had heard that it is even more fierce and dangerous than the borelé and is more dreaded by the natives. In districts where it is common, the people fear it more than any other animal—not even excepting the lion or the grim buffalo!

Hendrik had heard this about the keitloa, and no longer wondered at its having attacked him in the savage and unprovoked manner it had done. He only thanked his stars that there existed that little ledge of rock upon which he now stood, and from which he could look down and contemplate those terrible horns with a feeling of complacency which, five minutes before, he had not enjoyed. He almost laughed at the odd situation he found himself in.

"What a place for Hans!" he said in soliloquy. "Capital place for him to study the natural history of this clumsy brute!"

At this moment, as if echoing his thoughts, the keitloa began to exhibit before him one of its peculiar habits.

There stood a good-sized bush right in front, having a number of separate stems growing from one root, the whole forming a little clump of itself. Against this bush the rhinoceros commenced battling,—now charging it from one side, now from another,—dashing at it headforemost, breaking the branches with his horns, and trampling them under his thick clumsy limbs—all the while, by his menacing look and movements, appearing as if he was fighting with some enemy in earnest! Whether in earnest or not, he continued to go on in this way for more than half-an-hour, until every stem and branch were barked, broken, and crushed to mummy among his feet, and not till then did he desist from his furious attacks.

The whole thing had such a ludicrous air about it that it recalled to Hendrik's mind the story of Don Quixote and the windmill, and set him laughing outright. His merriment, however, was not of long duration, for he now began to perceive that the fury of the keitloa was as long-lived as it was terrible. The glances that the animal

from time to time cast upon the hunter told the latter that he had to deal with an implacable enemy.

As soon as the creature had finished its battle with the bush, it walked back towards the cliff, and stood with its head erect and its small lurid eyes gleaming upon the hunter. It appeared to know he was its prisoner, and had resolved upon keeping him there. Its whole manner satisfied Hendrik that such was its intention, and he began once more to feel uneasy about the result.

When another hour had passed, and still the keitloa kept watching him from below, he became more than uneasy—he became alarmed.

He had been suffering from thirst ever since they commenced hunting the blesbok—he was now almost choking. He would have given any thing for one cup of water.

The hot sun—for it was yet only noon—scorched him as he stood against that bare burning rock. He suffered torture from heat as well as thirst.

He suffered, too, from suspense. How long might his implacable sentinel keep watch upon him? Until the keitloa should leave the spot, there was not the slightest hope of his escaping. To have returned to the plain would be certain death. It would have been death but for the timely proximity of that friendly rock. No hope to escape from its broiling surface so long as the fierce brute remained below.

Would Hans and the others believe him lost, and follow upon his spoor? They might, but not till the next day. They would not think of him being lost before night came, as it was no unusual thing for one of them to be off alone from morning till night. How would he endure

the terrible thirst that was raging within him? How would he suffer it until they should arrive?

Besides, it might rain during the night. His spoor would then be completely obliterated. They would not be able to follow it, and then, what might be his fate?

These and many other reflections passed through his mind as he stood upon the ledge, regarding his fierce jailer with looks of anger and impatience.

But the keitloa cared not for that. He still remained upon the ground, now pacing to and fro by the bottom of the cliff, and now standing still, with head erect, his small dark orbs scintillating with a look of untiring vengeance.

Chapter Thirty One.

A Singular Escape.

As the moments passed, Hendrik's thirst grew fiercer, and his impatience stronger. He had already examined the cliff above him—in hopes that he might have found a way by which it could be scaled. To no purpose did he look up. There were other ledges, it is true, but they were beyond his reach. The shelf he stood upon ran along the face of the cliff for many yards, but narrowed at both ends until it could be followed no farther. He had not moved from the spot where he ascended, as that was the broadest part, and where he was most out of reach of the elastic snout and long horns of the keitloa.

He now remembered that, while battling about below, he had noticed a dark spot above the ledge, which he had conjectured to be the entrance of a cave, or a hole in the cliff. He had thought of it once again, but as creeping within a cave would not render him more secure than he was out on the rock, he had not gone towards it.

Now it occurred to him that he might examine the cave, and enter it if large enough to admit him. It would, at least, be pleasanter there, as he would be sheltered from the hot rays of the sun—an important consideration at that moment.

But there was another consideration that influenced him still more; and that was, the thought that were he once *out of sight* the rhinoceros *might forget him*. He knew that the old adage, "out of sight, out of mind," had a good deal of meaning when applied to the borelé, the lion, and many other dangerous animals; and perhaps the proverb would also hold good of the keitloa—though what he had heard of this creature gave him very little

ground to hope. At all events, he could test the thing. It would not cost much time to make the trial; and even should it prove of no service in that way, the change from his present stand upon the hot ledge for a seat within a cool cavern could not otherwise than better his condition. To the cave then!

Fixing his eye upon the keitloa, he commenced moving along the terrace, towards the point where he remembered having noticed the dark fissure in the cliff.

The keitloa followed, keeping with him step for step; and apparently roused to fresh vigilance, as if it feared that its victim was about to attempt an escape. All the way it followed him; and as the ledge grew narrower, it became necessary for Hendrik to proceed with great caution. Not that he was in danger of falling from it, but rather of *being dragged*—for the rhinoceros, by standing on his hind-legs, was now able to stretch his broad muzzle above the edge of the rock, and to protrude his elastic snout across the ledge within a few inches of the wall beyond. It therefore required "gingerly" stepping on the part of Hendrik. Notwithstanding all the menacing efforts of his adversary, Hendrik succeeded in reaching the entrance of the cave.

It was a cavern deep and dark, with a mouth sufficiently large to admit the body of a man in a bent position.

Hendrik was about stooping to enter it, when a loud "purr" sounded in his ears that caused him to start erect again, as if some one had run a needle into his back! The "purr" was quickly followed by a "roar," so deep and terrible, that in his first moments of alarm, the hunter felt half inclined to leap to the ground, and risk the horns of the rhinoceros, which, at that instant, were gleaming above the ledge, within twenty inches of his feet!

There was no mystery in what caused the alarm. There was no mistaking that roar for any other earthly sound. The cave was tenanted by a lion!

The tenant did not remain much longer within his house. The roaring continued; and every moment sounded nearer and clearer. The huge claws caused a rattling among the dry pebbles that strewed the bottom of the cave. The lion was coming forth!

With the nimbleness of a klipspringer, Hendrik bounded to one side, and ran back along the ledge, looking fearfully behind him.

This time he was not followed by the keitloa. The rhinoceros, whether terrified by the roar of the lion, or whether his attention was solely taken up by it, remained standing where he had taken up his position, with his head projected over the rock, and his snout pointed towards the entrance of the cavern.

Next moment the shaggy front of the lion filled the mouth of the cave, and the king of beasts and the "king of brutes" came face to face!

THE KEITLOA AND THE LION. Page 198.

For some moments they remained gazing at each other; but the eyes of the lion seemed to intimidate the keitloa, and the latter drew his head back, and dropped on all fours to the ground. Perhaps he would have gone off from the spot without an encounter; but the ire of the dread monarch had been aroused by this intrusion upon his rest. For a moment he stood lashing his tawny sides with his tail; and then, crouching until his breast touched the rock, he launched himself out from the ledge, and

came down with all the weight of his body upon the broad back of the keitloa!

But, king as he was, he had mistaken the character of that "subject," if he thought he was going either to mangle him badly, or put him to flight. Sharp as were his claws, and strong his arms to strike, they barely scratched the thick hard hide of the pachyderm; and although he tried to "fix" himself on the shoulders of the latter, he could not manage to stick. Had it been a buffalo, or an antelope, or even the tall giraffe, he would have ridden it to death; but to ride a rhinoceros was a different affair; and he found it so. Although he used both teeth and claws to keep him in the position he had taken, neither would serve him, and he was dismounted almost in an instant. The moment the keitloa felt the fierce rider on its back, it made a desperate rush outward from the rocks, and shaking its huge body like an earthquake, it cast the lion to the plain.

The lion crouched as if again to spring; but the latter, suddenly turning upon his antagonist, stood face to face with him before he could effect his purpose.

The rhinoceros did not pause a moment, but rushed on his antagonist with his horns set like couched lances. The weight of his body, with the impetuosity of the charge, would have driven those hard sharp weapons through the toughest skin that lion ever wore, and through his ribs as well. The lion seemed to be troubled with some such idea; for, instead of awaiting the onset of his enemy, he turned tail—the cowardly brute!—and made off up the pass, the keitloa chasing him as if he had been a cat!

Hendrik, all the while, had watched the combat from the ledge; but he never knew how it ended, or whether the rhinoceros overtook the lion or not. The moment he saw

the two great brutes in full run *up* the pass, he leaped from the ledge and ran *down* it, with all the speed he could take out of his legs.

On reaching the angle, he hesitated a moment which way to take—whether to follow back the spoor of the hunt, or the later tracks of his horse—but at length he decided on following back his own spoor over the open plain. He ran along it as fast as he was able, looking over his shoulders at very short intervals, and still fearful that the great black body would show itself in his rear. He was agreeably disappointed, however. No keitloa followed in pursuit; and soon another agreeable fact came under his notice—he perceived that his horse had also gone back the same way. On rounding a clump of bushes some distance farther on, he saw the horse browsing a little way off upon the plain.

The latter permitted himself to be caught; and Hendrik, once more mounting to the saddle, pursued his way towards the camp. The spoor of the hunt guided him in a direct line; for the blesboks, it will be remembered, ran all the while to windward, thus following a straight course. Hendrik had no difficulty in following the track; and, after two hours' riding, got back to camp, having picked up most of the dogs on his way back.

Hans and Arend *did* laugh at him. Groot Willem did *not*. The latter remembered how his rival had acted after his own tumble over the burrow of the aard-wolf; and now reciprocated Hendrik's handsome behaviour on that occasion. Groot Willem and Hendrik were likely to become great friends.

Chapter Thirty Two.

A Vast Herd of Antelopes.

Next day the young yägers were witnesses to a most extraordinary spectacle; and that was, a vast herd of blesboks,—so vast, that the plains appeared literally covered with their purple masses!

This herd was not browsing, nor at rest, but scouring up against the wind—as those hunted the day before had done—and evidently running as if some dreaded enemy in their rear had given them an alarm.

The mass of bodies was nearly half a mile in width; but it would have been difficult to estimate its length, as it continued to pass before the eyes of the yägers for more than an hour! On the animals poured, sometimes running in line, and sometimes the hindmost leaping over those that preceded them, moving like an impetuous torrent. All of them ran with necks extended forward, their noses close to the ground, like hounds running upon the scent!

Here and there they were closely packed in dense masses, while in the intervals between, the bucks were thinly interspersed; and now and then were wide breaks, like an army marching in column.

The cause of these openings was simply that the immense drove consisted of a great many separate herds, all running by one impulse; for it is a curious habit of the blesboks and bonteboks, that when one herd becomes alarmed, all the other herds that chance to be in the same plains with this one, both to windward and leeward of it, start off in succession; and as all, from their habit of running up the wind, must follow the same direction, a constant drove, or rather a continuous

succession of droves is formed, and passes in open column before the spectator who may be on either flank. The wonderful spectacle of so many living creatures, running together in such countless numbers, brought to mind the accounts, which the young yägers had read, of the migrations of the buffalo on the prairies of America, and also those of the passenger-pigeon. Of course, the resemblance to the "trek-boken" of their own springboks, which all of them had witnessed, was also remembered.

On this day our hunters were more successful than upon the preceding. They had learnt by their experience of yesterday how to "jäg" the blesbok.

Instead of attempting either to "stalk" or "head" them, they found that the best plan was to ride along the flanks of the running herd, and now and again dash near enough to fire into the thick of them. The blesboks, while moving to windward, will permit the hunter to get within three or four hundred yards of their flank; and the mounted hunter, keeping his horse fresh, can now and then gallop within shooting distance before the moving mass can turn out of its course. Firing among a flock in this aimless way, the bullet is not always sure of a victim, but now and then a buck fells to the shot.

Practising this plan, the young yägers played upon the flanks of the great herd during the whole time of its flight to windward; but notwithstanding the continuous cracking of rifles, with now and then the louder detonation of Groot Willem's great elephant-gun, the slaughter was not very great. Six only "bit the dust." But as in the six there chanced to be an equal number of bucks and does, the hunters were quite content. They were not "jäging" for the meat, but merely to get specimens of the horns and prettily-painted skins; and three of each were as many as they wanted.

The hunt was soon over; and as their horses were pretty well "blown," the yägers returned at an early hour to camp, taking with them only the heads, horns, and skins of their game, with just enough of the venison to give them fresh steaks for a day or two.

One peculiarity they remarked in skinning the blesboks—that the skins of these beautiful creatures exhaled a pleasant perfume—arising, no doubt, from the fragrant plants and herbage upon which the animals feed.

The afternoon was spent in dressing the skins—by removing the fatty flesh that adheres to them—and they were then spread out to dry. Under such a hot sun, a few hours was sufficient to render them dry enough to be carried on to the next camp, where they would be spread out for a longer period, and thoroughly prepared for packing in the wagons.

Hendrik and Groot Willem performed this service; but the preparing of the heads—a more scientific operation—was the work of Hans assisted by Arend. Hans had his box of chemicals, consisting of arsenical soap and several other noted "preservers," which he had brought along for this special purpose; and by night, two pairs of heads, with the skin and horns attached, were thoroughly cleaned and mounted, and ready for nailing up to the wall.

There was a buck and doe in each pair; one, of course, for the Von Blooms, and another for the mansion of the Van Wyks.

The only difference between the horns of the *blaze-buck* and the *blaze-doe* is, that those of the latter are shorter, and more slender; while the skin of the doe is less vivid in its colouring, and smaller, as is also the body of the animal. The same remark applies to the kindred species—the bonteboks—of which brilliantly coloured creatures

full sets of horns and skins were obtained the day after.

On this occasion, the "stand and drive" recommended by Groot Willem had been tried again, and with great success; each of the four—Hans, Hendrik, Arend, and Groot himself—having shot his buck as the flock dashed up to their stands. Indeed, Hans, upon this occasion, had carried off the palm. His double-barrel, loaded with ball, had enabled him to knock over a couple of the "painted goats"—as bonteboks are sometimes styled—right and left.

The explanation of their success in this hunt, and their failure when trying the same plan with the blesboks, is not found in any essential difference between the two species. Their habits are almost the same.

No. Their success lay simply in the fact, that on the day when they jäged the bontebok, there was no wind—not a breath of air stirring. On this account the game were not only unable to run against the wind, but, keen as is their scent, they were not able to tell behind which ant-hill lay their concealed enemies.

The consequence was, that Klaas and Jan were able to drive them right up to the ambushed hunters, who slew them without difficulty.

The "stalk" would not have succeeded on such a day, for these antelopes trust far more to their nose than their eyes; moreover, a correct rifle-shot is very difficult to be obtained in the plains of the "zuur-veldt,"—as the *mirage* is almost always upon them, and interferes with the aim. So strong is this mirage, that objects at a distance become quite distorted to the eye, and out of all proportion. A secretary bird stalking along looks as big as a man, and an ostrich attains the altitude of a church-steeple. Even the colour of objects becomes changed;

and travellers have mistaken a pair of tawny lions for the white tilts of their own wagons and have gone towards them, thinking they were riding into their camp! An awkward mistake, I should fancy.

After having secured their specimens of the pied antelopes, the young yägers again broke up camp, and treked away across the plains of the “zuur-veldt.”

Chapter Thirty Three.

The Lone Mountain.

It has been observed, that upon the plains of the zuur-veldt country, mountains of singular forms meet the eye of the traveller—cones, domes, square box-like masses with table tops; sharp ridges, like the roofs of gigantic houses; and some that pierce the heavens with pointed peaks like the steeples of churches! Some, again, present a horizontal outline, like the parapet of a fortification, while square tower-like masses, rising above the general level, carry out the idea of some work of military architecture on a grand scale.

Our young yägers were very much interested in these mountain forms, so varied and fantastic. Sometimes their route led them along the base of a precipice rising a thousand feet sheer above the plain, and trending for miles without a break, so that for miles no access could be had to the mountain that rose still higher above. Sometimes they were compelled to trek along narrow ridges that sloped off on both sides, leaving scarce enough of level to run the wheels upon. Then, again, they would be compelled to pass around some spur, that, shooting for miles out into the plain, barred their direct path.

As they treked across one of the widest plains they had yet seen, a singularly formed mountain drew their attention. It could scarce be called a mountain, as its altitude above the plain could not have been more than seven or eight hundred feet; but its brown rocky surface gave it that character, and to have styled such a mass a hill would have been equally misnaming it. There were no “foothills,” or inequalities near its base. The greensward

of the level plain stretched away on every side—its verdant colour strongly contrasting with the dark brown granite of the mountain.

The sides of this singular mountain sloped from base to summit as regularly as those of an Egyptian pyramid; and at a distance it looked pyramidal, but on coming nearer its rounded form could be perceived. It was, in reality, an obtuse cone, perfect in all except the apex, and it was there that the peculiarity of this mountain lay. Instead of ending at the apex, a steeple-like rock rose out of the summit some thirty feet higher, ending in a point that appeared from below as "sharp as a needle." It was this that had drawn the attention of the young yägers more particularly, as other mountains of conical form were common enough along their route; but this one, looking, as one of them observed, like an inverted funnel, differed from any they had yet seen. It was very conspicuous, thus standing isolated in the midst of the open plain, and contrasting so much in its colour with the green table upon which it appeared to rest.

"Let us go and explore it," proposed Arend; "it isn't much out of our way. We can easily overtake these slow-going oxen again. What say ye all?"

"Let us go, by all means," said Hans, who fancied that upon so odd-looking a mountain he might fall in with some new plant.

"Agreed!" cried all the others in a breath, for when Hans proposed a thing it was usually assented to by his younger comrades.

Without further ado the whole six turned their horses' heads for the mountain, leaving the wagons to trek on across the plain, towards the point where they intended to encamp.

When the riders first faced to the mountain, it appeared to be about a mile off, and all, except Hans, believed that it was not more. Hans maintained that it was *five*, and was unanimously contradicted. A discussion took place, Hans standing alone—five to one against him. The idea of its being more than a mile was scouted. Hans was ridiculed—laughed at—called blind.

There was a little epitome of the world on that plain—a paraphrase upon a small scale of Galileo and his contemporaries.

And here let me counsel you, boy reader, ever to be cautious how you pronounce against ideas that may be put forth, because they chance to differ from those you already hold. Half of what you have already learnt is erroneous, and much of it has been taught you with an evil intent. I do not refer to what has been taught you by your school instructor, who imparts knowledge to you with the best of motives. But the tyrants of the earth—both priests and princes—for long centuries have had the moulding of men's minds, and they have spared no labour to shape them to their own purposes. They have so well succeeded, that one half the *very proverbs* by which conduct is guided, prove upon examination to be false and wicked.

There is a peculiarity about the attainment of knowledge which assists wicked men in misleading their victims, and I would wish that all of you should know this peculiarity. I do not claim to be its discoverer, for others may have discovered it as well; but up to this hour I have met with no promulgation of it.

It is this, that *every truth is overshadowed by a sophism, more like the truth than truth itself*. This law holds good throughout the whole extent of the moral, intellectual, and material world.

I cannot pause here to illustrate the above statement—not even to explain it. But I hope the day is not distant, when you and I may converse upon such matters *face to face*.

I hope you believe that I have helped you to some knowledge; but I now affirm, and in full seriousness, that, if you examine the statement I have thus emphatically made, and *study it to a full understanding*, you will have gained more knowledge in that one sentence than all I have hitherto written. You will find in it the key to most of the errors and misfortunes that afflict mankind.

In that sentence you will also find a key to the difference of opinion that existed between Hans and his five companions. None of the five were *thinkers*—they relied entirely on the evidence of their senses. A process of ratiocination never troubled the brain of any of the five. Had they never before seen a straight rod plunged into crystal water, they would most certainly have believed that the rod was bent into an angle—ay, and have ridiculed any one who should have contradicted the *evidence of their senses*, just in the way they now ridiculed Hans for asserting that an object was five miles off, when they *plainly saw* it was only a fifth part of that distance. It certainly *appeared* only a mile off—that is, to one who had been in the habit of measuring distances by the eye in the ordinary atmosphere of a lowland country. But Hans knew they were now in a region elevated many thousand feet above the level of the sea. Partly from books, and partly from his own observation, he had studied the nature of the atmosphere at that altitude; and he was acquainted with the optical illusions of which it is frequently the cause. He admitted that the mountain *looked* near, even as near as a mile; but he held on to his original opinion.

