George Manville Fenn

"Off to the Wilds"

Chapter One.

Coffee and Chicory, but not for Breakfast.

“Just look at him, Dick. Be quiet; don’t speak.”

“Oh, the dirty sunburnt little varmint! I’d like the job o’ washing him.”

“If you say another word, Dinny, I’ll give you a crack with your own stick.”

“An’ is it meself would belave you’d hurt your own man Dinny wid a shtick, Masther Jack? Why ye wouldn’t knock a fly off me.”

“Then be quiet. I want to see what he’s going to do.”

“Shure an’ it’s one of the masther’s owld boots I threw away wid me own hands this morning, because it hadn’t a bit more wear in it. An’ look at the dirty unclane monkey now.”

“He’ll hear you directly, Dinny, and I want to see what he’s going to do. Hold your tongue.”

“Shure an’ ye ask me so politely, Masther Jack, that it’s obliged to be silent I am.”

“Pa was quite right when he said you had got too long a tongue.”

“Who said so, Masther Jack?”

“Pa—papa!”

“Shure the masther said—and it’s meself heard him—that you was to lave your papa at home in owld England, and that when ye

came into these savage parts of the wide world, it was to be father."

"Well, father, then. Now hold your tongue. Just look at him, Dick."

"It's meself won't spake again for an hour, and not then if they don't ax me to," said Dennis Riley, generally known as "Dinny," and nothing more. And he, too, joined in watching the "unclane little savage," as he called him, to wit, a handsome, well-grown Zulu lad, whose skin was of a rich brown, and who, like his companion, seemed to be a model of savage health and grace.

For there were two of these lads, exceedingly lightly clad, in a necklace, and a strip of skin round the loins, one of whom was lying on his chest with his chin resting upon his hands, kicking up his feet, and clapping them together as he watched the other, who was evidently in a high state of delight over an old boot.

This boot he had found thrown out in the fenced-in yard at the back of the cottage, and he was now seated upon a bank trying it on.

First, he drew it on with a most serious aspect, held out his leg and gave it a shake, when, finding the boot too loose, he took it off and filled the toe with sand; but as the sand ran out of a gap between the upper leather and the sole close to the toe and as fast as he put it in, he had to look out for something else, which he found in the shape of some coarse dry grass. With this he half filled the boot, and then, with a good deal of difficulty, managed to wriggle in his toes, after which he drew the boot above his ankle, rose up with a smile of gratified pride upon his countenance, and began to strut up and down before his companion.

There was something very laughable in the scene, for it did not seem to occur to the Zulu boy that he required anything else to add to his costume. He had on one English boot,

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same as the white men wore, and that seemed to him sufficient, as he stuck his arms akimbo, then folded them as he walked with head erect, and ended by standing on one leg and holding out the booted foot before his admiring companion. This was too much for the other boy, whose eyes glittered as he made a snatch at the boot, dragged it off, and was about to leap up and run away; but his victim was too quick, for, lithe and active as a serpent, he dashed upon the would-be robber, and a fierce struggle ensued for the possession of the boot.

John Rogers, otherwise Jack, a frank English lad of about sixteen, sprang forward to separate the combatants, but Dinny, his father's servant, who had been groom and gardener at home, restrained him.

"No, no, Masther Jack," he cried, "let the young haythens fight it out. It'll make them behave betther by-an'-by."

"I won't; I don't like to see them fight," cried Jack, slipping himself free, and seemingly joining in the fray.

"Don't, Masther Jack," cried Dinny; "they'll come off black on your hands. Masther Dick, sir, tell him to lave them alone."

The lad appealed to, a pale delicate-looking youth, clenched his fists and sprang forward to help his brother. But he stopped directly and began to laugh, as, after a short scuffle, Jack Rogers separated the combatants, and stood between them with the boot in dispute.

For a moment it seemed as if the two Zulu lads were about to make a combined attack, but there was something about the English lad which restrained them, and they stood chattering away in their native tongue, protesting against his interference, and each laying claim to the boot.

“Speak English,” cried Jack. “And now you two have got to shake hands like Englishmen, and make friends.”

“Want a boot! want a boot! want a boot!” the Zulu lads kept repeating.

“Well, you do as I tell you, and you shall each have a pair of boots.”