Patient as was the young philosopher, the ridicule of his companions nettled him a little; and suddenly pulling up on the plain, he challenged them to a measurement. They all agreed to the proposal. They had no measuring chain—not even a yardstick.

But they knew that Hans could tell distances without one; and having consented that his measurement should be taken, they all rode back to the point where the discussion had commenced.

How was Hans going to manage it? By trigonometrical triangles, you will say. Not a bit of it. He could have told the distance in that way if he had wished; but he had a simpler plan. Hans did not carry a *viameter*, but a *viameter* carried him!

Yes, in the stout steady-going cob which he rode, he had as perfect a viameter as ever was set to a wheel; and Hans having once put his horse to the proper pace, could tell the distance passed over almost as correctly as if it had been traced by a chain! There was a certain rate of speed into which Hans's horse, when left to himself, was sure to fall, and this speed was so many steps to the minute—the steps being of equal length. By either counting the steps, or noting the time, the exact distance could be obtained.

Hans had been in the habit of putting his horse to the proper pace for this very purpose, and could do so at a minute's warning. So, taking out his watch to regulate the speed by the moment hand, he started forward in a direct line for the mountain.

All rode, after, without noise—so as not to disturb Hans in his counting. But for that, they would have continued to gibe him a little. Only for a short while, however; for, as they rode on, and the mountain did not appear to

come any nearer, their faces began to look very blank indeed.

When they had ridden for a full half-hour, and the mountain *still looked a mile off*, Hans had five very crest-fallen boys moving along in his rear.

When they had ridden nearly another half-hour, and their horses' snouts almost touched the rocks of the mountain, none of the five was surprised to hear Hans cry out in a loud firm voice:—

"Just five miles and a quarter!"

Not a word was spoken. Not one of the five ventured even a whisper of contradiction. Hans did not laugh in his turn, but facing round simply said—

"*Every truth is overshadowed by a sophism more like the truth than truth itself*!"

Chapter Thirty Four.

The Approach to the Lone Mountain.

Although from a distance the mountain had appeared of smooth outlines, now, that they gazed upward from its base, it presented quite a different aspect. Loose boulders of rock, strewed thickly upon the slope, covered its sides up to the very summit, giving it the appearance of a gigantic "cairn," such as may be seen upon the tops of some of our own mountains. These, however, are the work of men, while that upon which our yägers gazed looked as though giants had erected it.

Among the loose stones there was yet a trace of vegetable life. Plants of the cactus kind, and rare euphorbias, grow in the spaces between the rocks; and here and there stood a small tree, with spreading top and myrtle-like foliage, casting its shadow over the side of the mountain. The arborescent aloe was also seen, its coral-red spike appearing above the sharp edge of some huge boulder, and strongly contrasting with the dull grey of the rock.

After contemplating the singular eminence for some minutes, it was proposed that they should all ascend to its summit. It appeared but a very short way. The path was not very steep. A ten minutes' climb would suffice. What a splendid view they should have from its top! It commanded a prospect of the country they were about to traverse for the next three days' journey at least. They might lay out their course from it, and by noting landmarks, avoid the détours of mountain-spurs and other obstacles. Should they ascend it?

Yes. All of them desired to do so—some to enjoy the view; some for the fun of climbing; and Klaas and Jan

because they had seen a large bird wheeling around the summit, which might be the king of birds—an eagle; and they wished to make a nearer acquaintance with his majesty.

Hans also had an interest in going up. He wanted to examine the vegetation of the mountain—that appeared to differ essentially from that of the surrounding plain—and particularly the myrtle-leaved tree already mentioned.

So the voice for making the ascent was unanimous—*nemine dissentiente*.

Without further ado, they all dismounted—for it would have been impossible to have ridden up such a rock-strewed path—and secured their horses by tying their bridles together. This was their usual way when there was no tree to which they could make them fast. The mode answered well enough. The animals were well acquainted, and on friendly terms, so that they did not bite or kick one another; and with their noses all turned inward, no one of them could stray off without the consent of the other five, and this unanimity could never be obtained. Even had five of them agreed to wander a bit, there was one that would have opposed such a conspiracy, and *pulled against it* with all his might—one that would have remained loyal to his master; and that was Hans's steady, sober-sided cob, that had been trained to wait wherever his rider left him. Upon many a botanical excursion had he carried his master, and often had stood with no other fastening than the bridle thrown over his withers, while the botanist climbed the rocky steep, or dived into the thick bush, to pluck some rare plant or flower.

Leaving their horses, the party commenced the ascent. Now their path lay between large masses of granite, and now passed over the tops of the rocks. It required them

to use all their strength and agility; and although from below they fancied they would reach the summit in about five minutes time, they were sadly disappointed.

There are few things more deceptive than the ascent of a mountain. It is usually more difficult than it appears, and a large allowance should be made in the calculation, both for time and labour. The philosopher Hans knew this very well, and told the others that it would take them a full half-hour to get to the top. Some of them were inclined to ridicule his assertion; but they remembered their late humiliating defeat, and remained silent—although they *thought* five minutes would bring them to the very summit.

At the end of five minutes they began to change their opinion; and when three times five had passed over, they found they were still but half-way up the slope!

Here they halted, and five minutes were spent in "puffing and blowing."

Hans had now an opportunity of examining the tree that so interested him, for they had stopped under the shade of one.

It was not a large tree, nor could it be called a very handsome one; but for all that it proved to be of a most interesting character. It was much branched with small leaves, of a pale green colour, and in their general effect having a resemblance to the myrtles. Its flowers, too, were small and inconspicuous. It chanced to be in flower at the time, and this enabled the botanist to determine its character. It belonged to the order *Santalaceae*, or "sandal-woods;" and was a species of *Santalum*, closely allied to the *Santalum album* of India, which yields the sandal-wood of commerce.

They all knew what sandal-wood was, as they had seen

various "knick-knacks" manufactured out of this famous wood; but they knew not whence it came, or what sort of tree produced it. Hans, however, taking advantage of the halt, gave them this information:—

"The sandal-wood," he said, "is produced from a tree of the same genus as the one now above us. It grows in the mountainous parts of the Malabar country, and also in the islands of the Indian Archipelago. It is a small tree, rarely growing to a foot in diameter. Its wood, as you know, is highly prized on account of its agreeable fragrant smell; and because this fragrance not only keeps it from decaying, but also preserves any material, such as clothes, silk, and other articles that may be in contact with it, from insects or rust. In consequence of this quality of the sandal-wood, it is in great demand for making boxes, cabinets, and such articles of furniture; and, on account of its agreeable odour, it is also manufactured into fans and necklaces which command high prices.

"The Brahmins use it in their sacrifices to the god Vishnu, to scent the oil employed in the ceremony."

"Are there not two kinds of sandal-wood?" inquired Klaas. "Sister Wilhelmina has a box of it and a necklace, too. They were brought from India by Uncle, but they are very different. The box is white, and the beads of the necklace are of a beautiful yellow colour—maybe they are dyed."

"No," answered Hans, "they are not dyed. There *are* two kinds, white sandal-wood and the yellow sort, and it has been said that they were the produce of different trees. This is not the case, however. Although there is more than one species of *Santalum* that produces the sandal-wood of commerce, the white and yellow kinds are taken from the same tree. The reason of the difference is, that towards the heart of the tree where the wood is older,

and especially down near the root, the colour is of a deep yellow; whereas the young wood that lies outwardly is nearly white. The yellow part is harder, more fragrant, and, of course, more valuable.

"When these trees are felled for their wood, the bark is at once stripped off and the trunk buried for nearly two months—which strengthens its odour, and renders it more agreeable."

While Hans was giving these interesting details, the others took out their knives; and each cutting a branch from the sandal-tree, applied it to his nose, and then tasted it.

But, though they could perceive its fragrant smell, they found it perfectly insipid to the taste. Hans said it was so with the *Santalum album* or true sandal-wood of India —that, notwithstanding its sweet perfume, it is quite tasteless.

He further informed them that the name "sandal-wood" is not derived from the use to which the wood is sometimes put—that of making *sandals*. On the contrary, these derive their name from the wood itself. The true derivation of the word is from the Persian "sandul," which signifies useful, in relation to the valuable qualities of the timber. The sandal-wood of the Sandwich Islands, added Hans, is procured from two species different from *Santalum album*.

The yägers, having now rested a sufficient time, again faced up the mountain, and in fifteen minutes after stood upon its top.

Chapter Thirty Five.

The Little Hyrax.

It is not quite correct to say that they stood upon the summit. They had reached the top of the hill, but still above them rose the steeple-like rock which they had observed from the plain, and whose odd appearance had allured them to the spot.

A singular rock it was, rising full thirty feet above the summit of the mountain. Its sides were nearly vertical, but scored and seamed as if the rain had worn its surface into furrows. It gradually narrowed upward, until it ended in a point not four inches in diameter; but along its sides from top to bottom similar points stood up; so that the whole structure—if we may call it so—bore a strong resemblance to a Gothic turret, rising in the midst of many others that stood out from its base and along its sides.

It appeared inaccessible to any other creature than a cat, a monkey, or a winged bird; and of course not one of the party thought of such a thing as climbing it. That would have been a perilous undertaking.

After they had satisfied themselves in gazing at this singular geological phenomenon, they commenced moving around its base to the opposite side. It was not so easy to get round it, as huge sharp boulders covered the whole scarp of the hill around its base, and they had either to mount over these, or push themselves through the narrow interstices between.

Before they had got quite round, however, an object came under their eyes that caused them to halt, and remain for some time in an attitude of observation.

About half-way down the hill rested a rock of vast dimensions, whose sharp angular top rose higher than those around, and commanded the view of a broad space of the mountain-side. Upon the top of this rock was perched a very large bird—full as large as a turkey-cock. Its plumage was of a deep black colour, except over the back, where there was a patch as white as snow covering the shoulders. The feathers upon the legs reached to the very toes, and were of brown colour. The toes appearing beneath were of a bright yellow.

The general outline of its form—the abrupt curving of the beak—the full-rounded tail—the strong broad wings, and the feathered legs looking as though the bird wore *trowsers*—were all characteristic points that told its species.

"An eagle!" exclaimed the hunters as soon as they saw it.

It was an eagle, and one of the largest of its kind. It was the great vulture-eagle of Verreaux, (*Aquila Verreauxii*). This bird no doubt it was that Klaas and Jan had caught a glimpse of as they approached the mountain.

It was scarce two hundred yards from the boys, and although they had been making a considerable noise while passing over the rocks, it had not heard them, and still sat without noticing their proximity. That would have been strange for a bird so shy as an eagle; but it was accounted for by the fact that its attention at the moment seemed to be taken up with something else. This was evident from the attitude in which it sat, or rather stood, with claws firmly clenched upon the edge of the rock, and neck stretched forward and downward. It was evidently eyeing some object below, in which it took a deep interest.

Its back was turned upon the hunters, and offered a fair

mark; but it was far beyond point-blank range of any of their guns, except perhaps the roer. Groot Willem, however, might have reached it, but at such a distance and with so small a mark a bullet from the smooth bore would have been little better than a chance shot.

Groot Willem was about to try it, however; but Hans begged of him to hold his fire a little longer, so that they might watch the movements of the eagle—which, from its odd attitude, was evidently meditating to surprise some victim below.

It was not long before the victim was also in sight—appearing suddenly upon a little terrace, some twenty or thirty yards farther down the mountain. It was a small quadruped, of a greyish brown colour, darker above, and of lighter tint beneath. It had the look of a rabbit, though considerably larger than one, thicker in the body, and without the long ears. It stood, moreover, not so high on its legs, and these appeared much bent as it walked. Like the rabbit, its hair was of a thick woolly nature, though long scattered silky hairs rose above the general surface of its furry coat it was entirely without a tail; and the four claws of its fore feet were *not* claws, but nails resembling little hoofs? On the hind-feet it had but three toes; the inside one of each ending in a regular claw.

Of course, these peculiarities were not noticed by the spectators at the moment, as the little quadruped was beyond the reach of such minute observation. They were communicated afterwards by Hans, who knew the animal well.

Altogether it was by no means an interesting animal to look at externally; yet in its internal structure it was one of the most interesting upon the globe.

In that small round woolly creature, timid as a mouse—

now making abrupt runs across the little platform—now stopping short in its career, to nibble a leaf of some plant, or to look suspiciously around—in that insignificant quadruped the young yägers beheld a near relative of the big brutal rhinoceros! Yes; though without any horn upon its snout, and without the naked skin—the teeth, the skull, the ribs, the hoof-like toes, the whole internal structure of the animal in question, prove it to be a rhinoceros!—a regular pachyderm! So says Frederick Cuvier.

"What a wonderful triumph," said Hans, "the closet naturalists have had in this discovery! 'What a triumph of anatomy,' says M. Cuvier, 'that proves this supposed rodent to be a rhinoceros!' In my opinion it is rather a proof of the weakness of M. Cuvier's anatomic theories; for here is a creature, with all the *teeth* of a rhinoceros, and all the *manners* of a rabbit!

"Instead of the bold brutal nature of the rhinoceros—rushing out without provocation, attacking and butting at whatever comes in its way—here we have a shy timid creature, that takes to flight on the slightest suspicion of danger, and seems to be frightened at its very shadow. Why, it affords the most absolute proof of the uncertainty of the *teeth* and *bones* as a guide to the mode of life of any animal. In all animated nature a better illustration could not be found of the fallacy of M. Cuvier's arguments than this same *hyrax*—for so the quadruped is called—and, despite the opinion of the celebrated French savant, I still believe the little creature to be more of a rabbit than a rhinoceros." So spoke Hans Von Bloom. It was bold language for so young a naturalist!

It is true there was much reason in his holding to the opinion that the hyrax is no pachyderm. Its habits are so unlike those of the thick-skinned brutes—its mode of life so different from that of a rhinoceros.

Its habits are very simple, and can be told in a few words. It is gregarious; dwells upon the mountains, and in the most rocky places; makes its den in the crevices and caves that are found there, steals forth to eat or bask in the sun; runs timidly and with a shy suspicious look; feeds on grass and leaves of plants, and is fond of those of aromatic properties; can escape from most carnivorous quadrupeds, but is successfully preyed upon by birds, and especially by the vulture-eagle—the species already described. Such is the history of the "*daman*" or "*hyrax*," "dassie," "rock-badger," or "rock-rabbit"—by all of which names the creature has figured in books.

It is one of those anomalies that cannot be classed with other quadrupeds, and has been constituted a genus of itself. Two species are known, differing very slightly from each other. They are *Hyrax Syriacus* and *Capensis*, or the Syrian and Cape hyrax.

One of the most interesting facts in relation to this quadruped is, that the Syrian species is most probably the "coney" of the Scriptures. In fact, the description can apply to no other existing animal.

I have said that all this knowledge was obtained afterwards from the philosopher, Hans.

Just then there was no time for such observations; for the hyrax, with two or three of its companions, had scarce appeared from the platform, when the eagle shot down from the rock, and swooped right into the midst of them.

The boys heard the shrill cry of the little quadrupeds, as the shadowy wings covered them; and expected to see the eagle rise with one of them in its talons.

They were disappointed, however, as well as the bird

itself. The “rock-rabbits” had been too quick for their well-known and dreaded enemy; and before the eagle was able to put a claw into their wool, they had all scattered, and rushed within the safe shelter of their dark caves.

Of course, they were not coming out any more that afternoon. The eagle seemed to have this very idea; for, rising into the air with a scream of disappointment, it flew off towards the other side of the mountain.

Chapter Thirty Six.

The Klipspringers.

In hopes of getting a shot at it on the wing, the boys crouched behind the boulders as it flew round, holding their guns in readiness. It passed them at too great a distance, and none of them fired.

They expected to see it fly off, and wing its way towards the neighbouring mountains—as it could only be a stray visitor to the hill, some hungry old eagle out upon a hunt.

It was about to do this; for it had already risen to a considerable elevation, and was heading away, when all at once it stopped suddenly in its flight, and balanced itself for some moments in the air, with neck bent downward, as if it had taken a fresh interest in some object that had just come under its eye below.

Had the rock-rabbits ventured forth again? No. It could not be they; for the eagle was hovering over a different quarter—quite the opposite side of the mountain. If rock-rabbits were in sight, they must be a different party. That was not improbable. There might be others upon the mountain. And yet the eagle would not hover above *them* in that way. The habit of this species is not to "swoop" from on high, but to watch from a perch upon some neighbouring rock, and dash upon the hyrax, when it comes out to feed or bask—precisely as the boys had seen it do.

So quick is the rock-rabbit in escaping to its retreat, that even an eagle, darting from a high elevation, would fail to clutch it. Had there been rock-rabbits below, they would have perceived the great black bird above, and

would have secured themselves at once. It could not be they that were now occupying the attention of the vulture-eagle.

It was *not* they. Hans, who with his double-barrel had hoped to obtain a shot at the eagle, and had crept ahead of his companions to the other side of the tower-rock, saw that it was not rock-rabbits that had caused the eagle to pause in its flight, but some creatures of a very different character.

About half-way down the slope grew a sandal-wood tree, one of the largest upon the mountain, with a full bushy top. Directly, under this tree was a mass of tabular rock, with a smooth top, quite horizontal, and several yards in length and breadth. Over this, and nearly covering its whole extent, the sandal-wood threw its protecting shadow; so that while the hot sun baked down upon the surrounding slope, the surface of the rock was kept shaded and cool. It was just such a spot as one would have chosen to have rested upon, commanding a far view of plains and picturesque mountains, and sweetly shaded from the burning noonday beams—just such a spot as the contemplative mind would have desired, and in which, freed from care, it could have delivered itself up to pleasant meditations.

One cannot help fancying that many of God's wild creatures, in selecting their haunts and homes, have an eye to the picturesque. I can tell at a glance the cliff in which an eagle will make its eyrie, the glade that will be haunted by the stag or the fallow-deer, the tree under which he will repose, and oft times it has appeared to me that these favourite haunts are chosen by animals less for the security they afford, than for the picturesque beauty that surrounds them.

One could hardly have fancied that lone wild mountain—that smooth table-rock—that fragrant sandal-wood tree—

without some living thing placed there by Nature to enjoy the scene, and give life to the picture—which would otherwise have been incomplete.

It was not incomplete. It was crowned and perfect. The shade of the sandal-wood fell not in vain. Upon the surface of the table-rock was a group of living creatures born to enjoy that wild and lovely scene—created, as it were, to give a finish to the picture.

There were three individuals in this group—three quadrupeds of a kind that had not been seen by the young yägers since the setting out of their expedition. Though these animals wore a similar coat of hair, and were of the same yellowish olive colour, all three were of different sizes. The largest was scarce so tall as a pointer-dog, while the smallest was still less than a tiny young kid. The second was not half-way between the two, but nearly equal in size to the largest. The principal difference between the latter two lay in the fact that the large one had a pair of horns upon its head, which the other wanted. There were no horns neither upon their tiny little companion. For all this difference, the three were evidently of the same genus and species, nay, nearer relations still—of the same *family*. They were a family of *klipspringers*.

Hans knew at once it was the klipspringer, (*Oreotragus saltatrix*), and so did all the others—for this interesting antelope is still found within the settled districts of the Cape Colony—wherever high inaccessible cliffs and rock-covered mountains afford it a secure retreat from dog, hunter, and hyena.

Among the many interesting forms of the antelope tribe, that present themselves in South Africa, the klipspringer is not the least interesting. Though a very small creature, and of no great value to the hunter, it differs so much in its haunts and habits from others of the

antelope race, as to make it an object of curiosity, even where it is common and often seen. Unlike the oryx, the gnoo, the hartebeest, the blesbok, the eland, and a host of others, the klipspringer never appears upon the plain. It is purely a mountain-dwelling animal, and the crag and cliff are its favourite haunts. There it is safe from the carnivorous beasts—the lion, the hyena, the wild-hounds, and the jackal—none of which can reach its secure retreat upon the ledges of the beetling precipice. Even the leopard cannot follow it there—notwithstanding his recurved claws that enable him to climb like a cat. On the steep cliffs, and along the dizzy heights, the klipspringer has no equal in South Africa; he can scale them as no other quadruped; he fears no four-footed *beast* of prey. Three birds alone are his dangerous enemies—and these are the eagle of Verreaux, the Kaffir eagle, and the lammergeyer.

The klipspringer stands about twenty inches in height is strongly and compactly built, with stouter limbs than the small antelopes of the plain. His horns are but four inches in length, rise vertically up from his head, and incline slightly forward. They are wrinkled at the base, and ringed in the middle. The hair that covers his body is long, wiry, and thickly placed upon the skin; and standing out upon end, gives the animal somewhat of a porcupine appearance. The colour is a nearly uniform yellowish olive, caused by the individual hairs being ash-coloured at the base, brown in the middle, and yellow at the tips. One of the most characteristic points about the klipspringer is the formation of its hoofs. These, instead of being long and pointed—as is the case with most antelopes—are cylindrical in form, and rest vertically upon their bases. They are jagged at the edges—so as to give the animal the power of adhering to the smoothest rock, without danger of slipping. Like every piece of Nature’s handiwork, they are perfectly adapted to the use for which they are intended.

The klipspringer is not gregarious; but is seen in pairs, or *families*, as they now appeared under the eyes of the young yägers.

When Hans first noticed them, they were in different attitudes. The buck was standing upon the rock looking out over the plain below, but had not as yet perceived the eagle—as the thick leafy top of the sandal-wood interposed between him and it.

The doe was lying down; while, kneeling beside her, and drawing nourishment from her teats, was the little kidling.

Presently, the black shadow of the soaring bird passed over the greensward of the plain. It moved under the eyes of the buck, who, perceiving it, started suddenly, uttered a kind of hissing snort, and struck the rock with his hoof. This movement on his part brought the doe at once to her feet, as well as the little fawn; and all three stood in an attitude of observation, turning their eyes now upon the shadow below, and now glancing suspiciously above. After a moment they all commenced leaping about, though they still kept upon the rock. They saw the eagle, for it had now moved out some distance over the plain, so that the foliage of the tree was no longer interposed between it and them.

It was just at this moment that the eagle had paused in its flight, and hung poised in the air. It had for the first time placed its eyes upon the klipspringers.

In a moment the rapacious creature perceived the little fawn, cowering close behind the body of its mother; and without more ado, the bird directed its flight downward; and, when nearer, swooped straight at the group upon the rock.

Sudden as was the dash of the bird, it was a fruitless

effort, and it rose again without having made a victim.

But when the spectators looked for the antelopes, not one of the three remained upon the table, where they had stood the moment before! As quick as the flight of the bird, all three had sprung off from the rock, and thus escaped from its dreaded claws.

One would have supposed that the klipspringers would have hid themselves in crevices, as the conies had done. Not so. All three were seen—each standing conspicuously upon the top of a rock, and seeming to await the further action of the bird. With heads erect, and eyes turned upward, they stood, evidently expecting a renewal of the attack. The eagle, after hovering around and calculating its distance, swooped again.

In this fresh attempt of the tyrant the little fawn alone was aimed at. Had it been the others, they would have sprung out of reach as before; and so, too, did the fawn repeatedly, bounding from rock to rock, with the elasticity of an india-rubber ball. But the wily bird continued the attack, turning each time in shorter circles, until the tiny limbs of the youthful antelope trembled with weariness. During all this time the old ones leaped about, bounding high in the air, and descending upon the sharpest edges of the rocks, as if they had alighted from a flight with wings. The object of their movements evidently was to draw the attack of the eagle upon themselves, and thus save their offspring.

It was to no purpose, however. The cunning ravisher preferred making a victim of the kid, and paid no attention to the manoeuvres of the old ones. No doubt, there were eaglets on the neighbouring mountain, and the tenderest venison was wanted for their dinner.

At all events, the eagle continued to assail the poor little fawn, until the latter had no longer strength left to leap

from the rock upon which it had taken its last stand.

Another dash made the eagle—a last and final swoop. Its talons closed like a cramp upon the vertebrae of the tiny quadruped, which the next moment was borne aloft into the air!

A shrill sad bleating was heard from below—drowned for an instant by the discharge of several guns, whose reports echoed like thunder from the rocks; and then the winged robber, with his victim still clutched in his talons, was seen falling with fluttering wings to the earth!

THE KLIPSPRINGER AND THE EAGLE. Page 232.

Chapter Thirty Seven.

Hunting the Klipspringer.

The eagle dropped not far from the summit; and the boys, running down to the spot, found it lying quite dead, with the little klipspringer—also dead of course—still fast in its claws. The talons sunk deeply into the flesh, embraced the spine, and even in death the fierce bird had not relaxed its hold!

Some would have considered the death of the eagle a just punishment; but, then, what was its crime? It is true, it had killed, and would have carried away, the little fawn of an innocent antelope—one of the most harmless of creatures. But what else could it have done? Nature had taught it to sustain itself in this way. Perhaps it had a nest on the brow of some beetling precipice—for this vulture-eagle of South Africa is a dweller upon rocks, and not a *tree-eagle*—perhaps in this nest it had a pair of downy little eaglets, each with an appetite like that of an ostrich—perhaps they were expecting that very kid, or some similar dish, for dinner; and would have been very hungry without it—might have died of hunger? What, then, could the parent bird do but provide them, though at the expense of other parents just as much attached to their offspring as an eagle could be? How can it be regarded as a crime? The eagle did not wantonly destroy the antelope, but to satisfy the cravings of hunger. It only obeyed one of the laws of Nature.

Cruel laws they *do* seem; yet, if they be crimes, Nature herself is answerable. Alas! we cannot comprehend, and, I fear, in this life never will comprehend, why we, the creatures of the earth, are born to prey upon one another. A puzzle to the humane heart is that "chain of

destruction."

Wanton killing of animals *is* a crime; and our hunters, at first sight, might be thought chargeable with this in having *wantonly* shot down the eagle. Such was not the case, however. They did not do so out of any feeling of wantonness. They had a proper object in shooting the bird. It was the representative of a rare and little-known species, and the possession of its skin for *scientific purposes* had something to do with the fatal aim that brought it down—for it was from the double-barrel of the naturalist the shot was sent that destroyed it.

By the act the klipspringers had been avenged, though there was little idea of giving them vengeance in the minds of the young hunters. Quite the contrary; for in five minutes after, the whole six—buck-dogs and all—were in full chase after these creatures, as ready to rob them of their lives as they had been to take away that of their winged enemy.

Nor was it out of wantonness either, or the mere love of hunting, though that might have been the principal motive with one or two of the party. But there was a curiosity about these little antelopes, and a desire to examine them more closely, that urged the young yägers to attempt their destruction. They desired to possess their trophies.

You may wonder why they should care about the horns of a klipspringer, since it is not one of the rare antelopes within the boundaries of the settlements! True, the animal itself is not rare; but it is a rare occurrence, when one falls before the bullet of the hunter—as the klipspringer is as shy and wary as the chamois itself—and, dwelling in the most inaccessible places, it is difficult game to capture. Hence, the killing of a klipspringer is regarded in the light of a feat, and its little horns are by no means an ordinary trophy.

The young yägers, therefore, wanted the pair belonging to the buck that was now leaping over the rocks below.

Some minutes were spent in deliberating as to what would be the best mode of getting possession of them.

At the report of the guns both the klipspringers had gone farther down the mountains, and were now standing upon a large boulder near its base.

Hendrik proposed that the party should dash right down after them—dogs and all—and force them out into the plain, where, it was well known, they could make but a poor run, and would be easily overtaken by the buck-dogs.

This plan seemed feasible. The antelopes were very near the base of the mountain. The hunters coming on them from above could easily drive them into the plain; and then there would be a run between them and the dogs, of which a fine view would be obtained.

Off started the whole party, directing their course straight down the mountain to the point where the klipspringers were seen. The dogs were set free, and sprang forward in advance.

The hunters moved on as fast as the nature of the ground would permit them; and in ten minutes would have been near enough to the klipspringers to have fired, had the latter favoured them by remaining in their place. But they did not do so. Of course, they had a full view of their enemies as they advanced; and before the hunters had got half-way down, the nimble game set off round the bottom of the hill, flitting from rock to rock like a brace of birds.

What seemed odd in their mode of progressing was, that instead of running along the open spaces between the

fragments of rock, they chose the rocks themselves for their path, and of these also the most prominent ones; so that their flight was a succession of bounds, some of them of enormous length! Many of the boulders, on which they rested a moment, and from which they sprang again, were so narrow at the top, that the little creatures hardly obtained room for their feet; and, with their four hoofs touching each other, they would spring off as though moved, not by muscular power, but under the influence of some elastic force!

At first the hunters believed their task to be an easy one. The mountain surface was of so limited an extent, they would soon surround the game, or force it out upon the plain. The first attempt to do so, however, had ended in a failure. The klipspringers had escaped without difficulty to the other side, and were now farther off than ever!

The hunters called up the dogs, recrossed the summit, and once more set their eyes upon the game, perched as before upon prominent points.

A second time the party advanced, spreading as they went down, and holding their guns in readiness; but long before they were within range, the klipspringers took to flight again; and, just as they had done before, passed around the base to the other side of the mountain. Of course, the dogs, scrambling clumsily among the rocks, were, no match for such game as they; and even had the klipspringers been near enough for the guns, the most accomplished riflemen could not have "sighted" them, so quick were their motions. The only chance of the yägers lay in their shot-guns, and to have hit them, even with these, would have been a feat equal to the bringing down a snipe or woodcock.

Once more the boys attempted to drive them into the open plain; but with the same result as before. Although

the hunters had spread themselves across the mountain, the nimble game dashed past them, and escaped to the other side.

Groot Willem now proposed a new plan. That was for all to descend the mountain to its base, and there make a complete surround of it. Then each to march straight up, and, by hemming the game on all sides, *force them to the summit*.

"In this way," added Groot Willem, "we'll at least have a crack at them; for if they try to get back through our line, they must pass near some of us."

Groot Willem's suggestion was adopted. The yägers now descended to the base of the mountain; and, separating, spread around it at equal distances from one another. The buck-dogs were also distributed; one going with each hunter, except Klaas, who had no dog to accompany him. Since the affair with the blauw-bok, there had been only five in the pack.

Thus placed, the boys recommenced the ascent. They proceeded with proper caution, keeping each other in view, and shouting from time to time words of instruction as to the position of the game. These were seen bounding before them, from rock to rock—now crossing the mountain to the opposite side, with the intention of escaping in that way—now zigzagging along the sides, or bounding upward toward the summit.

When the hunters had advanced about half-way up, the klipspringers became frightened in earnest. They saw that they were encompassed on every side; and sprang to and fro like a pair of grasshoppers.

At length they seemed determined to run the gauntlet through the circle of hunters, and made a bold dash in the direction of Hans. The naturalist, although not

professing to be much of a hunter, was a capital shot; and, raising his double-barrel, he fired.

The doe fell to the crack; and the buck, suddenly turning as on a pivot, once more bounded up the slope. The dogs had already gained a distance ahead of their masters, and now advanced upon the buck from all sides. There seemed no chance left him of avoiding their onset.

He had mounted a boulder near the base of the tower-rock; and the five were rushing upon him with open jaws, and shining teeth, when, all at once, as if impelled by a spring, he shot upward to a narrow ledge of the vertical rock, far beyond their reach. The ledge was scarcely wide enough to have given footing to a weasel, and yet the klipspringer seemed to feel quite secure upon it. But he did not rest there. The shouts of the hunters, as they hurried up the mountain, impelled him farther; and springing to a still higher ledge, and to another still higher, he stood at length upon the pinnacle of the rock!

A shout of surprise broke from the hunters as they witnessed this wonderful feat. And a singular spectacle it was. As already stated, the tower-rock ended in a point scarce four inches in diameter; and upon this stood the klipspringer, his hoofs pressed closely together, his neck drawn in, his body gathered into a ball, with the stiff wiry hair radiating on all sides outward, like the spines of a hedgehog—a curious object to look upon!

Although the hunters were now within shot, so odd did the creature appear thus placed that not one of them thought of drawing trigger upon it. They knew that they had the buck in their power—the dogs were all around him—and at such a height, full thirty feet from the ground, it could not escape. All therefore held their fire, and ran forward to the bottom of the tower.

They had made a sad mistake about the powers of that

klipspringer. As they were congratulating themselves on having trapped the buck in so odd a manner, he was seen to shoot out into the air, and, with a whizzing noise like that made by some great bird, he passed close to their ears, and lit upon the boulder from which he had bounded up! Scarce an instant did he rest there, but sprang to another, and another, and in a few seconds was far down the side of the mountain!

So sudden had been this movement on the part of the game, and so unexpected, that both dogs and hunters were taken by surprise, and not a shot was fired until the klipspringer was beyond reach! Just at that moment, as they stood watching his retreat, a puff of smoke was noticed far down the mountain—a gun cracked at the same instant—and the buck was seen to tumble headlong from a rock!

With fresh surprise the hunters turned to one another. "Who?" exclaimed all simultaneously. Ha! there were only five of them. One was missing!

"It's Klaas!"

It was Klaas beyond a doubt—Klaas who had killed the klipspringer.

Klaas had given an illustration that the "race is not always to the swift." He was rather a heavy boy, was Klaas; and feeling fatigued at so much climbing, had seated himself on a stone, and was taking a bit of a rest, when he observed the klipspringer, standing upon a rock right before his face. Having his light fowling-piece loaded with buckshot, he had taken aim, and dropped the buck from his perch.

Jan was not a little jealous, and insinuated that it was a bit of "luck" not very well deserved; but whether it was luck or not, Klaas had certainly killed the klipspringer,

and was not a little elated at his performance.

Having collected the game, the young yägers proceeded to where they had left their horses; and, mounting, galloped off after the wagons that were moving slowly across the distant plain.

Chapter Thirty Eight.

Bold Birds.

On the third day after entering the plains of the "zuur-veldt," the yägers treked to the banks of a large river, and followed its course up-stream. The scenery was altogether new and of a different character to that of the plains. The river was fringed with reeds and willows, and beyond these stretched a wide bottom land of meadow-like character, studded with groves and copses of green trees whose foliage was grateful to the eye after the journey over the dry plains. Here the deceitful mirage no longer tantalised them with prospects of verdant groves and smooth limpid lakes. Both existed in reality; and a succession of lovely landscapes met the eyes of the travellers as they advanced.

The grass upon the banks of this river was excellent, and in order that their cattle should have the opportunity of a good feed, the party formed camp at an early hour. They outspanned in a little meadow, directly by the edge of the water, and made a fire out of the stems of the willows that grew near.

Jan and Klaas noticed a large flock of birds hovering above the water, and swooping about, something in the same manner as swallows on a summer evening over the surface of an English lake.

They were birds of a moderate size, scarcely so big as a common pigeon—nor was there any thing in their colour to make them attractive. They were rather a dull-coloured set of birds for Africa, being reddish-brown, with a mixture of white and grey; but had they been near enough for the boys to have observed their feet and legs, these with the "cire" around their eyes, would have

appeared of a beautiful orange-yellow colour.

There was one peculiarity about these birds, which could be observed at a great distance, and that was their "forked" tails. In this respect they might also be said to resemble swallows, but the forking was far less acute than in the tails of the latter. There was enough of it to give the birds a character; and that, with their general form and the colour of their plumage, made it easy enough to tell to what genus the birds belonged. They were birds of the genus *Falco*, (hawks,) belonging to that section of it distinguished as *Milvus*, (the kites.)

Of the kites there are several species, but the particular one to which these before the eyes of Klaas and Jan belonged, was the "parasite kite," (*Milvus ater*), an inhabitant of all parts of the continent of Africa, and a bird somewhat smaller than the royal kite of Europe.

Both these bird-boys knew that the birds were hawks of some kind, but they could not tell what sort. When Hans told them that they were "kites," they both became doubly interested; and, guns in hand, stood near the water's edge watching the manoeuvres of the long-winged fork-tailed creatures.

To a superficial observer it might have appeared that these kites were merely playing themselves; now poised and hovering in the air, now floating softly along, and at intervals shooting down until they "dipped" themselves in the water of the stream. Any one, however, who had closely watched them for a time would soon have perceived, that they were not going through these manoeuvres for simple amusement. Each time that one of them made a plunge into the water, it might be observed that in rising again, it carried a shining object in its talons, which object was neither more nor less than a tiny little fish. Fishing, then, was what the "parasites" were after; and not for amusement, as anglers do, but

following it as a regular calling—in fact, following it for food.

Not that fish forms the only food of this species of lute. No; it will eat almost any thing,—little quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, and even carrion, upon a pinch. It is, however, very fond of fish; and, when it chances to reside in a country of waters, where fish are plenteous and easily procured, it follows the calling of a fisher pretty regularly.

Klaas and Jan stood for some time expecting to get a shot; but as none of the birds came near enough, they at length gave up all hope, and laid aside their guns.

Shortly after, dinner was ready, and all the boys sat down upon the wagon-chests, and commenced eating. Their dinner that day consisted of a very nice dish—that is, the flesh of the great South African bustard (*Otis tarda*) or wild peacock, (wilde pauw,) as they themselves termed the bird. Groot Willem had that morning shot this fine game, at very long range, with his "roer;" and but for the far "carry" of his gun they would not have procured the bird—for the wild peacock is one of the shyest kinds of game-birds, and scarcely ever rests within shooting distance of any cover by which it may be approached. Large as it is, it is esteemed the most delicate eating of South African birds, and almost equal to the wild turkey of America.

Now the young yägers had roasted this precious *morceau*, had carved it, and each was sitting with a piece in hand—one with a wing, another having the "drumstick," a third the "merrythought," a fourth the "pope's nose," and so on. Of course they were in a high state of enjoyment over such "titbits."

While engaged in this pleasant way, they were astonished to see the whole flock of kites come suddenly

swooping over the camp. Klaas and Jan were the more astonished, since they had been for some half-hour vainly endeavouring to get within shot of these very birds. *Now* there would have been no difficulty about that, for the parasites not only came within shooting distance, but, actually and literally, flew *in the very faces* of the boys! Yes; they would swoop right up until within a few feet of the diners, then poise themselves upon their wings, spread out their tails, turn over on their backs, and execute sundry other eccentric manoeuvres that put the six yägers into fits of laughter. Of course Swartboy joined in the chorus, and even the grave Kaffir grinned at the ludicrous spectacle.

But it did not end here. After a while the birds grew bolder and bolder; at each swoop they came nearer; until at length several of them actually snatched pieces of the bustard's flesh out of the very hands of those that were eating it! Verily did they illustrate the old adage of "many a slip between cup and lip."

Even the dogs were made victims of these bold little robbers, who swooped forward to their very muzzles, and snatched at the bones they were crunching.

This curious scene continued for some time. It would have ended sooner, had the business been in the hands of Klaas and Jan. Both these boys, at the first approach of the birds, had started up to get their guns, but they were withheld from using them by the others, and especially by Hans—who was desirous of observing these curious little hawks with the eye of a naturalist.

After a while the bird-boys were allowed to "blaze away;" and, what is still more singular, their repeated shots did not completely frighten off the parasites, though several were killed! Even some that must have been wounded—since the feathers had been knocked out of them—returned again and again to hover above the camp, with

eyes fixed eagerly upon the scraps of meat that had been left lying upon the chests!

A little incident was yet to occur of a still more ludicrous character.

Hans had that day shot a pigeon of very beautiful plumage, which is peculiar to the interior of South Africa, and whose wings and body are of a deep green colour. This species is somewhat rare, and Hans was desirous of preserving the skin and having it mounted. After dinner, therefore, he had skinned it; and having thrown its flesh to the dogs, he was still at work upon the skin, taking out the brains.

Klaas and Jan, satiated with sport, had desisted, and laid aside their guns—the consequence of which was that the parasites had returned in great numbers, and now exhibited as much effrontery as ever.