“Two boot? Two boot?” cried the boy who had lost his treasure.

“Yes; two boots,” said Jack. “You’ve got an old pair, haven’t you, Dick?”

“Yes; they can have my old ones,” was the reply. “Go and get them, Dinny.”

“And my old lace-ups too,” said Jack.

“Ugh!” ejaculated Dinny, spitting on the ground in token of disgust. “Ye’ll both repint being such friends with cannibal savages like them, young gentlemen. They’ll turn round on ye some day, and rend and ate ye both.”

“Not they, Dinny,” laughed Jack. “They’d prefer Irishmen, so we should be safe if you were there.”

“Ah, ye may laugh,” said Dinny, “but they’re a dangerous lot, them savages, and I wouldn’t trust ’em the length of my fut.”

Dinny went towards the back door of Mr Rogers' roomy, verandah-surrounded cottage farm, high up in the slopes of the Drakensberg, and looking a perfect bower with its flowers, creepers, and fruit-trees, many being old English friends; and Jack proceeded to make peace between the two Zulu boys.

"Now look here, Sepopo, you've got to shake hands with your brother," he cried.

"No!" cried the Zulu boy who had been lying down when he snatched the boot, and he threw himself in a monkey-like attitude on all fours.

"Now you, Bechele, you've got to make friends and shake hands," continued Jack, paying no heed to Sepopo's defiant attitude.

"No!" cried the last-addressed, emphatically. "'Tole a boot! 'Tole a boot!" And he too plumped himself down upon all fours and stared at the ground.

"I say yes!" cried Jack; when, as if moved by the same influence, the two Zulu boys leaped up, ran a few yards, and picked up each his "kiri," a short stick with a knob at the end nearly as big as the fist, ran back to where the English lads were standing, and with flashing eyes began to beat the sand with their clubs.

"Come along, Dick!" cried Jack. "They shan't fight. You take Sepopo, I'll take Bechele. No; don't! It will make you hot, and you're not strong. I'll give it them both."

Jack, who was very strong and active for his age, made a dash at the young Zulus just as they began threatening each other and evidently meaning to fight, when for a few moments there was a confused struggle, in which Jack would not have been successful but for his brother's help, he having overrated his strength. But Dick joined in, and in spite of their anger the Zulu boys did not attempt to strike at their young masters, the result being that they allowed their kiris to be wrenched from their hands, and the next minute were seated opposite to each other on the ground.

“They’re as strong as horses, Dick,” panted Jack. “There! Now, you sirs, shake hands!”

“No!” shouted one.

“No!” shouted the other; and with a make believe of fierceness, Jack gave each what he called a topper on the head with one of the kiris he held.

“Now will you make friends?” cried Jack; and again they shouted, “No!”

“They won’t. Let them go,” said Dick, languidly; “and it makes one so hot and tired.”

“They shan’t go till they’ve made friends,” said Jack, setting his teeth; and thrusting his hand into his pocket he brought out a piece of thick string, the Zulu boys watching him intently.

They remained where Jack had placed them, and going down on one knee he seized the right hand of each, placed them together, and proceeded to tie them—pretty tightly too.

“There!” cried Jack. “Now you stop till you’re good friends once more.”

“Good boy now,” cried one on the instant.

“Good boy now,” cried the other.

“Then shake hands properly,” said Jack.

“Give him the boot,” cried Sepopo, as soon as his hand was untied, and he had gone through the required ceremony with his brother.

“No, no; give him the boot,” cried the other.

“Hold your tongues,” cried Jack. “I say, Dick, let’s call them something else if they are going to stop with us, Sepopo! Bechele! What names!”

“Well,” said Dick, languidly, as he sat down in a weary fashion: “one’s going to be your boy, and the other mine. Let’s call them ‘Black Jack’ and ‘Black Dick.’”

“But they are brown,” said his brother.

“Yes, they are brown certainly,” said Dick, thoughtfully. “Regular coffee colour. You might call one of them ‘Coffee.’”

“That’ll do,” said Jack, laughing, “‘Coffee!’ and shorten it into ‘Cough.’ I say, Dick, I’ll have that name, and I can tell people I’ve got a bad ‘Cough.’ But what will you call the other?”