All at once, one of them seeing Hans engaged with the pigeon, and thinking no doubt that the body of the bird was still in its skin, made a sudden dash, drove its claw through the feathery mass, and carried off the skin in triumph! Hans, whose eyes had been closely bent upon his work, saw nothing of the approach of the little winged robber; and for some moments believed that one of the boys, out of a "lark," had snatched the pigeon from his fingers. It was not until he looked around, and then up into the air, that he was aware of the real culprit; and although all rushed to their guns, the pigeon-skin could not be recovered—as the kite, on seizing it, rose high into the air, and then carried it off to the other side of the river!

As not a bit of flesh remained in the skin, and as Hans had succeeded in extracting even the brains, no doubt the parasite soon discovered that his *pigeon* was no better than a "decoy!"

Chapter Thirty Nine.

The Waterbuck.

The bank upon which the yägers had encamped was about five or six feet above the surface of the water, as it now stood. The bank on the opposite side also rose above the water level; but on both sides there was a break or declivity that sloped down into the channel. These breaks corresponded with each other. They were not natural gorges, but had evidently been made by heavy animals, such as rhinoceroses and others, that were in the habit of coming either to drink or ford the river at this point. The tracks of many kinds of animals could be distinguished leading down to the water or up into the meadow—so that the place was evidently a "drift," or crossing-place for the wild beasts of the country around.

Perhaps at night many would cross here, and Hendrik and Groot Willem had resolved to watch that night and have a little moonlight sport. A moon—and a very fine moon—was expected; for the queen of the heavens was nearly in the full at the time, and the sky all that day had been without a cloud.

But they were destined to enjoy a little sport before the moon arose—even before the sun had gone down.

While engaged around the wagons, their attention was attracted by a movement among the reeds on the opposite side of the river. There was also an open space on that side corresponding to the meadow in which they were encamped. Around the opening grew a thick brake of tall reeds, interspersed with willows and other low trees. It was among these reeds that the movement was observed.

Presently a large animal came out of the covert, and stepped boldly forward into the open ground, where the short sward enabled them to see it from horn to hoof—for it was a creature with hoofs and horns—without doubt an antelope.

It was a species, however, which none of the party had ever seen before—an antelope of majestic form and elegant proportions.

It stood nearly five feet in height by full nine in length, and its general colour was a greyish sepia brown. Its face, however, was of a deeper brown around the bases of the horns and over the frontlet tinged with rufous. The lips and muzzle were white; a white patch marked the throat; a white streak was before each of the eyes; and a curious oval band of white encircled the tail. The hair over all the body was harsh, more resembling split whalebone than hair; but that which covered the neck was longer than the rest, and stood out all around like a mane on end. The horns were nearly three feet in length, and curved first upwards and then slightly inwards. They were closely ringed to within six inches of their tips, and of a whitish green colour. The tail of the animal was about eighteen inches in length with a tuft at its tip.

The shape and set of the horns, the rigid hair that grew all around the throat and neck, and the elegant upright bearing of this antelope, enabled the naturalist Hans to tell his companions to what species it belonged. It was the famed "waterbuck," (*Aigocerus ellipsiprymnus*).

I have said "famed" antelope, because the waterbuck is in reality one of the finest and most famous animals of the whole tribe.

Its name would seem to imply that it was a dweller in the water. Such, however, is not the case. It is called

waterbuck because it is never found far from the banks of a river or other water, in which it delights to plunge, and bathe itself during the hot sunshiny hours of the day. Of course it is an excellent swimmer, and, indeed, such confidence has it in its powers of swimming, that when hunted or pursued by whatever enemy, it makes directly for the river and plunges in, no matter what depth may be the water. It is the habit of many species of deer to make for water when hunted, but with them the object is to throw the hounds off the scent, and having once crossed a river, they continue on through the woods. Now the waterbuck does not leave the river for any great distance. It either swims downstream, or, having gone out on the opposite bank, returns to it, after making a short détour through the woods. It seems to regard the water as its haven of safety, and when overtaken usually stands at bay in the very middle of the stream.

It loves to dwell along rivers where there are marshy banks covered with tall sedge and reeds; and at certain seasons of the year, when these are partially inundated, the waterbuck is rarely seen—as it then makes its haunt in the very heart of morasses which are impenetrable to the hunter. Its long spreading hoofs enable it to pass with safety over marshy grounds, where other species of antelopes would be "mired" and destroyed.

The waterbuck has been classed by naturalists with antelopes of the *aigocerine*, or goat-horned group; but it differs greatly, both in horns and habits, from any of these, and deserves to be ranked as an antelope *sui generis*. If it were established as a separate genus, it would not stand alone, since another "waterbuck"—evidently a second species—has been discovered by late explorers a little farther to the north, upon the shores of the Lake Ngami. The latter is termed by the natives the "leche," and in the shape of its horns, and most of its habits, it bears a decided generic resemblance to the

Aigocerus ellipsiprymnus.

Still a third species of waterbuck has turned up during the recent explorations to the afore-mentioned lake; but this, though in habit very similar to the others, differs widely in regard to its physical characteristics. Its horns are of the spiral form, greatly resembling those of the koodoo, (*Strepsiceros koodoo*), and naturalists are disposed to class it in the genus *Tragelaphus*. Its name among the natives is "nakong."

The reason why none of our young hunters were *personally* acquainted with the waterbuck was, that none of them had ever seen it before; and the reason why none of them had seen it was, because it is not found in any part of the country through which they had hitherto travelled. It is altogether a tropical or sub-tropical species, loves a warm climate, and does not range so far south as the Cape settlements. It is possible that there may be other species by the rivers that run through the unknown interior of Africa; for between that southern territory, which has been yet explored, and the Great Säara, there lie many strange countries, and many strange creatures, of which the geographer and the naturalist yet know nothing.

So, my boy reader, if you should be desirous at any period of your life to achieve the reputation of a Bruce, a Park, a Denham, a Clapperton, or a Lander, you need not fear the want of an opportunity. There is still enough of "unexplored Africa" to employ adventurous spirits for perhaps a century to come. At all events the ardent naturalist will find plenty of new ground up to the new year's day of 2000! That I can safely guarantee.

THE WATERBUCK. Page 251.

Chapter Forty.

The Ravenous Reptile.

All eyes were fixed upon the beautiful animal as it approached the river. With light majestic step it advanced to the bank, and without pausing walked down the slope. It had no fear of the water, and stepped into it without hesitation.

The boys were in hopes that it intended to cross the river. On the opposite bank it was too distant for the a carry of their guns—even the elephant roer could not have sent a bullet to that side with any chance of hitting. Should the antelope cross, however, the case would be different. It might then come within range of their pieces; and, to make sure, Hendrik and Groot Willem had stolen under the cover of the reeds, and advanced nearer the crossing-place.

They were doomed to disappointment, however. The waterbuck had no intention of crossing. It had come to drink; and having waded in knee-deep, it stopped, and dipped its muzzle into the water for that purpose.

With disappointed looks the boys remained gazing upon it as it drank.

Now it chanced that close to the spot where the buck had entered the water there was a black log. It lay along the water in a direction parallel to the bank, and seemed to be floating—though only a small portion of it appeared above the surface. Saturated with the water, as it must have been, its weight perhaps had thus partially immersed it. The boys had given no heed to this log. It

was the half-decayed trunk of some tree—perhaps the black-barked acacia—that had been carried downstream during flood-time, and had made a lodgment in the little bay, where the path entered the water. Of course to such an ordinary circumstance the boys gave no heed. Neither did the waterbuck. Ah! false security! Better for the antelope had it heeded that log! Better for it had it "looked before leaping," and carefully scrutinised that black-barked thing—for black though it was, it was not the log of any acacia. *That log was alive*!

To the astonishment of all the boys, and no doubt to the far greater astonishment of the waterbuck, the dark object suddenly became endowed with motive power, and was seen to dart forward with the velocity of an arrow towards the spot where the animal was drinking. It was no longer a log, but a hideous reptile—a crocodile of gigantic dimensions!

The boys expected to see the waterbuck rear back, and attempt to escape. No doubt so it would have done, had the crocodile missed its aim, but the latter had not missed. On the contrary, it had seized the muzzle of the antelope in its long gaunt jaws, and was proceeding to drag its victim under the water.

There was a struggle not of long duration, but it was terrible while it lasted. The buck pranced, and plunged and spread his legs, and endeavoured to shake off his reptile assailant. Several times he was brought to his knees; but being a powerful animal he recovered his legs again, and once nearly succeeded in drawing the crocodile out upon the bank. All the while, too, he kept striking forward with his sharp fore-hoofs; but desperate as were the hits he made, they produced no impression upon the harsh scaly coat of his amphibious antagonist. Had the latter held him by any other part, he might have had some chance of escape; but seized as he had been

by the very tip of his snout, his head was all the time kept close down to the water, and the awkward position rendered it impossible for him to make use of his horns—his principal weapons of defence.

The crocodile was by no means one of the largest of his kind—else the struggle would have ended sooner. A very large one—that is, one of sixteen to twenty feet in length—can drag a buffalo bull under water, and a buffalo bull possesses four times the strength of a waterbuck. The one now seen was not over ten feet long; and the strong waterbuck might have been a full match for it, had it not been for the unfair hold which it had taken. In that, however, lay the advantage of the reptile, and it seemed to be aware of it, for from the first moment it never relaxed the "clutch" it had taken, but held on with its terrible teeth and strong jaws, closed like a clamp on the snout of its victim!

Now the crocodile was raised some feet out of the river, and the boys could see its ugly breast, and spread hand-like claws; now using its powerful tail as a fulcrum it would strike against the water, and then the head of the buck would be plunged below the surface, and held down for minutes at a time. Of course during all this while the water was kept in commotion; and, what with the struggles of the quadruped and the lashing of the reptile's tail, a constant spray of froth and bubbles marked the scene of the strife.

The conflict at length came to an end. The water-tyrant triumphed. The buck was dragged into the river beyond his depth; and although few quadrupeds could swim as well as he, once off his legs he was no longer a match for the amphibious saurian. His head and horns both disappeared beneath the surface—now and then the tail of the crocodile flapped upward, as it exerted itself to keep its victim under—and then both reptile and

quadruped sank to the bottom of the river, and were seen no more!

For some time the hunters remained watching the surface of the water. They saw the frothy bubbles floating over the spot—some of them reddish with the blood of the waterbuck—but the current soon carried them away, and the river glided past smooth and silent as if no such commotion had occurred in its waters.

The hunters all returned to the wagons, and a conversation now occurred about crocodiles, in which Congo took part.

The Kaffir had hunted upon the great river Limpopo, which lay to the northeast of their present camp. He alleged that there crocodiles were very numerous, and some were seen of enormous dimensions, attaining to thirty feet in length, with bodies as thick as a rhinoceros; that such scenes, as that they had just witnessed, were of no uncommon occurrence there. He said that the larger crocodiles frequently attacked buffaloes, precisely as this one had done the waterbuck—that they lie in wait by the watering-places of these animals, and seizing them by the muzzle when they are drinking, drag them under water, and thus suffocate them.

But Congo related a still more curious habit of the crocodiles. He asserted that they never devour their prey until it becomes quite decomposed—that is, until it attains the condition of carrion. He stated that when a crocodile has killed a buffalo or any large animal, it always drags the carcass back to the shore, and, leaving it exposed to the action of the sun's rays, watches near it until the flesh has become *tainted to its taste*! The young yägers had heard of this before; but were not inclined to believe it, though Congo now assured them of its truth—alleging that this habit of the crocodile was

well known among the native hunters of the Limpopo.

Notwithstanding the sneers of many naturalists, the simple savage was right, as the young yägers themselves were soon enabled to prove.

I have said that when the crocodile and his victim disappeared below the surface, they were seen no more. That, however, was not strictly true. Both of them were seen again, and in a very short while after—more than seen, indeed; for the crocodile was killed by a bullet from Groot Willem's roer; and upon venison steaks, cut from the buttocks of the waterbuck, both Congo and Swartboy —as well as the buck-dogs—made them a hearty supper.

It was thus the thing came about. Hans had entered into a dissertation about crocodiles in general. He was informing his companions of the number of new species of these creatures that had been lately discovered, and pointing out the great progress of natural science during the present half century; how the crocodiles were divided by modern naturalists into many genera, and that, including the caimans and alligators of America, and the gavials of Asia, the whole crocodile family could not number less than two dozen living species, although but a few years ago it was supposed there were but three kinds in existence; how America possessed true crocodiles as well as alligators; how the number of species in America was greater than that of Africa and Asia taken together; how there were none of these great reptiles found either in Europe or Australasia; and, among other things, Hans was pointing out the difficulty which existed in determining both the genera and species of all the *Crocodilidae*.

While the yägers were listening to these details, the Kaffir, who had been squatted with his eyes bent upon the river, suddenly started from his crouching attitude,

and pointed down to the bank, toward a small brake of reeds that grew out of the water.

All eyes were turned in that direction, and it was perceived that some of the reeds were shaking about, as if a large creature was moving among them. The reeds were nodding about and bending downward in bunches, and breaking as if under some heavy pressure, and crackling as they broke. What could be causing such a commotion amongst them? It did not appear like the natural motion of any wild animal, for these glide about, even in their undisturbed haunts, in a stealthy and easy manner. There was something unusual going on among the reeds. What could it be?

The young yägers were determined to find out; and for this purpose they drew near the margin of the reeds. They did not approach them openly, but crawled forward under cover of the grass and bushes, observing perfect silence, so as not to fright away whatever creature was causing the movement.

Fortunately the reed-culms did not grow so thickly as to obscure the view; and when near, it was possible to see a large object moving in their midst. And a large object *was* seen—a large dark creature which was at once recognised as a crocodile.

It might have been another crocodile, and not that which had just drowned the waterbuck; but the hunters were not left to conjecture on this point, for, while watching its movements, they now perceived the carcass of the waterbuck itself, which the huge reptile was dragging up among the reeds, evidently with the intention of raising it out of the water! For this purpose it was using its powerful jaws, as well as its snout, and strong forearms —now pulling the body along a bit, then pushing and rolling it over towards the bank.

The boys watched these strange manoeuvres for some moments in silence; but Groot Willem had brought his gun with him, and choosing a moment when the huge saurian was resting a little, he aimed for the socket of its eyeball, and sent the big bullet of his roer crashing through its skull.

The reptile plunged back into the river, and went to the bottom leaving the wave tinged with blood. Presently it rose to the surface, struggling violently, and evidently in great agony. Now it raised the fore-part of its hideous body quite out of the water; then its head went under, and its long tail was flouted into the air; then up came its head again, and so on, till at length its struggles ceased, and it sank to the bottom like a stone. No doubt it sank to rise no more.

Congo and Swartboy rushed in among the reeds, and drawing out the waterbuck—somewhat lacerated by the teeth of its destroyer—dragged it in triumph to the camp.

Chapter Forty One.

The Guinea-Hens.

Although Swartboy and Congo supped upon the flesh of the waterbuck—which is far from being a delicate venison—the boys had something better for supper. That was roast fowl, and a very dainty kind of it, quite equal to grouse or partridge. They all supped upon "guinea-hen."

The guinea-fowl (*Numida meleagris*) is a bird that has been long known, and is often mentioned in the works of ancient writers under the names *Meleagris* and *Gallina Numidica*. It is unnecessary to give a description of its appearance, as every one is acquainted with the beautiful pearly plumage of the bird, from which it has obtained the name of pearl-hen—among the Germans Perl-Huhn, and among the Spaniards "Pintado," or spotted hen. The English name "Guinea-hen" is in allusion to the country from which it has been chiefly obtained in modern times. The guinea-fowl is truly a native of Africa—though it is now domesticated in almost every country in the world, and has become a common inhabitant of the farm-yard. In the United States of America, particularly in the Southern States, where the climate exactly suits it, the guinea-hen, or "guinea-chicken," as the bird is there called, is a great favourite, both as a bird for the table and a layer of eggs; and certainly the flesh of the young pullet is much more delicate and savoury than that of the common fowl.

In many of the West India islands, the guinea-hen, although introduced from Africa, has become wild, and in the forests of Jamaica it is hunted and shot like other game. In these islands the species propagates very rapidly; and where the birds become numerous they do great mischief to the crops of the planters. On this

account they are often hunted, not to be served up at the table, but for the purpose of exterminating them as troublesome pests.

Throughout all Africa, its native country, the guinea-fowl exists; but it is to be remarked that there is more than one species. The common guinea-fowl (*Numida meleagris*) is the best known, and in its wild state differs very little from the domesticated variety. The latter, however, frequently varies in colour, and some are seen with very little of the blue tint upon their feathers and almost without spots. This, however, is the usual law of wild birds when produced under domestication, as ducks, turkeys, geese, and all the other pets of the farm, fully demonstrate. Even when left to herself, nature often "sports" in this way, and we know of no bird or animal of which "albinos" may not be at some time observed.

In addition to the common guinea-fowl, a second species is well known to exist in the Southern parts of the African continent. This is the "crested guinea-fowl," (*Numida cristata*). It is not quite so large as the common kind, and has other differences. It is of a darker blue colour, but spotted like its congener, each feather having from four to six spots upon it. The quills are yellowish brown, but the edges of the secondaries are of a pure white, which contrasts prettily with the dark colouring of the general plumage.

But the most conspicuous difference between the two species is in the formation of the crown and cheeks. As is well known, over the bill of the common guinea-fowl rises a singular warty membrane like a casque, while two carunculated wattles hang from the lower mandible. Both these appendages are wanting in the *Numida cristata*; but in place of the hard casque, the head of this species is ornamented with a crest of loose hair-like feathers of a bluish-black, which adds very much to the elegant

appearance of the bird.

The guinea-hens are gregarious and sometimes immense flocks of them are seen together. They spend most of their time upon the ground, but they also take to trees when startled, and roost upon the branches. Their food consists of seeds, berries, and soft slugs.

While the boys were discussing what they should have for supper, a flock of these beautiful crested creatures came chattering across the open meadow in which was the camp. Of course the shot-guns were immediately put in requisition, and several of the party got ready to go after them.

Now it is not so very easy to get a shot at the wild guinea-hens. They are no great flyers, and do not take to the wing when pursued, unless when close pressed by a dog or some other swift animal. But a man on foot is no match for them, as they run very swiftly where the ground is even. They are shy, moreover; and it is not without difficulty that a shot can be had. There is one way, however, of approaching them successfully. A dog should be set after them, precisely in the same manner as though they were rabbits, hares, or any other small quadrupeds. The dog of course being swift enough to overtake them, soon comes up, and the guinea-fowls are then forced to take wing. But, as they are greatly disinclined to a long flight, they soon settle down again, or, what is more likely, perch upon the branches of the nearest tree. The dog then runs up to the tree; and, if well-trained, will commence barking, and continue so till the sportsman approaches within shot. The birds upon the tree have no fear of the dog below—knowing very well that he cannot climb up to them—but, while their attention is occupied with him, they pay no heed to their more dangerous enemy the gunner, who can then easily approach within range, and take aim at his leisure.

Now this mode of hunting the guinea-fowl was well known to the young yägers; and as one of their dogs had been trained to it, they took him along, and commenced the pursuit with every confidence that they would eat roast fowl for supper.

They were not disappointed. The birds were soon after sprung, and then treed; and the barking of the dog conducted the gunners to the spot where the game had taken roost, among the branches of some "cameel-doorn" trees near the bank of the river. Several shots were obtained; and three brace and a half were brought into camp—enough to serve not only for supper, but also for breakfast on the following morning.

It seemed to be quite a place for birds; for while there, many other species were observed by the young hunters. A great many curious plants grew in the neighbourhood, the seeds of which served many kinds for food; besides, from the proximity of the river many flies and other insects were produced, the prey of numerous shrikes and other birds of the family of *Muscicapidae*.

Hans pointed out a very singular bird that was flying about the meadow, and was every now and then uttering a note that sounded like the word "edolio." From this note the bird derives its name, just as in England the "cuckoo" is named from its peculiar call, and in France "coucou."

Now the *edolio* of South Africa is also a cuckoo; and although differing from our cuckoo in some respects, it has a great resemblance to it in others. It has the same parasite peculiarity of depositing its eggs in the nests of other birds, and leaving them to be hatched there; and its other habits are very similar to those of the common cuckoo.

But there are some very curious points in the history of the "edolio," which it does not share with its European congener. Among the boors of South Africa it is known as the "New year's day bird," (Niuwe jaars vogel,) and these simple people ascribe to it some wonderful characteristics. They say that it appears only at the beginning of the year—whence the name "new year's day bird"—and that whenever it is hungry it commences to cry out, and then all the little birds in the immediate neighbourhood fly towards it, carrying food, which they give it to eat!

Now all the young yägers, as well as Congo the Kaffir and Swartboy the Bushman, were well acquainted with this story; and all, with the exception of Hans, believed it to be true. Hans, however, knew the explanation of the marvellous matter, and proceeded to give it to his companions.

He stated that the bird known among the farmers as the *Niuwe jaars vogel*, was no other than the young of the "edolio" (*Cuculus serratus*)—though the farmers would not believe this, because, although full fledged, it differs a good deal from the parent birds both in size and colour, and is therefore taken for a distinct kind. That the mystery of its appearing always on the first day of the year, was scarce a fable after all, as it was *about* that time that young edolios obtained their full feathers, and commenced flying about. That the further statement, of its crying out when hungry, was perfectly true; but that *all* the small birds in the neighbourhood were summoned by its cry, was not correct, although *some* would be, viz: the step-mother and father that had brought it into life; and that these having been often seen in the act of feeding the young edolio had given origin to the fable. This was certainly a very good explanation.

Hans further stated that a similar belief existed among

the natives of India, in relation to the large-billed cuckoo, (*Eudynamis orientalis*), and that the belief had a similar origin.

“The edolio,” continued Hans, “like the cuckoo, deposits its eggs in the nest of many species of small birds; and that it places them there with its beak, and not in the ordinary way, has been satisfactorily determined by naturalists.”

Chapter Forty Two.

Rooyebok.

As our travellers advanced up-stream, the wide level plains became narrowed into mere stripes of meadow that lay along both sides of the river. On both sides, and not a great distance off, wood-covered mountains trended parallel to the course of the stream. Sometimes their spurs approached very near to the banks—so as to divide the bottom land into a series of valleys, that rose like terraces one above the other. Each of these was a separate plain, stretching from the river's bank to the rocky foot of the mountain.

Nearly every one of them was tenanted with game of one sort or another—such as had already been met with on the route—but beyond killing enough to keep their larder supplied with fresh meat, our party did not make any stay to hunt here. The guide had informed them, that beyond the mountain where the river took its rise lay the country of the elephant, the buffalo, and the giraffe; and in hopes of reaching this long-expected land, the sight of a herd of springboks, or gnoos, or blauw-boks, or even elands, had little more interest for the young yägers than if it had been a drove of tame oxen.

Ascending into one of the upper valleys, however, they came suddenly in view of a herd of antelopes whose forms and colours distinguished them from any our hunters had yet met with. This at once decided them to halt the wagons, and prepare for a chase.

That the animals seen were antelopes, there could be no mistake. They had all the grace and lightness of form peculiar to these creatures; besides, their horns were conspicuously characteristic. Their appearance bespoke

them to be true antelopes.

They were large ones too—that is, of medium size—about as large as red deer; but of course small when compared with such species as the blauw-bok or the huge eland. Each would have measured nearly three feet and a half in height—and even a little more, over the croup—for although there are some antelopes, such as those of the *acronotine* group—the "hartebeest," "sassabye," and "bekr-el-wash"—that stand lower at the croup than the shoulders, the reverse is the case with other species; and those now before the eyes of our hunters possessed the latter characteristic. They stood high at the croup.

None of the yägers had ever seen one of the kind before; and yet, the moment they came under view, both Hendrik and Groot Willem cried out—

"Rooyebok!"

"How know you that they are rooyebok?" demanded Hans.

"From their colour, of course," replied the others.

The colour of these antelopes was a deep fulvous red over the head, neck, and upper parts of the body; paler along the sides; and under the belly pure white. There were some black marks—such as a stripe of black down each buttock, and also along the upper part of the tail—but the general colour of the animals was bright red; hence their being taken for "rooyebok," or "red-bucks," by Hendrik and Groot Willem.

"The colour is not a good criterion," remarked Hans. "They might as well have been 'grysbok,' or 'steinbok,' or 'rooye rheebok,' for the matter of colour. I judge by the horns, however, that you are right in your guess. They

are rooyebok, or, as the Bechuanas call them, 'pallah,' and, as naturalists style them, *Antilope melampus*."

All looked at the horns as Hans spoke, and saw that these were full twenty inches in length, and somewhat like those of the springbok, but more irregularly lyrate. The two nearly met at their tips, whereas at their middle they were full twelve inches apart. This was a characteristic by which they could easily be remembered, and it had enabled Hans at once to pronounce upon the species.

Strange to say, there was but one pair of full-grown horns in the whole herd, for there was but one old buck, and the does of the pallah are hornless. A "herd" is hardly a proper term; for this species of antelope cannot be called gregarious. What our hunters saw before them was a *family* of rooyeboks, consisting of the old male, his wives, and several young bucks and does—in all, only eleven in number.

Our hunters knew, from what they had heard, that the rooyebok is both a shy and swift antelope—difficult either to be approached or run down. It would be necessary, therefore, to adopt some plan of proceeding, else they would not succeed in getting one of them; and they had fixed their minds most covetously on the large knotted horns of the buck. They halted the wagons to await the result of the chase; though the oxen were not to be outspanned, unless it should prove successful. If so, they would camp upon the ground for the night—so as to enable them to dress the meat, and preserve the "trophies." With such resolves, they made ready to hunt the pallah.

Upon first coming in sight of the rooyebok, the hunters were upon the crest of a high ridge—one of the mountain-spurs, that divided the valley they had just

traversed from that in which the red antelopes were feeding. From the eminence they occupied, they commanded a view of this valley to its farthest border, and could see its whole surface, except a small strip on the nearer side, which was hidden from them by the brow of the ridge on which they stood.

Around the sides of the valley there were trees and bushes; though these did not form a continued grove, but only grew in detached clumps and patches. All the central ground, where the pallahs were feeding, was open, and quite destitute of either bush or cover of any kind. Between the bordering groves there was long grass; and, by the aid of this, a skilled hunter might have crept from one grove to another, without attracting the attention of the antelopes.

It was decided, therefore, that Hendrik and Groot Willem should steal round to the other end of the valley, keeping under cover of the thickets and grass. Then the pallahs would be between two fires, as they must either go up or down the valley in trying to escape. On the right lay the steep mountain; on the left, the deep rapid river. They would not likely attempt to move off on either hand. So this design to intercept them was good enough.

The horses were now tied to trees and left on the back of the ridge, while the hunters moved forward upon the brow that overhung the valley.

They had not advanced far before that part of the valley hitherto unseen came under their eyes, and there, to their astonishment, another herd of animals appeared; not of antelopes—although, from their colour, they might have been mistaken for such. No—the short round heads, elongated bodies, thick massive limbs, and long tufted tails, told at a glance, that it was no herd of peaceful ruminants the hunters were gazing upon, but an

assemblage of dreaded *carnivora*—a troop of lions!

Chapter Forty Three.

Four-Footed Hunters.

There were twelve lions in the troop—old males, females, and whelps of different ages! A terrific spectacle to look upon, in any other way than through the bars of a cage, or out of a third story window. But our young yägers beheld them on an open plain, and at the dangerous proximity of three hundred yards!

It is needless to say that a sudden stop was put to their advance, and that every one of the six was more or less alarmed. Although they knew that, as a general rule, the lion will not attack man without provocation, it might be different where such a number were together. Twelve lions would have made short work of them, one and all. No wonder the young hunters trembled at sight of such a troop, and so near; for the brow of the ridge, running abruptly down to the plain, was all that lay between them and the dreaded assemblage. A few bounds would have brought the lions to the spot on which they stood!

After the first moments of surprise and alarm had passed, the yägers bethought themselves how to act. Of course, the pallahs were driven completely out of their mind, and all ideas of a hunt given up. To have descended into that valley, would have been to have encountered twice their own number of lions: older hunters than they would have shied off from such an encounter. They did not think for a moment of going farther, nor, indeed, of any thing but retreating; and it cannot be said that they *thought* of that, for it was the instinct of the moment.

"Back to our horses!" whispered they to one another, the moment they set their eyes on the lions; and, without

staying to contemplate the fearful group, all six stole back; and, in less than two minutes' time, were seated in their saddles.

Their presence had not been discovered by the lions. Two circumstances had favoured the boys, and prevented this. The ridge over which they were passing was covered with underwood, and the "bosch," reaching as high as their heads, had sheltered them from view. The other circumstance in their favour was that the wind was blowing *down* the valley, and therefore, *from* the lions and towards themselves. Had it been otherwise, they would have been scented, and of course, discovered. Still another circumstance—the hunters had been advancing in silence, on account of the design they had formed of stalking the pallahs. The lions, therefore, still remained ignorant of their proximity. Once on horseback our party felt secure, and soon got over their little "flurry." Each knew that the noble creature that carried him, could give any lion the heels. Even the ponies of Klaas and Jan could run away from the fastest lion in Africa. Once mounted, all felt that the danger was over.

The hunters, Hendrik and Groot Willem, were not satisfied to retreat in this way. They were resolved on at least, having another "peep" at the dangerous game; and, therefore, prepared to return to their former point of observation, of course this time on horseback. Hans also felt a similar inclination—from the desire to study a chapter of natural history—and Arend would go out of curiosity. It was not deemed safe to take Klaas or Jan along; so these two youngsters were unceremoniously sent back to the wagons, that had been halted in the lower valley near the bottom of the hill.

The other four rode slowly and silently forward, until they came once more in view of the valley, the herd of pallahs, and the troop of lions.

The antelopes were still feeding quietly near the centre of the open ground. The lions were as yet on the ground, where they had been first observed. That the pallahs knew nothing of the proximity of their dangerous neighbours was very evident, else they would not have been moving so sedately along the sward. They had no suspicion that an enemy was near. The lions were in the lower end of the valley, and therefore to leeward of them —for the wind was blowing fair downstream, and came right in the faces of the hunters. A thicket, moreover, screened the lions from the eyes of the herd.

It was equally evident that the beasts of prey were well aware of the presence of the rooyeboks. Their actions proved this. At short intervals one trotted to the edge of the "bosch," in crouching attitude, looked out to the open plain, and after a moment or two returned to his companions, just as if he had been sent to "report." The old males and the lionesses stood in a thick clump, and seemed to be holding a consultation! The boys had not a doubt but that they were doing this very thing, and that the subject of their deliberation was the rooyebok herd.

At length the "council" appeared to break up. The troop separated, each taking a different direction. Some went along the bottom of the valley, while several were seen to proceed towards the mountain foot.

When these last had reached the groves before mentioned, they turned upwards; and one after another were seen crouching from clump to clump, crawling along upon their bellies, as they passed through the long grass, and evidently trying to shelter themselves from the view of the pallahs.

Their object now became clear. They were proceeding to the upper end of the valley, with the design of driving the game upon those that had remained below—in fact,

carrying out the identical plan which the hunters themselves had projected but the moment before! The boys marvelled at this singular coincidence; and as they sat in their saddles they could not help admiring the skill with which their *rivals* were carrying out their own plan.

Those—three there were—that had gone skulking up the edge of the valley, were soon out of sight—hidden under the "bosch" that grew at the opposite end, and which they had been seen to enter. Meanwhile, the other nine had spread themselves along the bottom of the valley, each taking station under cover of the bushes and long grass. The trap was now fairly set.

For a few minutes no movement was observed on the part either of lions or pallahs. The former lay crouched and stealthily watching the herd—the latter browsed peacefully along the sward, perfectly unconscious of the plot that was "thickening" around them.

Something at this moment seemed to render them suspicious. They appeared to suspect that there was danger threatening. The buck raised his head; looked around him; uttered a hiss, somewhat like the whistling of deer; and struck the ground a smart rap or two with his hoof. The others left off browsing, and several of them were seen to bound up into the air—after the very singular manner of springboks.

No doubt they had scented the lions, now at the upper end of the valley—as the breeze from that quarter blew directly towards the herd.

It was surely that; for after repeating his signal, the old buck himself sprang many feet into the air, and then stretched himself in full flight. The others of course followed, leaping up at intervals as they ran.

As the lions had well calculated, the antelopes came

directly down the valley, breast forward, upon their line. Neither the wind nor any thing warned them of the dangerous ambuscade; and in a few short moments they were close to the patches of brushwood. Then the nine huge cats were seen to spring out as if moved by one impulse, and launch themselves into the air. Each had chosen a rooyebok, and nearly every one succeeded in bringing his victim to the earth. A single blow from the paw of their strong assailants was enough to stretch the poor antelopes on the plain, and put an end at once to their running and their lives. So sudden was the attack, and so short-lived the struggle, that in two seconds from the time the lions made their spring, each might be seen crouching over a dead pallah, with his paws and teeth buried in its flesh!

Three alone escaped, and ran back up the valley. But a new ambush awaited them there; and as they followed the path, that led through the thicket at the upper end, each became the prey of a lurking lion.

Not one of the beautiful antelopes, that but the moment before were bounding over the plain in all the pride and confidence of their speed, was able to break through the line of deadly enemies so cunningly drawn around them!

The hunters remained for some minutes gazing upon the singular spectacle. Hendrik and Groot Willem would have stolen forward, and sent a brace of bullets into a brace of lions; but Hans would not hear of such a thing. He alleged that there was no time when these animals are more dangerous to attack, than just after they have killed their game and are drinking its blood. At such a moment they are extremely ferocious, and will follow with implacable vengeance any one who may disturb them. It would be more prudent, therefore, not to provoke such a powerful band, but to retire altogether from the spot.

To these counsels of Hans—backed by Arend—the two hunters at length reluctantly yielded; and all four rode back to the wagons.

Arriving there, a consultation was held how they were to proceed. It would be a dangerous business to trek up the narrow valley guarded by such a troop. A ford was therefore sought for, and found at some distance below; and, having crossed their wagons, the travellers encamped on the opposite side—as it was too late to move farther that night.

They had done well to go across the river, for during the whole night the fierce brutes were heard roaring terrifically upon the side where they had been observed. In fact, the place appeared to be a regular *den of lions*.

Chapter Forty Four.

"Widow-Birds."

They were only too glad to get off out of that neighbourhood, and at an early hour they inspanned and treked up the banks of the stream.

Just as on the other side, the road led through a succession of valleys, with groves of trees scattered over their surface; and as they proceeded, the mountain-spurs more frequently approached the banks, and at one or two places they found great difficulty in getting the wagons across the ridges. One of these was so steep, that for a while the travellers feared they would not be able to follow the stream any farther. The oxen refused to trek up the declivity, and neither whip nor jambok would force them forward.

But Congo knew of a plan by which they were at length induced to proceed; and both wagons arrived in safety at the top of the pass—not, however, until Swartboy had clicked and shouted, and Congo had screamed, till their throats were sore, and both had worn the voorslays of springbok skin from their long whips.

Congo's mode of making the oxen move forward was a very simple one; and consisted in his going ahead of them and smearing the rocks along the path with the "mest" of the oxen themselves—thus leading the animals to believe that other oxen had gone before them, and that therefore the passage must be practicable, since some of their own kind had already made it! This mode is often adopted by the trek-boors of Southern Africa, when they wish to drive up very precipitous places, where the oxen are afraid to go of themselves.

The valley, which was reached after climbing through this difficult pass, was one of very small extent—not exceeding a couple of acres; and as the river had now become diminished to a mountain-stream, it was fordable at any point throughout the whole length of the little meadow in which the travellers encamped. At the head of this valley a ridge trended across the course of the stream through which the current had cleft a wide way; and the only road leading out above was along the channel of the river itself. Fortunately, this channel was nearly dry, else they could have gone no farther in that direction. As it was, the pebbly bed of the stream could be traversed by wagons, and they would easily get through to wider plains that stretched beyond. They had halted for the night in this little valley, because there was excellent grass for their cattle; and as wood grew along the sides of the rocky hills, and clear cool water ran down the stream, they possessed all the three necessary requisites for a traveller's camp.

It was a curious little place where they had outspanned. As already stated, the level ground was not over a couple of acres in extent, though it was nearly of circular form. Through the very centre of it passed the stream, its bed being only a few feet below the general surface; and all around were the mountains, their precipitous sides rising like rocky walls to a height of several hundred feet, and completely enclosing the mountain within their embrace.

THE AMBUSCADE OF LIONS. Page 279.

There were no trees upon the surface of the meadow itself, but against the rocks grew many kinds; some of them hanging with their tops downward, and some stretching horizontally outwards. A few small shrubs alone, with some reeds, grew upon the edge of the

stream; but these were low, and would not have concealed a man standing erect.

In the centre of this natural amphitheatre the camp was formed—that is, the wagons were placed there. The horses and oxen were not fastened in any way, as it was supposed they would not care to stray out of the valley.

There were three good reasons why they should not wander. First, because they were wearied with a long day's work, and one that had been particularly severe. Secondly, the paths leading out were difficult to find. And thirdly, because both the grass and water there were of as good a quality as either horse or ox could have expected to meet with elsewhere. There was no reason, therefore, why any of them should go beyond the confines of the valley where the camp was situated.

As usual, no sooner were Klaas and Jan fairly out of their saddles than they went bird's-nesting. Several kinds of birds had been seen by them as they entered this secluded valley; and it was likely that some of their nests would be found at no great distance off.

And some were found. Upon the shrubs and reeds quite a colony of birds had made their habitations. They were small sparrow-looking birds, having nests of a kidney-shape, hollow in the inside, which was reached by little circular entrances, something like the nests of the common wren. The outside part was constructed of grass; while inside, the nests were lined with a soft substance resembling wool. This was the cottony down obtained from some plant that, no doubt, grew in that neighbourhood, but which the boys could not see anywhere around.

Now these little birds were already well known to the young yägers. They had met with them before; and all of

them knew they were birds of the genus *Ploceinae*, or weaver-birds. They knew, moreover, that there are not only many species of weaver-birds, but that there are also many *genera*, or rather *subgenera*, of them, differing from each other in size, colour, and habits, but all possessing the curious instinct of building nests of a very ingenious kind—in other words "weaving" them; from which circumstance they derive their trivial name. The nests of all the species differ from each other. Some are constructed of a globe-shape; others like a chemist's retort; others of kidney-form; and still another kind of nest is that of the "social weaver-birds." These last unite in large numbers, and fill one great nest, or "hive," which often fills the whole top of a great acacia, looking like a haystack built among the branches of the tree.

The little weavers observed by Klaas and Jan were of the genus *Amadina*—the *Amadina squamifrons*; and both the boys were glad at encountering some of their nests at that moment. Not that they were at all curious to see the eggs, for they had examined them often before. No: that was not the reason. There was another and a different one. It was this: the inside lining of the nest of the amadina makes excellent wadding for shot-guns—quite equal to tow, and even better than the softest paper; and as both Klaas and Jan were out of wadding, they expected to replenish their stock by robbing the poor amadinas of their pretty nests.

They would not have done so wantonly, for Hans would not have permitted them; but, as hunters, they stood in real need of the article, and therefore they took it without remorse.

Simple as the thing was, they were compelled to unravel the nests before they could get at the soft material with which they were lined: and this unravelling was not done without some difficulty, for the outside work was woven

together like the rods in a fine piece of basket-work. The entrance which the bird had left for its own passage in and out was so small, that the boys could not thrust their hands into it; and, what was singular, this entrance, whenever the bird was absent from the nest, was so closed up that it was difficult to find it!

Having obtained as much wadding as they required out of a pair of nests, the boys did not disturb any of the others; but permitting them to hang where they had found them, returned to the wagons.

They had not been long there before their attention was attracted to another bird, and one of a rarer and more curious kind than the amadina. It did not differ much from the latter in point of size, but in the nature and colour of its plumage—which was most curious indeed. The bird which now occupied the attention, not only of Klaas and Jan, but of all the others, was about the size of a canary-bird; but its long tail-feathers, several times the length of its body, gave it the appearance of being much larger than it really was.