“I don’t know. Stop a moment— ‘Chicory.’”

“And shorten it into ‘chick’. That will do, Dick; splendid! Cough and Chick. Now you two, one of you is to be Cough and the other Chick; do you hear?”

The Zulu boys nodded and laughed, though, in spite of the pretty good knowledge of the English language which they had picked up from their intercourse with the British settlers, it is doubtful whether they understood the drift. What they did comprehend, however, was, that they should make friends; and this being settled, there was the old boot.

“Give me boot, and show you big snake,” cried Chicory.

“No, no, give me; show more big snake,” cried Coffee.

Just then Dinny came up with two old pairs of the lads’ boots, which he threw down upon the sandy earth; and reading consent in their young masters’ eyes, the Zulu lads pounced upon them with cries of triumph, Coffee obtaining the two rights, and Chicory the two lefts, with which they danced about, flourishing them over their heads with delight.

“Come here, stupids!” cried Jack; and after a little contention, the boys being exceedingly unwilling to part as they thought with their prizes, he managed to make them understand that the boots

ought to go in pairs; and the exchange having been made, each boy holding on to a boot with one hand till he got a good grip of the other, they proceeded to put them on.

“Ugh! the haythen bastes,” said Dinny, with a look of disgust. “Think of the likes o’ them wearing the young masthers’ brogues. Ah, Masther Dick, dear, ye’ll be repinting it one of these days.”

“Dinny, you’re a regular prophet of evil,” said Dick, quietly.

“Avic—prophet of avil!” cried Dinny. “Well, isn’t it the truth? Didn’t I say avore we left the owld counthry that no good would come of it? And avore we’d been out here two years didn’t the dear misthress—the saints make her bed in heaven—go and die right away?”

“Dinny! how can you!” cried Jack, angrily, as he saw the tears start into his brother’s eyes, and that in spite of the sunburning he turned haggard and pale.

“Don’t take any notice, Dick,” he whispered, in a tender, loving way, as he laid one arm on his brother’s shoulder and drew him aside. “Dinny don’t mean any harm, Dick, but he has such a long tongue.”

Dick looked piteously in his brother’s face, and one tear stole softly down his cheek.

“I say, Dick,” cried Jack, imploringly, “don’t look like that. It makes me think so of poor mamma. You look so like her. I say don’t, or you’ll make me cry too; and I won’t,” he cried, grinding his teeth. “I said I’d never cry again, because it’s so childish; and I won’t.”

“Then I’m childish, Jack,” said Dick, as he rubbed the tear away with one hand.

“No, no. You have been so weak and delicate that you can’t help it. I’m strong. But I say, Dick, you are ever so much stronger than when we came out here.”

“Yes,” said Dick, with a wistful look at his brother’s muscular arms. “I am stronger, but I do get tired so soon, Jack.”

“Not so soon as you did, Dick; and father says you’ll be a strong man yet. Hallo! what’s the matter? Look there.”

The brothers turned round, and hardly knew whether to laugh or to be alarmed; for a short distance away there was Dinny dancing about, waving his arms and shouting, while Coffee and Chicory, each with his kiri, were making attacks and feints, striking at the Irishman fiercely.

“Ah, would you, ye black baste?” shouted Dinny, as roaring now with laughter the brothers ran back.

“Shoo, Shoo! get out, you dirty-coloured spalpeen. Ah, ye didn’t. Kape off wid you. An’ me widout a bit of shtick in me fist. Masther Dick, dear! Masther Jack! it’s murthering me the two black Whiteboys are. Kape off! Ah, would ye again! Iv I’d me shtick I’d talk to ye both, and see if your heads weren’t thick as a Tipperary boy’s, I would. Masther Dick! Masther Jack! they’ll murther me avore they’ve done.”

As aforesaid, the two Zulu boys had picked up a great deal of the English language, but their understanding thereof was sometimes very obscure. In this instance they had heard Dinny talking to his young masters in a way that had made the tears come in Dick’s eye, and driven him and Jack away. This, in the estimation of the Zulu boys, must be through some act of cruelty or insult. They did not like Dinny, who made no attempt to disguise his contempt for them as “a pair of miserable young haythens,” but at the same time they almost idolised the twin brothers as their superiors and masters, for whom they were almost ready to lay down their lives.

Here then was a cause for war. Their nature was to love and fight, as dearly as the wildest Irishman who was ever born. Dinny had offended their two “bosses”—as they called them, after the fashion of the Dutch Boers, and this set their blood on fire.

Hardly had the brothers walked away than, as if moved by the same spirit, they forgot the beauty of the old boots in which they had been parading—to such an extent that they kicked them off, and kiri in hand made so fierce an attack upon unarmed Dinny that, after a show of resistance, he fairly took to his heels and ran back to the house, just as the brothers came up.

“Popo give him kiri,” cried Chicory.

“Bechele de boy make Boss Dinny run,” cried the other, his eyes sparkling with delight. “No make de boss cry eye any more.”

“No make Boss Dick cry eye any more,” repeated Chicory.

The brothers looked at each other as they comprehended the meaning of the attack.

“Why, Jack,” said Dick, “what faithful true fellows they are. They’ll never leave us in a time of trouble.”

“No, that they won’t,” cried Jack; and just then a tall, stern, sunburnt man, with grizzled hair and saddened eyes, came up to where they stood. Laying his hand affectionately on the shoulder of Dick,—

“Come, my boys,” he said, “dinner is ready. Let’s be punctual while we are leading a civilised life.”

“And afterwards, father, as punctual a life as we can,” said Dick, smiling.

“Hurray!” cried Jack, giving his cap a wave in the air. “Only another week, and then, father—”

“Yes,” said Mr Rogers, with a quiet, sad look, “then, my boy, good-bye to civilisation.”

“Only for a time, father,” said Dick, quietly.

“Till you win health and strength, my boy,” said Mr Rogers, with an affectionate glance.

“And that we’ll soon find,” cried Jack; “for we are off to the wilds.”

Chapter Two.

Why they went away.

It was about two years before this that Mr Edward Rogers, a gentleman holding a post of importance in the City of London, had purchased some land and come out to dwell in Natal. For physician after physician had been consulted, seaside and health resort visited, but as the time glided on the verdict of the doctors became more and more apparent as a true saying, that unless Mrs Rogers was taken to a warmer climate her days would be few.

Even if she were removed the doctors said that she could not recover; but still her days might be prolonged. What was more, they strongly advised such a course in favour of young Richard, who was weak and delicate to a degree.

“Then you really consider it necessary?” said Mr Rogers to the great physician who had been called in.

“I do indeed. As I have said, it will prolong your wife’s days, and most probably it will turn that delicate, sickly boy into a strong man.”

On being asked further what country he would recommend, he promptly replied,—

“South Africa.”

“Natal is the place,” he continued. “There you have the Drakensberg, and you can choose your own elevation, so as to get a pure, temperate climate, free from the cold of the mountains and the heat of the plains.”

Mr Rogers was a man of prompt action, for the health of those dear to him was his first consideration. The consequence was that after rapidly making his arrangements, and providing the necessaries for his new home, he took passage to Durban, arrived

there in safety with his wife, two sons, and Dennis; then made his way to Maritzburg; and soon after he had purchased an extensive tract of land, and a pleasantly situated home, with garden in full perfection, the owner of which, having made money in the colony, wished to retire to England.

Here for a time Mrs Rogers had seemed better, and undoubtedly her life was considerably prolonged. Gardening, farming, and a little hunting formed the occupations of the father and sons, and for a time all was happiness in the sunny far-off home. Then the much-dreaded day came, and they were left to mourn for a tender wife and mother, whose loss was irreparable.

Richard, who partook greatly of his mother's nature, was, like his father, completely prostrated by the terrible loss; and though time somewhat assuaged his grief, he seemed to have gone back in his health, and lost the way he had made up since he left England, and he had become so weak and delicate that Mr Rogers had consulted the doctor, who from time to time visited their far-off home.

"Medicine is of no use, my dear sir," he said frankly. "I can do him no good. I suppose he sits indoors a good deal and mopes?"

"Exactly."

"Then look here, my dear sir, give him a thorough change. You are not tied to your farming in any way?"

"Not in the least."

"Then fit up a waggon, take your horses, and have a few months' campaign in the wilds yonder. You want a change as badly as the boy, and you will both come back, I'll venture to say, doubled in strength. Why, the ivory and skins you'll collect will pay your expenses. I wish I had the chance to go."