Its colour was of a very dark glossy brown, or nearly black, upon the head and over the upper parts of the body. Around the neck was a collar of orange rufous, which grew paler upon the breast, ending in a buff tinge over the abdomen, lower parts of the body, and thighs.

But it was in the tail-feathers that the peculiarity of this bird appeared. Of these, two were immensely long, set vertically, or "edgeways," and curving far outward and downward. Two others, much shorter, also stood out edgeways above the first. These were broadly webbed at their bases, being at their widest rail three inches across; while their tips, for the length of three inches more, were entirely without any feathery web, and looked like a pair of stiff hairy spines projecting outward.

Besides these two pairs of vertical feathers, there were four others on each side of the tail, nicely graduated one above the other, each being about a quarter of an inch shorter than the one immediately below it. All these tail-feathers were black.

But one of these birds was seen by the boys at their camp; but they noticed that it was accompanied by another bird of a rusty brown and whitish colour, and with a tail of the ordinary kind. This companion was neither more nor less than the female; while the gaudy creature with the orange colour and long tail-plumes was the male.

Hans's knowledge was now brought into requisition, for the others had never seen this curious bird, and knew not to what species it belonged. Hans told them it also was one of the weaver-birds; known among naturalists by the name *Vidua*; among the French as "La veuve;" and among the English as "Widow-bird." All of the party regarded this as a very singular name for the bird; and at once called upon the naturalist for an explanation of it. Fortunately, Hans was able to give them this; and that was more than the learned Brisson—he who baptised it *Vidua* and *La veuve*—has been able to do.

"Brisson," said Hans, "has named the little creature 'widow-bird,' because he had heard that it was so called among the Portuguese; and the French naturalist assigns as a reason that it was so called on account of its colour and long tail! Such writers as Monsieur Brisson and Monsieur Buffon are never at a loss for reasons. Now it so happens that neither its colour nor tail had any thing to do with the origin of its name 'widow-bird,' which of itself is quite a misnomer. The Portuguese, who first drew attention to this bird, called it 'Whidah' bird, from the fact that it was received by them from the kingdom of Whidah in Western Africa. That is the way in which the

bird has received its appellation."

The Whidah-bird, on account of its livery habits, but more from the singularity of its tail-plumes, is a great favourite as a pet: and is often seen in cages, where it hops from perch to perch without fear of constraint, and alternately depresses and elevates its long tail with great vivacity. It is usually fed upon grain and several kinds of herbs, and is exceedingly fond of bathing itself in water. It moults twice a year; and during one period the male loses the long plumes which distinguish him from his mate, and altogether becomes so changed in colour, that the sexes are not then very easily told apart. It is only during the breeding season that the cock Whidah-bird attains his fine tail, and the orange and black colours of his plumage.

There are two species of Whidah-birds known to naturalists. The "Paradise widow-bird" (*Vidua paradisea*) is the one described above; and another which is called the "Red-billed widow-bird," (*Vidua erythrorhynca*). The latter is a smaller species, and differs from the other in the arrangement of the tail-feathers. Its bill is of a deep red colour—whence the trivial name; and its plumage is of a bluish-black upon the upper parts of the body, with a white collar around the neck, white wing coverts, and whitish underneath.

Its habits, however, are precisely similar to those of the species *Paradisea*; and both are found inhabiting the same countries, viz: Western Africa. The range of neither reaches as far southward as the Cape Colony, but one of the species extends to the countries northward of the great Orange River, and is occasionally, though rarely, seen.

On account of its rarity in these parts, the young yägers, and particularly the naturalist Hans, were desirous of

obtaining its skin; and for this purpose the shot-guns were levelled, and both the “widows” were ruthlessly brought down from their perch.

Chapter Forty Five.

The Pique-Boeufs.

Of course Hans, aided by the others, immediately set about skinning the widow-birds, with an eye to their being preserved. Arend was his principal assistant, for Arend was clever with his hands; and was, moreover, as good a taxidermist as Hans himself. It never troubled Arend to know the genus or species of a bird; but give him the bird itself, and he could strip off its skin and mount it without leaving a trace of a ruffled feather.

While thus engaged, a noise fell upon the ears of the young yägers that caused all of them to start—Hans and Arend dropping the skins of the widow-birds, upon which they had been operating.

The noise which produced this startling effect, was neither more nor less than the cry of a bird, and but a small bird at that. The note very much resembled the well-known call of the mistle-thrush or screech-cock, (*Turdus viscivorus*). It was no louder, and the bird that uttered it was no bigger than this thrush; but for all that, the note produced a somewhat terrifying effect upon the yäger camp. All of the party, both yägers and attendants, knew the cry well. Even the buck-dogs sprang to their feet, and howled as it reached their ears; and the whole camp was suddenly in a commotion.

Now, my young reader, you will wonder why the cry of a bird, not bigger than a blackbird, could create terror in the minds of such courageous boys as our yägers; and you will naturally desire to know what sort of bird this was.

I have said the boys all knew it, the attendants and the dogs. Nay, more, the horses and oxen recognised that cry; and its effect on them was not less wonderful; for the moment it was heard, the horses tossed up their heads, snorted as if in terror, and commenced *stampeding* over the ground. The oxen exhibited similar symptoms of affright. Yes, horses, oxen, dogs, Kaffir, Bushman, and yägers, were all affected by the screech of that bird, as it pealed along the rocks, and echoed through the glen. All recognised in it the warning cry of the *Pique-Boeuf*!

An account of this singular bird will explain the cause of the consternation which its note had thus suddenly produced.

The "Pique-Boeuf" is about the size of a starling, of a greyish colour over the body, with short wings, and tail somewhat of a darker hue. Its feet are formed for grasping, and its claws are hooked and compressed. The most remarkable part of the bird is its bill. This is of a quadrangular shape, the lower mandible much stronger than the upper one, and both swelling towards the tip, so as to resemble a forceps or pincers. The purpose of this formation will be seen, when we come to speak of the habits of the bird.

These are, indeed, peculiar; and, by the laws of ornithology, stamp the Pique-Boeufs as a distinct genus of birds.

A celebrated French ornithologist, and a true *field naturalist* as well—Le Vaillant—thus describes the habits of these birds:—

"The bill of the Pique-Boeuf is fashioned as a pair of solid pincers, to facilitate the raising out of the hides of quadrupeds the larvae of the gadflies, which are there

deposited and nourished. The species, therefore, anxiously seek out the herds of oxen, of buffaloes, of antelopes—of all the quadrupeds, in short, upon which these gadflies deposit their eggs. It is while steadied, by a strong gripe of the claws in the tough and hairy hide of these animals, that, with strong blows of the bill and powerful squeezes of the skin, at the place where the bird perceives an elevation, which indicates the presence of a maggot, he extracts it with effect. The animals, accustomed to the treatment, bear with the birds complacently, and apparently perceive the service which they render them, in freeing them from these true parasites, which live at the expense of their proper substance."

Now, there are many species of birds, as well as the Pique-Boeufs, that lead a very similar life, living principally upon the parasite insects that infest the bodies of the larger quadrupeds, both wild and tame. In America, the "cow-bunting" (*Icterus pecoris*) is so termed from its habit of feeding upon the parasite insects of cattle; and among other animals it is a constant attendant upon the immense herds of buffaloes that roam over the great American prairies. Other species of icterus also frequent the vast cattle-herds of the South American plains.

The red-billed weaver-bird (*Textor erythrorhynchus*) is equally the companion of the African buffalo; and any one who has visited an extensive sheep-pasture cannot fail to have observed the common starling perched upon the woolly backs of the sheep. The white-necked crow (*Corvus albicollis*) is noted for similar practices, as well as several other species of *Corvidae* and *Sturnidae*. All of these kinds, however—the white-necked crow excepted—content themselves with only taking away the parasites, which are attached to the skins of the animals, or such

as live among the hair and wool—none of the aforesaid birds having in their bills the necessary strength for extracting the maggots which are lodged beneath. Now, with the Pique-Boeufs, there is no difficulty about this. Their peculiar beaks enable them to penetrate the toughest hides of the large quadrupeds; and although they also feed upon the ticks and other parasites that rest upon the surface, they prefer the larvae that lie beneath. Hence, these birds are entitled to be regarded as distinct from any of the others; and naturalists have formed them into a separate genus—the genus *Buphaga*, or "beef-eaters."

It is scarcely necessary to point out the absurdity of this name, which seems to have been given from a misapprehension of the habits of the birds. The Pique-Boeuf is no beef-eater, but a "beef-picker," if you will, as the French phrase very properly expresses it. But M. Brisson, who gave the name, seems very much to have resembled his more celebrated countryman—the great *closet naturalist*, Buffon—in ascribing such habit to birds and animals as suited his fancy.

Buphaga is the name given, and so let it stand.

Only two species have been yet observed. One is the *Buphaga erythrorhyncha*, or red-billed beef-eater—so called from the colour of its beak, which is a beautiful coral-red—while the more common species already described has a yellow beak. The latter is the *Buphaga Africana*. Both species are birds of Africa—the "coral bill" (*Bec corail*) being also a native of the island of Madagascar. The "coral bill" is smaller than the *Buphaga Africana*, and somewhat different from it in colour. The tint of its plumage is more sombre. The upper parts, head and throat, are of an ash-brown, glazed, as it were, with bluish; and beneath, the bird is of a yellowish rust

colour. Its bill, also, is smaller and less powerful than that of its congener.

The Pique-Boeufs are generally seen in company; but they never fly in large flocks. Six or eight of them may usually be observed together. They are very wild shy birds, and it is difficult to approach within shooting distance of them.

The only chance of getting near enough is to approach behind the body of an ox, or some other animal—using the latter as a stalking-horse, and driving it gently towards those beasts on whose back the birds may be perched. The gunner, by then showing himself suddenly, may obtain a shot at them on the wing.

Such are the habits of the Pique-Boeufs. But all this does not explain why it was that the screech of one of these birds had thrown the camp of the young yägers into such a state of excitement or alarm. The reason remains to be told. It was this:—

Of all the quadrupeds to which the Pique-Boeufs attach themselves, there are none upon which they are such constant attendants as the rhinoceros. This animal is the victim of many parasitical insects—of ticks and larvae. His huge body and corrugated skin, of such vast extent, offer an ample field for such creatures, and consequently afford a supply of food to the Pique-Boeuf, which is unfailing.

The rhinoceroses, therefore, of all the four species that inhabit South Africa, are always attended by the beef-eaters, which, on this account, are known among hunters as "rhinoceros-birds." Go where the rhinoceros will, the Pique-Boeufs follow him, perching upon his back, his head, or any other part of his body, and remaining there quite unconcernedly, as if they regarded that situation as

their natural roosting-place and home. The rhinoceros himself never dreams of molesting them. On the contrary, he finds their presence extremely useful to him. Not only do they give him ease, by destroying the insects that would otherwise annoy him, but in another sense they do him an essential service. They warn him of the approach of the hunter, or any other danger. The moment such appears, the rhinoceros, who himself may have been asleep, is instantly aroused by the harsh screeching of the birds, and put upon his guard. Should their voices fail to awake him, these cunning sentinels will flutter around his head, and peck into his ears until they succeed in giving the alarm. With elephants and hippopotami they act in a similar manner; so that one of the difficulties to be encountered by the hunter in pursuit of these animals, is the vigilance of the little winged sentinel that thus keeps watch over their sleep!

It was this curious habit, then—well known to every creature in the camp—that caused all hands to start up on hearing the screech of the Pique-Boeuf. The presence of the bird announced the proximity of the dangerous “rhinoster.”

Chapter Forty Six.

Charged by "Muchochos."

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction whence came the "skreek" of the bird, and there, sure enough, were a brace of rhinoceroses of the biggest kind. They were just entering the little glen, through the gap before mentioned; and were coming down the channel of the river, plunging through the water as they walked knee-deep.

The superior size of their bodies, as well as their colour, told they were white rhinoceroses; and the long horn upon the snout, pointing slightly backward instead of forward, showed they were of that species known among the natives as "muchocho," and among naturalists as *Rhinoceros simus*.

The other species of white rhinoceros is the "kobaoba," lately named *Rhinoceros Oswellii*; although in my opinion it should have been *Rhinoceros Cummingii*—since the great lion-hunter was not only the first to give any definite characteristics of this rare species, but more than any other man has he contributed to a knowledge of the South African *fauna*.

The principal distinction between the kobaoba and muchocho is observed in the set and size of the horns. In neither species is the posterior horn any thing more than a conical knob of six or seven inches in length; but in each the anterior horn is very long—far exceeding that of the black rhinoceroses. In the kobaoba, this horn sometimes reaches to the enormous length of four feet, and even exceeds that measurement; while in the muchocho, three feet is the limit. In the former the horn

projects forward, standing at an angle of forty-five degrees with the line of the snout; whereas that of the muchocho is erect, with a slight curve or sweep backwards.

Both species far exceed in size the two kinds of black rhinoceros, and are fully equal to their great Asiatic congener—he with the curious shield-like skin, so well known in picture-books, museums, and zoological gardens. In other words, the white rhinoceroses of South Africa are in point of magnitude, after the elephant, the largest quadrupeds in the world. In point of habits they differ altogether from the black species. They are grass-feeders, as the shape of their muzzle testifies; while the black kinds browse upon various kinds of shrubs and acacia thorns, and are furnished with a prehensile lip for the purpose of more easily grasping the twigs and branches.

As has been elsewhere observed, in disposition the two kinds are also very different. The black rhinoceroses—both "borelé" and "keitloa"—are of an extremely vicious and malignant nature, and more dangerous even than the lion. They are swift of foot; and, but for their defective powers of vision, it would be a perilous thing to approach them. The white species, on the contrary, are slow, and less disposed to make an attack upon man. When these are wounded, or are accompanied by their young, the case is different. They then exhibit all the ferocity of their race; and many a native hunter has fallen a victim to the rage of both the kobaoba and muchocho.

The flesh of the two last-named species is excellent eating—being almost as good as fresh pork. It is not so with the flesh of the black rhinoceros, which is strong, rancid, and bitter.

Now, knowing the general disposition of the "muchochos," and knowing also the delicate flesh which these animals afford to the hunter, our young yägers at seeing them lost all sense of alarm. They at once rushed to their guns, and commenced preparing to receive the advancing quadrupeds. Had it been borelés or keitloas, they would have acted differently; and would, perhaps, have thought only of flying to their horses, or of ensconcing themselves in the wagons. Of white rhinoceroses, however, they had no fear; and having armed themselves, they advanced boldly and openly to the conflict.

By this time the muchochos had got fairly through the pass; and, climbing out of the river-channel, stood up on the grassy sward of the meadow. Their naked bodies, thus fully exposed to view, appeared of enormous size. One, however, was much bigger than the other—in fact, quite as large as a female elephant—for it was full sixteen feet in length from the tip of its long blunt snout to the "whisk" upon the top of its short tail.

But what caused astonishment to the advancing hunters was the fact, that instead of the two of these animals which they had already seen, three now appeared upon the bank. The third, however, was not larger than an ordinary hog; and, excepting that its snout wanted the characteristic horn, it might have passed for a miniature of the other two. Small as it was, there was no mistaking it for any other animal than a rhinoceros; and its size as well as actions showed that it was the young, or "calf," of the two old ones, that were respectively its male and female parent.

The hunters were delighted with this new discovery. The flesh of the young white rhinoceros is much more delicate and tender than that of the full-grown ones; and all of

them, but particularly Swartboy and Congo, now indulged in the anticipation of a rare treat.

No one thought of the increased danger of their thus attacking the rhinoceros in company with its young. That was forgotten in the hurry and excitement of the moment. The prudent Hans alone had some misgivings; but carried away by the enthusiasm of his companions, he failed to make them known. In ten seconds afterwards a volley of reports rang through the little glen; and by that same volley a shower of bullets—varying in size from the large ounce-ball of the elephant-gun to the small pea of the rifle—was poured upon the muchochos.

The only visible effect produced upon the animals was to cause them suddenly to change their gait, from the slow waddle at which they had been advancing, to a brisk rapid gallop, which was directed precisely toward the spot where the hunters were standing! At the same time the huge animals were heard to snort and blow like porpoises; and the sparkling of their small eyes, the quick lashing of their saucy tails, and the long horns set horizontally, showed that they were charging forward in the full bent of their fury. The "calf" followed in the rear, imitating the noise and actions of its ponderous parents.

This to the hunters was a movement wholly unexpected. Had it been borelé or keitloa there would have been nothing strange in it. On the contrary, it was just as either of the black rhinoceroses would have acted. But from muchocho—usually so harmless as to be called cowardly and stupid—an attack of this nature was quite unlooked for. The report of a gun, or even the barking of a dog, will usually put the muchocho to flight.

But our yägers had not reasoned correctly when they expected these either to fall to their shots, or take to

instant flight. *They had forgotten the presence of the calf*. That it was which caused the white rhinoceroses to act upon this occasion contrary to their usual habit—that, and perhaps the wounds they had received—for several of the bullets, although not fatal, had made painful wounds. So much the worse.

Of course, none of the young yägers stood their ground to receive this heavy charge. Their guns were now empty, and it would have been of no use. On the contrary, each and every one of them turned instanter; and no mischievous urchin ever ran faster from a parish beadle than did all six of them towards the camp. The tails of their coats made a considerable angle with the line of their backs, as they "sloped" across the level sward of that little meadow.

The short thick Bushman and the tall lank Kaffir—both of whom had gone forth to the attack—were not a bit behind in the retreat; and the whole eight were mingled together in such a helter-skelter pell-mell race, as had never before been witnessed in that silent and solitary glen.

Chapter Forty Seven.

A Ride upon a Rhinoceros.

Fortunately for all they were not distant from their wagons when thus charged upon. They had advanced only a few paces before delivering their fire, and these few paces were all they had to run back, before they sprang up into the capacious vehicles. Had it been otherwise—had the chase only lasted twenty yards farther—most undoubtedly one or more of the party would have been hoisted upon the horns of the pursuing animals, or trampled under their broad brutal hoofs.

As it was, the hindmost of them had a narrow escape of it; for they had hardly taken shelter under the cap-tents of the wagons, when the horns of the muchochos were heard rattling against the planks.

Although they had fled to the wagons for want of a better place, they were far from feeling secure. They knew that these immense brutes, should they take it into their heads, could soon demolish the vehicles, strong as these were. What was their consternation, then, at seeing the old bull suddenly lower his head, and charge forward upon one of the wagons, in which several of them had taken refuge!

The next moment was heard the terrible concussion—the horn of the muchocho struck the "buik plank," passing clear through it—the timber split from end to end—the "achter kist" was shivered to pieces, and the huge vehicle was lifted clear from the ground, and hoisted several feet out of its place! A simultaneous cry of alarm broke forth from the occupants of the wagon—which was continued as they saw the huge quadruped preparing to

repeat the charge.

At this crisis the faithful buck-dogs performed an essential service, and saved, not only the wagons, but perhaps also the lives of their masters. As the great bull was heading once more towards the wagon, several of the dogs attacked him from behind; two of them launched themselves upon his flanks, and one other springing upward, caught hold of his tail and hung on!

Now the tail of the rhinoceros is one of his tenderest bits; and this new and unexpected mode of assault quite disconcerted the old bull. Instead, therefore, of following up his charge upon the wagon, he turned round as fast as his unwieldy body would permit, blowing with agony and rage. But the stanch hound still hung on, while the others kept biting at the bull's hind-legs; and vainly attempting to get at the dogs, the huge beast danced round and round like a kitten after its own tail—if a comparison may be allowed between two animals of such unequal magnitudes.

This scene continued for some minutes, until at length the dogs were thrown off. One of them was crushed beneath the heavy feet of the rhinoceros, while another was badly ripped by the horn of the female. But the gallant brutes had performed their part well; and by means of their barking and biting, they had drawn the muchochos altogether away from the wagons, and into a different part of the meadow.

It was not likely they would return to the attack upon the wagons, unless they chanced to be driven that way by the dogs—for the rhinoceros, partly from his low power of sight, and partly from his forgetful nature, rarely returns to assault any object once he has quitted it.

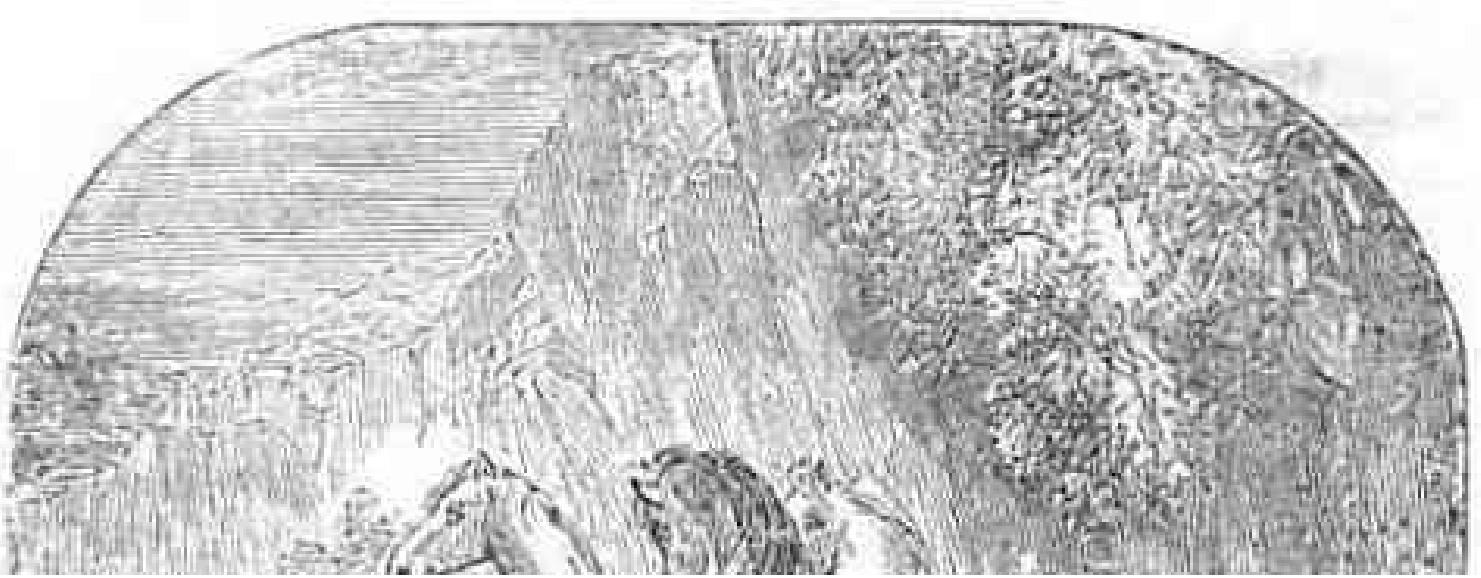
But a new fear now sprang up in the minds of the young

yägers—no longer for themselves, but for their horses!

These animals, as already stated, along with the oxen, had been left grazing upon the meadow, without any fastening. When the muchochos first appeared, both oxen and horses had taken to flight. The oxen had gone toward the lower end of the meadow; and, guided by a cunning old leader, had set off upon their back trail over the ridge by which they had entered. The horses, on the contrary, had remained prancing around the wagons, until the muchochos came upon the spot; and, then dashing off together, had leaped the stream, and taken their stand trembling and cowering close by the cliffs on the opposite side. Here they had remained during the early part of the fight between the dogs and muchochos.

But in the course of this conflict both the dogs and their huge adversaries had worked up to the spot where the horses were, and once more set the latter in motion.

Seeing these, the rhinoceroses immediately started after them—perhaps deeming them antagonists more worthy of their horns; and now for some minutes a terrible mêlée of charging muchochos and galloping steeds filled the measure of the glen—the former blowing and snorting with rage, while the latter snorted with affright.



THE RHINOCEROS' CHARGE. Page 209.

Fortunately, the small circumference within which this scene was enacted, enabled the hunters to use their pieces with effect; and whenever either of the rhinoceroses came to a stand, if but for a moment, the crack of a gun could be heard, and the thud of a bullet

hitting against their thick hides. It is a mistake to suppose that a leaden bullet will not penetrate the skin of a rhinoceros. On the contrary, the hide, though thick, is comparatively soft, and yields easily to either a spear or a ball—so that every shot took effect. The hunters, *par excellence*, Hendrik and Groot Willem, fired most of the shots, aiming behind the fore-shoulder for the heart and lungs—for in these parts the shot proves fatal. A bullet into the brain would have a like effect; but as the brain of the rhinoceros is exceedingly small in proportion to the size of the animal, it requires a sure aim to strike it; and the more certain way is to aim for the lungs.

So aimed Hendrik and Groot Willem; and what with the large leaden balls of the roer, and the small but better directed pellets of the rifle, both the muchochos were at length made to bite the dust. The calf was shot afterwards; for after the fall of its parents, the creature did not attempt to run away, but stood by the body of its mother, jerking its little tail about, and wondering what the trouble was all about.

A very, ludicrous scene was now witnessed, that caused the young yägers to break into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Their laughter, however, did not come until after the incident was over which gave rise to it—for there was danger in the scene, and it was somewhat painful to witness it.

It was as follows. The rhinoceros, like the American bison, when shot down by the hunter, rarely falls in the common way of other animals—upon its side—but usually sinks down upon his breast, and there remains even after death has taken place.

The two shot by Hendrik and Groot Willem had offered no exception to the rule. Both lay upon their bellies at a

little distance from the wagons, their broad massive backs turned upward.

Now a practice equally common among Bushmen, whenever a rhinoceros has been killed, is to leap upon the animal's back, thrust their spears into its flesh to try the depth, and discover whether the game be fat, and consequently valuable!

In the carrying out of this custom, no sooner had the great bull rhinoceros sunk down under the shots, than our Bushman, Swartboy, seeing that all danger was over, leaped forth from the wagon, and running up to where the dead animal lay, sprang upon its back! Shouting out a wild cry of triumph, he plunged his *assegai* into the flesh of the muchocho to the depth of a foot or more.

Almost at the same instant, the animal, which was not yet dead, rose to its feet again, and charged once more across the sward, with the Bushman upon its back!

The shout of triumph, which Swartboy had uttered, was suddenly interrupted, and cries of a far different import now rang through the glen; while the rhinoceros, no doubt impelled to fresh energy of life by the terrible pain he suffered from the Bushman's spear, charged round and round, as though he had quite recovered!

Swartboy, on the other hand, dared not leap to the ground, lest he might be impaled upon the dread horns, but held fast to the spear, which, still buried in the animal's thick flesh, served him as a *point d'appui*!

How Swartboy would have been delivered, had the strength of the muchocho held out, it is hard to say; but this gave way at length, and the huge quadruped once more sank to the earth, pitching the Bushman several yards over his head!

Swartboy did not lie long where he had been flung; but, sprawling up again, ran back at top speed to the wagons, where he was welcomed by yells of laughter! The oxen were soon overtaken and brought back, the calf of the muchocho regularly butchered, and that night the young yägers enjoyed a supper of “rhinoceros veal.”

Chapter Forty Eight.

Jan and the Koorhaans.

The next camp of the young yägers was fixed in a beautiful valley very similar to that in which they had seen the troop of lions, but of larger extent, and having its whole surface enamelled with bright flowers.

There were mountains all around, that seemed to shut in this fair picture and protect it from the hot dry winds of the desert. A river wound through its midst like a silvery serpent; and here and there upon the pools, where there was not much current, rested the wax-like leaves and flowers of the blue lily of South Africa, (*Nympha cerulea*), Upon the plain grew trees and plants of various sorts peculiar to the botany of the country. The eyes of the travellers rested upon many a fair form. Upon the banks of the stream they saw the drooping fronds of the Chaldean willow; and by the foot of the mountain the splendid *Acacia eburnea*, with its umbrella-shaped head, and clusters of golden flowers filling the air with their fragrance. They saw the valuable wax-berry, (*Myrica cerifera*), yielding its clusters of white wax-coated fruit. They saw the perfumed "bead-bush," out of whose fragrant roots are shaped the beads held in such esteem among the savage belles of the land. They saw the "sugar-bush," (*Protea mellifera*), with its large cup-shaped pink and white flowers,—the most beautiful of the tribe of *Proteaceae*. There, too, were scarlet geraniums, with marigolds, and starry Cape jessamines, forming a garden in the wilderness pleasant to the eye and fragrant to the sense.

The songs of numerous birds fell upon the ear, and their brilliant plumage could be seen as they fluttered among

the branches. The hum of bees, too, was heard; and thousands of these busy insects could be seen fluttering from flower to flower.

It was still early when the party arrived in this delightful spot; but so pleased were all of them with the scene around that they determined to halt before the usual hour and encamp there for the night.

So, choosing a pretty grove of willow-leafed "olean-wood" trees, that stood near the bank of the river, they outspanned under their shade.

As they were wearied by their exertions in getting the oxen over some rocky ridges, all lay down to rest under the cool shadow of the olean-woods; and several of the boys went to sleep, lulled by the sweet voices of the birds, the humming of wild bees, and the rushing sound of the water as it passed over some rapids below.

Klaas and Jan, however, had not gone to sleep with the rest, for neither had laid their shoulders to the wagon-wheels, and were, therefore, no more tired than usual. Besides, there was something nigh at hand that would have kept both awake, even had they been a good deal fatigued, and that was the appearance of a pair of very odd-looking birds out upon the plain, at no great distance from the wagons, and that every now and then raised their black top-knots above the grass and uttered a cry something like the croak of a raven.

These birds were not so very large—about the size of common fowls—but they were game-birds, having flesh of excellent flavour, and this rendered them interesting at the moment. They were, also, of very elegant forms—something of the tall majestic shape of the bustards. In fact, they were of a species that forms a sort of link between the bustards and grouse families; and are

known in South Africa as "koorhaans," and in India by the name of "floricans."

But it was nothing of all this that rendered them so interesting to Klaas and Jan. It was that the latter knew a very curious method of capturing these very birds, and he was in a perfect fever to put it in practice right before the eyes of the rival bird-boy Klaas. In fact, ever since the day that Klaas had so distinguished himself by knocking over the klipspringer, Jan had been burning for an opportunity to perform some feat of equal pretensions, but none had turned up. Now that these birds—old acquaintances of Jan's they were—had made their appearance, he saw a fair chance of gaining some renown. He would show Klaas how to catch koorhaans in a proper manner—that he would. So said Jan.

Jan was not long in having his triumph, which he obtained in the following manner.

He first pulled some long hair from the tail of his pony, which he twisted into a large stout snare. He next proceeded to Swartboy, and borrowed from the Bushman his whip, or rather the handle of the whip—for Swartboy took off the lash to accommodate him. It must be here remembered that Jan and Swartboy were great allies, and had been so for a long time; and it was in reality Swartboy who had taught Jan the curious mode he was about to practise upon the koorhaans. It must also be remembered that the handle of Swartboy's whip was an immense affair—a bamboo cane, full eighteen feet in length, and more like a fishing-rod than a whip-handle.

Well, upon the end of this, where the lash had been tied, Jan adjusted his snare; and then, mounting his pony, rode forth upon the plain.

Klaas stood watching him; and upon Klaas's countenance

there was a puzzled expression that Jan did not fail to notice, and that delighted him exceedingly.

Klaas knew nothing about the *modus operandi*—could not guess how the other was going to act—and his ignorance betrayed itself, though he did not say a word.

Was Jan going to ride up and snare the birds? Surely they would not let him come so near? They appeared shy enough, and would not let him, Klaas, come within shot, for he had tried it but the minute before. No: it could not be that way—the koorhaans wouldn't stand it, he knew.

Jan said nothing, but rode triumphantly forth, looking askance at Klaas as he passed out from camp.

When within about one hundred yards of the koorhaans—Klaas expecting every moment to see them run off as koorhaans usually do—Jan turned the head of his pony, and commenced riding round in a circle.

This he continued until he had got quite round the first circumference; and then, drawing his pony slightly inward, he began a second circle, which he completed as the first; and then still heading more inward, he made a third, and a fourth, and a fifth—of all which circles the bustards formed the centre. Of course, it was not exactly a circle he traced, but a spiral line constantly narrowing inward upon the game.

"Oho!" muttered Klaas, "I see what he's after now. Oho!"

Klaas said nothing more; but remained watching with great interest, while Jan continued round and round like a blind horse in a brick-mill.

But Jan was not blind. He was watching the movements of the koorhaans with the sharp eye of a bird-catcher.

And these birds were equally watching him—turning their heads now to this side and now to that; but, like stupids as they were, neglecting to use either their wings or legs to carry them out of the way of danger.

The result was that they permitted the pony, and Jan upon its back, to approach so near, that the boy was at length able to reach one of them with the top of Swartboy's long whip-stick, and pass the noose over head, topknot, and all.

In another moment the bird was fluttering at the end of the bamboo; and Jan, without dismounting, pulled the creature in that way up to the wagons, and held it there with an air of triumph that left Klaas without a word to say for the "balance" of that evening.

Chapter Forty Nine.

Groot Willem and the Python.

Groot Willem awoke from his nap before the others. It still wanted nearly two hours of sunset, and the hunter, observing a reddish object at a distance that looked like some animal, shouldered his roer and proceeded towards it. He took with him one of the buck-dogs, a well-trained and favourite hound, that usually accompanied him—even on a stalking expedition.

The red object which he had seen was near the edge of the valley, and at the bottom of a rocky precipice that bounded it upon that side. There were some trees growing along by the foot of the cliff, and the hunter calculated on being able to get a shot at the animal, whatever it was, from behind the cover of these trees. He continued on up the valley, and at length got near enough to tell what he was stalking at.

It was a small antelope, just about the size of the klipspringer, and with little erect horns four inches in length. In colour, however, it was unlike the latter. The upper parts of its body were a deep red, and underneath white, while its snout and face were black. The little creature was higher at the croup than at the withers, and entirely without a tail, or with a tail only one inch long, that had more the appearance of a stump.

Groot Willem, when he came nigh, recognised this antelope to be the *steenbok*, for he had met with it before, as it is common throughout the colony, inhabiting high lying grounds where there are bushes. It is one of those classed under the genus *Tragulus*, of which three other species—all small antelopes—are met with in South

Africa. The other three are the "grysbok," (*Tragulus melanotis*), the "vlackte steenbok," (*T. rufescens*), and the "bleekbok;" (*T. pediotragus*); though some naturalists assert that the last are only *varieties* of the steenbok, (*T. rupestris*). Groot Willem did not spend a thought upon these matters, he only thought of "stalking" the steenbok, and having its ribs for a roast at supper. He was able to approach it without any difficulty, as it was close to the bushes, and appeared not to be very shy.

There was but the creature itself—a little buck; and rarely is more than one, or at most two of these antelopes seen together—for the steenbok, and all the others of the genus *Tragulus*, are monogamous and solitary.

Groot Willem was at length within range, and was about to level his roer on the game, when the movements of the little animal caused him to hold his hand. Its actions were very odd, indeed. It was not browsing—it was not standing still—it was not running away from the ground, —and yet it was in constant motion!

As already stated, it was close in to the edge of the timber, where a number of small olean trees stood thinly over the ground. In front of these the little buck was dancing about in a very original manner. Now it ran to the right,—anon to the left,—now zigzag,—now it started suddenly backwards,—then ran forwards again,—all the while its eyes turning in a particular direction and shining brilliantly, as if the animal itself was in a state of unusual excitement.

Groot Willem looked to discover the cause of this odd manoeuvring on the part of the steenbok; something among the olean-wood trees seemed to attract the

notice of the animal. On this something the eyes of the hunter rested with wonderment; and for some moments he was unable to make out what it was. He could perceive a large glittering mass near the bottom of one of the trees; but this mass at first sight appeared without any particular form, and lay perfectly motionless.

As Groot Willem continued to gaze upon it, however, it gradually assumed a form, or rather his eyes gradually traced one, for the mass had not yet moved.

A hideous form it was—though of smooth and regular proportions—it was the form of a reptile—a serpent!

A serpent of enormous size, for the mass of its body, gathered up in a sort of irregular coil, covered the ground over a space of several square feet, while the body itself seemed thicker than the thighs of a full-grown man! The head of the reptile rested upon the top of the coiled body, and on running his eye along the mottled and glistening outlines, Groot Willem perceived that its tail was doubled around the stem of the olean-wood, and held it with firm grasp—for the serpent belonged to a family whose tails are furnished with horny claw-like hooks, giving them a power of prehension in this member equal to that of a hand. This is the family of the *Boidae*, or "boas," to which the one in question was generically related. It was a *python*—the *Python Natalensis*.

Groot Willem only knew it as the "rock-snake," and that is its ordinary designation—given it on account of the fact of its being a dweller among rocks and stony places. It might very properly be called "rock-boa," which would distinguish it from its cousins of America, the *Anaconda*, or "water-boa," and the true boa, which is a denizen of the forest, and which would therefore merit the title of "tree-boa."

Notwithstanding the difference of the dwelling-place of the boas and pythons, their habits are very similar. They lie in wait for their prey, capture it with their strong retractile teeth, and crushing it to death by constriction, swallow it whole—though often the animal swallowed is much larger than the diameter of their own bodies. Their elastic muscles, however, enable them to effect their purpose, aided by the slippery saliva which is copiously supplied from their glands.

When Groot Willem first saw the huge python, its head was lying over the coils of its body, and motionless. Presently, the head was raised up with the neck, and several feet of the body; and the parts, thus erected, moved gently from side to side with a sort of vibratory motion. The jaws were widely extended, so that the sharp retractile teeth were plainly visible, and the forked tongue at intervals was shot forward, and gleamed in the sun. The *eyes* of the reptile sparkled like fire.

It was a fearful object to look upon! And yet the steenbok did not appear to dread it. On the contrary, it kept drawing nearer and nearer, excited either by curiosity or *fascination*!

There are those who ridicule the idea of *fascination* on the part of serpents. But whether we are to believe in such a power or not, we cannot deny the fact. Certain it is, that whether it be curiosity, fear, or fascination, both birds and animals are moved to approach not only serpents, but crocodiles, until within reach of the jaws that are opened to devour them. Certain is this, and vouched for by the testimony of many a correct and reliable observer.

Groot Willem witnessed the strange phenomenon. When the buck had got within some six or eight feet of the

python, the head of the latter suddenly shot out; and before the antelope, which now appeared making an effort to escape, could spring out of the way, it was seized by the teeth of the reptile, and dragged towards the tree!

A number of quick contortions followed, and when Groot Willem looked again, the red body of the little antelope was almost hidden under the thick folds of the spotted python, that writhing around it was crushing it to death!

Chapter Fifty.

Groot Willem's Great Struggle with the Snake.

Now it chanced that the sight of that great serpent was very gratifying to the eyes of Groot Willem—far more so than any antelope. The reason was, that a friend of his, a young doctor of Graaf Reinet, who was fond of the study of herpetology, had requested him to bring home the skins of such rare snakes as he might fall in with—but especially that of the great "rock-snake," which is not found in the colony, not even so far south as the Orange River.

Here was a chance for the skin, which, up to this time, Groot Willem had searched for in vain.

He had another reason for being gratified; and that was the splendid trophy it would be, provided he succeeded in obtaining it. To kill a snake twenty feet long, and half as thick as a man—for the python appeared to be both—would be no small triumph! Where would Hendrik be then?

All at once the steenbok was forgotten, and the snake became the object of the hunter's skill.

Groot Willem had no skill about him. He knew of no mode to attack this new sort of enemy, except dealing with it as he would with a quadruped—that is, sending a bullet into it; and this he did the moment after.

His roer was levelled; and, glancing through his ivory sights, he fired the large ball through the thickest part of the reptile's body.

The latter felt the shot; and, suddenly unfolding itself, dropped the steenbok—now nothing more than a mangled carcase, with scarce a whole bone in it. The rapidity with which the snake glided off showed that the wound had done it but little harm.

The hunter thought of reloading again, when he perceived the serpent fast making to the rocks that in large masses lay piled up near the bottom of the cliff. Among these was its retreat; and if it once reached them, Groot Willem saw that he should never set eyes on it again.

Without staying to reload his gun, then, he ran in among the trees, and followed the direction taken by the serpent.