It was settled then, and the waggon was being fitted up with ammunition and stores; horses, guaranteed to be well-salted, had been purchased for Mr Rogers and his boys. The two young Zulus

who had been hanging about the place for months, making little trips with Dick and Jack, were to go; and in addition a couple of trustworthy blacks, experienced as waggon-driver and foreloper, had been engaged; so that in a very few days they would say good-bye to civilisation for months, and go seek for health in the far-off wilds.

The boys were delighted, for Mr Rogers proposed that they should aim for the Zambesi River, and seek some of the seldom-traversed lands, where game abounded, and where the wonders of nature would be opened to them as from an unsealed book.

If Dick and Jack were delighted, the two Zulu boys were half mad with joy. As soon as they knew that they were to be of the party they seemed to have become frantic, going through the actions of hunting and spearing wild beasts—knocking down birds with their kiris, which they threw with unerring aim—pantomimically fighting lions, one of them roaring and imitating the fierce creature's "oomph, oomph," in a way that sounded terribly real, while the other threatened him with his assegai.

Then they were always showing their cleverness as hunters by stalking people—crawling up to them through the long grass, taking advantage of every irregularity of the ground or shrub to get nearer, and grinning with delight on seeing the surprise and fear of the person stalked.

For it was only during the past year that they had been so much amongst the settlers in Natal. Their early days had been spent with their tribe in the north, their father being a redoubtable chief; but he had given great offence to the king, and had been compelled to fly for his life, finding refuge amongst the English, with his boys.

Mention has been made of well-salted horses, which to a sailor would immediately suggest commissariat beef in pickle in good-sized tubs; but pray don't imagine that the satisfactory condiment, salt, has anything to do with a salted horse in South Africa. A salted horse is one that is seasoned to the climate by having passed through the deadly horse sickness, a complaint so

bad and peculiar to the land that very few of the horses seized with it recover. When one does recover he is called a salted—that is, seasoned—horse, and his value is quadrupled.

Mr Rogers had spared no expense in getting together good cattle. His team of little Zulu oxen were the perfection of health and strength, and far more docile than is generally the case with these animals; though even these, in spite of their good behaviour, were exceedingly fond of tickling each other's ribs with their long horns, and saving the driver trouble, for the pair nearest the waggon would stir up the pair in front of them, and as these could only retaliate on their aggressors with their tails, they took their revenge on the pair in front; these again punished the pair in front; and so on, and on, to the leading oxen, the result of the many applications being a great increase of speed.

Then the horses were excellent. Mr Rogers had three for his own riding; a big bay, a dark grey, and a soft mouse-coloured chestnut, more famous for speed than beauty, and with a nasty habit of turning round and smiling, as if he meant to bite, when he was mounted.

Dick was clever at names, and he immediately suggested "Smiler" as an appropriate name for the chestnut. The dark grey he called "Toothpick," because of his habit of rubbing his teeth on the sharp points of the fence; while he called the big bony bay the "Nipper," from his being so fond of grazing on, and taking nips from, the manes and tails of his companions, when he could get a chance.

Mr Rogers provided three horses for his own riding, but it was with the idea of giving either of his sons an extra mount when necessary, for it was certain that there would be times when the arch-necked swift little cobs purchased for his boys would want a rest.

It was a stroke of good fortune to get such a pair, and the boys were in ecstasies when they were brought up from Maritzburg, for a handsomer pair of little horses it would have been hard to find. They were both of that rich dark reddish roan, and wonderfully alike, the differences being in their legs; one being nearly black

in this important part of its person, the other having what most purchasers would call the blemish of four white legs—it being a canon amongst the wise in horseflesh that a dark or black-legged horse has better sinews and lasting powers. In this case, however, the theory was wrong, for white legs was if anything the stronger of the two.

The lads then were delighted, and this became increased when they found the little nags quite ready to make friends, and willing to eat apples, bread, or as much sugar out of their hands as they would give.