Although these snakes glide along with considerable rapidity, they can by no means go so fast as a man; and in less than a dozen seconds Groot Willem had overtaken the python, and for that matter might have trodden upon its tail.

There he was close beside the fearful-looking monster, but without the knowledge how to attack it. He began by striking at its body with the butt of his gun; but although his blows were delivered fairly enough, the metal-shod heel of his roer only glanced from the slippery skin of the snake, without harming it in the least, or even retarding its progress towards the cliff. It made no attempt to retaliate, but only seemed bent on escaping to its lair.

It was almost successful; for although Groot Willem pounded away with all his might, it reached the rocks in spite of him, and had buried half of its long body within a crevice—no doubt the entrance to its den—before the hunter thought of changing his tactics.

It was now a critical moment with Groot Willem. Another instant, and the remaining half of the snake would slip out of sight, and then good-bye to it. What would he say to his medical friend? What to Hendrik and the yägers?

These thoughts inspired him with renewed energy; a new determination to succeed came over him. The snake was not a poisonous one; and, therefore, the encounter could not be very dangerous. It might bite him, but he had battled with many a biting creature before now, and conquered them, too. He would try his strength upon the snake.

He was not two seconds of time on coming to this determination; and, as soon as he had done so, he tossed his roer aside, and stooping down, seized the tail of the snake in both hands, and commenced hauling upon it!

At the first "pluck" he drew the reptile several feet outward; but, to his surprise, it then held fast; and, notwithstanding his great strength, he was unable to draw it a foot farther. The creature had, no doubt, got the fore-part of its body around an angle in the rocks; and, aided by its scaly skin, was enabled to hold fast.

Groot Willem pulled with all his might. A sailor in a storm could not have hauled harder upon the main brace; but all to no purpose, as not another foot of that part of the python that was still visible could be lengthened. About the half of it was still outside, but the other ten feet were buried within the dark recesses of the rocks.

For several minutes Groot Willem continued to exert his strength, dragging the long cylinder until he could hear its vertebrae crack, but without gaining an inch! On the contrary, he had already lost several inches. Every time that he relaxed his hold, the python was enabled to

move forward a bit, and this ground it never gave up again. If Groot Willem allowed it an inch, it was sure to struggle for an ell! It had all the advantage on its side, as it pulled *with the grain*, while its antagonist was exerting his strength *against* it.

Groot Willem felt confident he could hold the python in this position, as long as he could stand upon his feet; but what good would there be in so doing? He could not kill it in that way. If he were to "let go" for but an instant, he very well knew that the next instant would show him the last inch of the tail disappearing into the crevice! No, he could not let go, and he was resolved not to let go, until he should at least try the patience of his opponent. Maybe it would tire of being thus held upon the "stretch," and would let him pull it out again.

If there had only been some one with him to administer a few smart blows upon the creature's body it would have been all well; but the camp was at a very long distance off, and behind the trees. His companions could neither see nor hear him.

After standing on the strain a considerable time, a bright idea entered the brain of the hunter. There grew a small tree beside him—in fact, he was close by its trunk. The thought occurred that, if by any means he could fasten the tail to the tree, he could then go to work with a sapling, and beat the snake to death at his pleasure.

He was a ready fellow, Groot Willem, and a few moments sufficed him to mature his plans. He chanced to have a strong "cord" in the ample pocket of his jacket, which would serve to effect the very purpose, if he could only manage somehow to make it fast to the tail. This he proceeded to do at once.

Straddling the snake, so as to hold it partly between his

knees, he was enabled to loop the cord tightly around it, and the thing was done. In a minute more, the other end of the cord was tightly knotted around the trunk of the tree!

Groot Willem now broke off a sapling, determined either to beat the hinder half of the python to a jelly, or make it surrender and show its head!

He had not delivered the third blow, when it adopted the latter alternative; and the whole of its body now glided rapidly back out of the crevice—so rapidly that Groot Willem was not able to avoid the onset of the enraged reptile, and the next moment he was gathered within its coils!

So quick was the act, that he scarce knew how it had been accomplished. He saw the head, with its open jaws extended, dart towards him; he sprang to one side, but felt the cold scaly body against his limbs as if pulling him towards the tree; and the moment after, he was swept close up to the trunk, and pressed tightly against it!

He had just time to perceive that the folds of the serpent were around his limbs, and also around the trunk of the tree,—just time to feel that they were gradually tightening upon him—when the head, with its extended jaws and terrible teeth, came right opposite his face, and the eyes of the monster gleamed right into his!

A horrid spectacle it was—a horrid situation he was in; but Groot Willem was not the boy to lose either courage or presence of mind; and, finding his arms still free, he clutched forward and seized the reptile by the throat. To hold its head was just as much as he was able with both hands and with all his strength; but he held with the grasp of despair. Fortunate it was for him that the tail of

the python was secured by the rheim, and it was thus held fast at both ends! Had it been otherwise—had either head or tail been free, so that it could have used its power of constriction—in a few seconds more, Groot Willem would have been crushed as he had seen the little antelope. But now that both tail and head were fixed—the one by the cord and the other in the strong grasp of the hunter—the serpent was unable to exert its terrible power; and its folds remained loose around the limbs of its intended victim!

It writhed its neck, and wriggled its body, and changed the spiral rings from one part to another,—but all in vain. It could do him no harm!

How long this terrible struggle might have lasted would have depended upon how long the strength of the two could have held out. Groot Willem could not free himself from the folds of his antagonist, as *both* his legs were bound to the tree; and had he dropped the head of the python for a moment, he knew it would crush him to death. The snake, on the other hand, could not free itself, as it was held fast at both extremities. What was to be the result? Which would be the conqueror?

The serpent must have conquered in the end; though it might not have been able to free itself, as its tail was fastened to the tree. But Groot Willem was not able to strangle it, with all the compression he was exercising upon its throat, and his strength would have yielded in time. Most certainly would he have fallen a victim, but for a plan that he at length adopted to set himself free.

During all the continuance of the fight between him and the serpent, he had not attempted to use his knife. He had not thought of such a weapon against such an enemy. Not dreaming that he would be brought into close

quarters, he had almost forgotten that he carried a knife. By good fortune he had one, and it was in his belt. Even though one or two folds of the snake were around his breast, he could see the handle of the knife above them; and making a sudden grasp, he laid hold of it, and drew it forth.

The blade chanced to be almost as keen as a razor; and although the serpent now succeeded in twisting its head partially free, before it could tighten its folds, the sharp edge of the knife had half severed its body in twain!

A second gash was made in another part, and then a third and still deeper one; and the resolute hunter had the gratification to see the spiral rounds that threatened his destruction fall off and drop heavily to his feet!

In a short while the python lay dead upon the ground; and Groot Willem, although he felt that he had secured a great triumph, left the spot with some regret that he had *spoiled the skin*!

Chapter Fifty One.

The Honey-Guide and Honey-Eater.

Groot Willem's adventure was acknowledged by all to be the most wonderful that had occurred to any of them—even surpassing that of Hendrik with the rhinoceros—and for a good while it continued to be the subject of camp conversation.

During the expedition, every one of the party had either performed some grand feat or fallen in with a remarkable adventure, except Arend. It was not that Arend had less courage or less capacity than the rest; but, partly, because he felt no inclination to put himself in the way of hunting adventures, and partly that the chances had not favoured him. One adventure he had fallen in with—literally *fallen in* with. He had tumbled, horse and all, into a pit-trap set by some savages for capturing the rhinoceros! Fortunately, the sharp spike, usually placed at the bottom of these holes, had been removed—else either Arend or the horse would have fared worse than they did. Many a laugh had the six young yägers at Arend's solitary adventure. I say six, for Arend always good-naturedly joined in it himself. Arend was not the man for adventures in the great wilderness. Had it been in the great city instead, no doubt his fine face and handsome figure would have helped him to many a one in the flirtation line—had he been inclined that way. But neither did Arend care about that. He had but one ruling thought—so Groot Willem alleged—and that was to get home to the Graaf Reinet; and Groot usually added the reason, by giving a wink, and a word or two about "cherry cheeks and blue eyes."

Arend, however, was not destined to see home without one other adventure, in which all the rest had share, and which proved not only the last they met with during that expedition, but was near being the last of their lives!

They had changed their camp from the flowery plain to another equally flowery, though the plants that blossomed around were of a very different character. There were geraniums and marigolds in this plain, as there had been in the other; but here euphorbias of different species predominated, with cacti and other succulent plants.

Above their heads towered the tree Euphorbia, (*E. grandidens*), while at their feet the melon-shaped variety peeped forth from the ground. There too, were several poisonous species; among others the *Euphorbia antiquorum* growing side by side with the deadly belladonna lily, (*Amaryllis belladonna*). The young yägers seemed to have arrived upon a spot of earth that was almost wholly occupied with poison-yielding plants!

And yet it was a lovely scene. The flowers looked as fresh and as fair as elsewhere, and their fragrance scented the air around. Birds disported themselves among the branches of the trees; and bees hummed and whirred over the blossoms, imparting cheerfulness to the wild scene, and calling up ideas of home that were, at the moment, agreeable to the tired travellers. They had just formed camp, and were sitting quietly down, when their attention was drawn to a bird that had perched itself upon a low bush at no great distance from the wagons. It was not the beauty of this bird that attracted them, for its plumage was not beautiful, being of an ashy-brown colour upon the back, and grey below. It was

not its size, which was that of an ordinary finch; nor its song, which was no better than a monotonous chatter of the syllables "Kwi-kwi-kwi-kit." It was none of these things that caused the young yägers to give their attention to the bird, but its peculiar character—already well known to all of them. The little bird which sat upon the bush, starting from branch to branch, jerking about its tail, and uttering the "kwi-kwi-kit," was no other than the celebrated "honey-guide."

They all knew it; for they had met with it several times during the expedition, and Hans had told them its history. They all knew of its curious habits; how it will guide a man to the nest of the wild bee, by fluttering before him from bush to bush and rock to rock until it reaches the spot; how it will wait until the hive has been robbed of its honey-treasure; and then alight by the despoiled nest to feed upon the larvae of the bees, or the fragments of honeycomb that may have been left! They all knew this of the honey-guide, because they had followed one before now, and proved the truth of this wonderful *instinct*, which has been doubted by many travellers as well as naturalists.

Those points of its natural history they did not know of Hans had told them of long before. He had told them how the bird had been classed among the cuckoos, under the title *Cuculus indicator*—because it shares with the true cuckoos the singular habit of depositing its eggs in the nest of another bird; how other naturalists have formed a genus for itself—the genus *indicator*, of which several species are known; how the bird feeds mostly upon honey and the larvae of bees; and how nature has given it a protection against the stings of the old ones in the thickness of its skin: but Swartboy declared, in

relation to this matter, that the thick skin did not always save it; as he had often found the honey-guide lying dead by the nests of the bees, and evidently killed by their stings!

All these points in the natural history of the honey-bird were known to the young yägers; therefore the little chatterer, that had lit upon the adjacent bush, was no stranger to them.

And they were all right glad to see it, for a certain reason —because they wanted some honey, and particularly at that very time, as their sugar had run out, and they had nothing to sweeten their coffee with—a privation to several of the party.

All leaped to their feet, therefore, with the determination to follow the "honey-guide," go where it would.

They laid hold of their arms; and, what was still stranger, saddled and mounted their horses, intending to follow the guide on horseback!

You will wonder at this. But when you hear that the honey-guide often takes the hunter six or seven miles through the woods—and that not unfrequently it guides him to the lair of a lion, or the haunt of a black rhinoceros, instead of to the nest of a bee—you will understand why the young yägers took these precautions.

Just as they were about starting out, a very odd-looking animal "hove in sight." It had something of the appearance of a badger—being low set on its legs, plantigrade in its hind-feet, and with a snout and tail very like those of that animal. Its colour, too, and

pelage, was not unlike that of the common badger—a sombre grey above and black below, divided by a light stripe running down each side from the ears to the root of the tail. In size it was superior to the badger, and nearly equalling in this respect the American glutton, or "wolverene," which it also resembled. It had the general appearance of all the animals of the badger family—which, though few in genera and species, is represented by one or two in nearly every part of the globe. The animal which our yägers saw, or its species, to speak more properly, was the representative of that family in South Africa. It was the "ratel," or "honey-eater," (*Mellivora capensis*).

Now this quadruped was almost as well known to our party as the bird. They knew that its habits were equally singular; that, like the "indicator," it possessed a "sweet tooth;" and spent most, if not all of its time, in searching for the nests of bees and robbing them of their honey—provided the said nests were in the ground, where it could tear them up with its strong terrier-claws. On the other hand, when the nest chanced to be in a tree, they knew the ratel could not reach it—this animal not being a tree-climber. On such occasions he usually leaves the mark of his claws upon the lower bark, and this often guides the Hottentot hunter to a nest stored with honey. All these things the yägers had learnt from Swartboy and Congo; and from Hans a few other facts—such as that the ratel is found throughout all Africa—that it is formed by naturalists into a genus of itself, like so many other anomalous creatures of that continent—that its skin is so thick the bees cannot pierce it with their stings, so that it devours their honeycombs without fear of the buzzing insects—that on account of its disagreeable odour it is sometimes known as the "stinking badger."

Other facts with which all were acquainted were, that the ratel is accustomed to follow the "honey-guide;" and that the bird frequently conducts the quadruped to the hive—very much in the same way as it acts when followed by a man. *It is said*, however, on such occasions to fly lower, and to take shorter flights, lest the badger might lose sight of it! So says Monsieur Verreaux!

Now it was plain to the party that the ratel was at that moment in pursuit of his profession, and in full pursuit of the indicator. The interference, however, of the mounted yägers caused him to turn round, and make off in another direction; and the impatient "guide," having now gone ahead, was followed by a-much larger "tail."

On went the little creature from tree to tree, uttering its "kwi-kwi-kit," and evidently pleased at its new "following." On rode the young yägers directly in the wake of their guide.

Fortunately they had not far to go. The more frequently repeated twittering of the bird, and the increased excitement which the little creature exhibited, told the hunters they were near the nest of the bees; and in a few minutes after the bird perched upon a particular tree, and would fly no farther. In this tree was the hive!

They could have told that from the fact that near its roots the bark was scratched and torn off by the claws of some animal—the claws of a ratel, of course—and the amount of scratching showed, that more than one of these honey-eating quadrupeds had been guided to this place of *sweets* to meet with bitter disappointment!

A pair of axes, with Swartboy and Congo to handle them,

were now brought from the camp; the tree soon fell under their strokes: the bees were smoked out; and the honeycombs—a fragment or two being left as a reward for the services of the “guide”—were carried off to camp.

The store proved one of the largest? and the six yägers, as well as their dark-skinned attendants, that evening enjoyed a “surfeit of sweets.”

Chapter Fifty Two.

Conclusion.

And a surfeit of sweets it proved. Better for them had they never found that bees' nest, or had left its contents to the bird and the badger.

In less than an hour from the time they had eaten the honey, the whole camp was in a state of the greatest alarm. Every one of the party was suffering from a parched throat, a burning breast, and a loathing at the stomach. The bees had been busy among the blossoms of the belladonna and the flowers of the euphorbia, and *their honey was poison*!

It would be difficult to depict the consternation that was felt in the camp. They had all eaten of the poisoned honey—yägers, drivers, and all. They had all eaten plentifully of it—for there chanced to be plenty—and the absence of a vegetable diet for some days past had sharpened their appetite for the honey. Not one of them that was not ill—too ill either to give help or consolation to the others.

Every one believed he was *poisoned*, and acted accordingly. Hans of all preserved most presence of mind. He used all his skill in administering such antidotes as he could think of. Purgatives and emetics—such as they had in their chests—were freely administered; and no doubt to these might be attributed the saving of their lives.

Their lives *were* saved—the crisis passed without proving

fatal to any of them—but for days their illness continued; for days the young yägers might be seen wandering about the camp, or sitting listlessly around the camp-fire reduced to the thinness of skeletons, and looking like the ghosts of their former selves!

So great a shock had their health received, that they thought no more of continuing their expedition; they only waited for strength enough to enable them to set out on their return homeward. Arend's desire would now be fulfilled—he would soon look upon the lovely Trüey, and listen to the cheerful music of her voice. Hendrik—ardent hunter though he was—was equally desirous to get back, and lay his spoils at the feet of the blushing Wilhelmina. Klaas and Jan longed for puddings and sugar-plums; and Hans, who had now made a very extensive collection of the flora of the country, was also willing to return.

Only one—the great tireless loose-boned giant, Groot Willem—would still have persevered, and climbed over the mountains that separated them from the land of elephants, buffaloes, and camelopards. Groot Willem would still have gone on, had it been possible for the others to have accompanied him. But it was not possible, and the big hunter-boy was obliged to turn back with his companions. It was with a heavy heart that he did so—for he had for many years entertained an ardent longing to try his roer upon the huge thick-skinned quadrupeds that now roamed far beyond the frontier of the settlements. Perhaps he faced homeward with the less regret, that he had hopes of making, at no distant day, *another expedition to the haunts of the mighty elephant upon the banks of the lovely Limpopo*.

This hope consoled Groot Willem, as he mounted his

huge horse, and rode after the wagons that were already inspanned and treking down the valley.

Day by day, as the young yägers travelled homewards, they grew stronger and stronger; and when they had reached the Graaf Reinet, the effects of the poisoned honey had entirely disappeared—so that all six arrived home "safe and sound."

I need not tell you that a warm welcome awaited them in the paternal mansions of Van Wyk and Von Bloom. I need not tell how lovely looked Trüey, and how sweetly blushed Wilhelmina; nor need I describe the splendid "vrolykeid" that was given—at which all the rich boors of the country were present to celebrate the return of:

"The Young Yägers."

The End.

| Chapter 1 | | Chapter 2 | | Chapter 3 | | Chapter 4 | | Chapter 5 | | Chapter 6 | | Chapter 7 | | Chapter 8 | | Chapter 9 | | Chapter 10 | | Chapter 11 | | Chapter 12 | | Chapter 13 | | Chapter 14 | | Chapter 15 | | Chapter 16 | | Chapter 17 | | Chapter 18 | | Chapter 19 | | Chapter 20 | | Chapter 21 | | Chapter 22 | | Chapter 23 | | Chapter 24 | | Chapter 25 | | Chapter 26 | | Chapter 27 | | Chapter 28 | | Chapter 29 | | Chapter 30 | | Chapter 31 | | Chapter 32 | | Chapter 33 | | Chapter 34 | | Chapter 35 | | Chapter 36 | | Chapter 37 | | Chapter 38 | | Chapter 39 | | Chapter 40 | | Chapter 41 | | Chapter 42 | | Chapter 43 | | Chapter 44 | | Chapter 45 | | Chapter 46 | | Chapter 47 | | Chapter 48 | | Chapter 49 | | Chapter 50 | | Chapter 51 | | Chapter 52 |

End of the Project Gutenberg EBook of The Young Yagers, by Mayne Reid

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YOUNG YAGERS ***

***** This file should be named 34668-h.htm or 34668-h.zip *****
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:
http://www.gutenberg.org/3/4/6/6/34668/

Produced by Nick Hodson of London, England

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you
do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away--you may do
practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

*** START: FULL LICENSE ***

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project
Gutenberg-tm License (available with this file or online at http://gutenberg.org/license).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm
electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to
and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy
all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession.
If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who
agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works
even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project
Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement
and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic
works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the

Foundation"
or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the
collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are
located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from
copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg
are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of
this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with
the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern
what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in
a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check
the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning
the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate
access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently
whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the
phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase

"Project
Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived
from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is
posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied
and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees
or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the
work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1
through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted
with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution
must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional
terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked
to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm
License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this

electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to

the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the

"Right
of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE
LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR
INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH
DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can
receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with
your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with
the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a
refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity
providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy
is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further
opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth
in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER
WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO
WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages.
If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the
law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be
interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by
the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the
trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance
with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production,
promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees,
that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do
or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm
work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers
including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's
goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure
and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations.
To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4
and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered
throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:
Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be
freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest

array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations
($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up
with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we
have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition
against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who
approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm
concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S.

unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

http://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.