“That’s right, my boys,” said Mr Rogers, who found his sons making friends in this way with the new arrivals; “always feed your horses yourselves, and treat them well. Pet them as much as you like, and win their confidence by your kindness. Never ill-use your horse; one act of ill-treatment and you make him afraid of you, and then perhaps some day, when in an emergency and you want to catch your horse, he may gallop away. Go on like that, and those cobs will follow you about like dogs. But you must each keep to his own horse. Which one would you like, Jack?”

“Oh! the—”

Jack stopped, and glanced at his brother, whose face was slightly flushed.

Dick was weak and delicate, while Jack was the perfection of boyish vigour; and feeling that his brother did not enjoy life as he did himself, he stopped short just as he was going to say White Legs, for there was something in the cob’s face that he liked, and the little horse had let him stroke its velvet nose.

“Poor old Dick has taken a fancy to him,” he said to himself; “and the other will do just as well for me.”

“Let Dick choose first,” he said aloud.

“Very well,” said Mr Rogers. “Now then, Dick, which is it to be? though you can’t be wrong, my boy, for there is not a pin to choose between them, and they are brothers.”

“Should you mind if I chose first, Jack?” asked Dick.

“Not a bit,” said Jack, stoutly, though his feeling of disappointment was keen, for he felt now that he would dearly love to have the white-legged cob.

You may guess then his delight when Dick declared for the black-legged one.

As soon as he heard the decision Jack had his arm over the white-legged cob’s neck and had given it a hug, the horse looking at him with its great soft eyes, and uttering a low snort.

“Up with you then, my boys, and have a canter.”

“Without a saddle, father?” said Dick, nervously.

Jack was already up.

“Have it saddled if you like, my boy,” said Mr Rogers, kindly.

But Dick flushed, gave a spring from the ground, and was on the little cob’s back.

They were both skilled riders, but Dick’s illness made him timorous at times. He, however, fought hard to master his weakness; and when Jack cried, “Come on, Dick; let’s race to the big tree and back,” he stuck his knees into the cob’s plump sides and away they went, with the wind rushing by their ears, and the cobs keeping neck and neck, rounding the big tree about a mile away on the plain, and then making the dusty earth rise in clouds as they tore back, and were checked with a touch of the bridle by the home field.

“Why, Dick, my boy, I would not wish to see a better seat on a horse,” cried Mr Rogers, patting the cobs in turn. “Jack, you set up your back like a jockey. Sit more upright, my boy.”

“All right, father; I’ll try,” said Jack, throwing himself right forward so as to hug his cob’s neck. “But I say, father, isn’t he lovely? I felt all the time as if I was a bit of him, or we were all one.”

“You looked like it, my boy,” said Mr Rogers, smiling in his son’s animated face. “I wish Dick had your confidence, and you a little more of his style.”

“All right, father, we’ll try and exchange a bit a-piece,” laughed Jack. “But I can’t half believe it, father, that these are to be our own horses.”

“You may believe it, then,” said his father. “And now get them to the stable.”

“Oh, I say, Dick, what beauties!” cried Jack. “What shall you call yours?”

“I don’t know yet,” replied his brother. “He’s very fast. ‘Swift’ wouldn’t be a bad name; and we might call yours ‘Sure.’”

“Hum! I don’t think much of those names. Hold up!” he continued, examining the hoofs of his brother’s nag. “I say, Dick, what fine thick shoes he has got.”

“That’s a good suggestion,” said Dick, laughing, and looking brighter than he had seemed for weeks. “Let’s call him ‘Shoes,’ and his brother with the white legs ‘Stockings.’”

“Shoes and Stockings!” cried Jack; “but those are such stupid names. I don’t know though but what they’ll do.”

The question was not discussed, for the lads busied themselves in bedding down their own horses; and for the rest of that, day the stable seemed to be the most important part of the house.

Chapter Three.

Preparations for the Journey.

"What is it ye're doing?" said Dinny, a day or two before that proposed for the start.

Coffee and Chicory looked up from their task, grinned, and then went on sharpening the points of a couple of assegais upon a heavy block of stone, which they had evidently brought from a distance. Their faces glistened with perspiration; their knees were covered with dust; and they were in a wonderful state of excitement. Resuming their work on the instant, they tried to bring the weapons to a keen point.

"Kill lion," said Coffee, laconically; and he worked away as if the lion were round the corner waiting to be killed.

"Then ye may just as well lave off, ye dirty little naygars; for it's my belafe that you're not going at all."

Dinny went off into the house leaving the two boys apparently paralysed. They dropped the assegais, stared at each other, and then lay down and howled in the misery of their disappointment.

But this did not last many seconds; for Coffee sprang up and kicked Chicory, who also rose to his feet, and in obedience to a word from his brother they took their assegais and hid them in a tree which formed their armoury—for out of its branches Chicory took the two kiris or clubs; and then the boys ran round to the front, and stood making signs.

The brothers had such a keen love of anything in the way of sport that, expecting something new, they ran out and willingly followed the two young blacks out into the grassy plain about a mile from the house, when after posting their young masters behind a bush, Coffee and Chicory whispered to them to watch, and then began to advance cautiously through the grass, kiri in hand, their eyes glistening as they keenly peered from side to side.

"What are they going to do?" said Dick.

“I don’t know. Show us something. I wish we had brought our guns. Look out!”

There was a whirring of wings, and the two Zulu boys struck attitudes that would have been models for a sculptor; then as a large bird similar to a partridge rose up, Coffee sent his knobbed club whizzing through the air; another bird rose, and Chicory imitated his brother’s act; and the result was, that the cleverly thrown kiris hit the birds, which fell in amongst the long grass, from which they were retrieved by the lads with shouts of triumph—the birds proving to be the coranne, so called from the peculiarity of their cry.

“Well done, boys!” cried Jack. “They’ll be good eating.”

“Boss Dick, Boss Jack take Zulu boys, now?” said the kiri-throwers, eagerly.

“Why, of course. You know you are going,” replied Dick.

“Dinny say Zulu boys not going,” cried Chicory.

“Then Dinny knows nothing about it,” said Dick, angrily. “If he don’t mind he’ll be left behind himself.”

Coffee sent his kiri spinning up in the air, Chicory followed suit, each catching the weapon again with ease; and then they both dashed off across the plain as if mad, and to the astonishment of the brothers, who took the brace of birds and walked back towards the house, to continue the preparations for the start.

For there was so much to do, packing the great long tilted waggon with necessaries, in the shape of tea, sugar, coffee, and chocolate. Barrels of mealies or Indian corn, and wheaten flour, besides. Salt too, had to be taken, and a large store of ammunition; for in addition to boxes well filled with cartridges, they took a keg or two of powder and a quantity of lead. Then there were rolls of brass wire, and a quantity of showy beads—the latter commodities to take the place of money in exchanges with the natives—salt, powder, and lead answering the same purpose.

It was a delightful task to the boys, who thoroughly enjoyed the packing, and eagerly asked what every package contained, when they had no opportunity of opening it; while Mr Rogers looked on, smiling at the interest they took.

“Here y’are, young gentlemen,” said Dinny. “The masther seems to think that you’re going to do nothing but suck sweet-stuff all the time you’re out.”

“Why, what’s that, Dinny?” cried Dick, who had just brought out a heavy box.

“Sure, it’s sugar-shticks and candy,” said Dinny; and he went off to fetch something else.

“Why, so it is, Dick,” said Jack. “I say, father, are we to pack this sweet-stuff in the waggon? We don’t want it.”

“Indeed, but we do,” said his father, coming up. “Why a handful of sweet-stuff will make friends with a Boer, when everything else fails. Here, put this in the fore box. Perhaps, when I bring this out you’ll be glad to get at the sweet-stuff.”

“What is it, father?” said Dick.

Mr Rogers opened the little deal case and turned it out, to begin packing it again.

“Here’s a bottle of chloroform, and another of castor oil; two bottles of chlorodyne; a pound of Epsom salts; four large boxes of pills; a roll of sticking-plaster; a pot of zinc ointment; and a bottle of quinine and one of rhubarb and magnesia.”

Jack’s countenance was a study. For as his father carefully repacked the little box the lad’s face grew into a hideous grimace. He waited till Mr Rogers had finished his enumeration, and then clapping his handkerchief over his mouth, he uttered a loud “Ugh!” and ran and stood a few yards away.

“I shan’t go,” he cried.

“Why not?” said Mr Rogers, smiling.

“Why the waggon will smell, of nothing but physic. What’s the good of taking it, father?”

“The good? Well, my boy, there’s nothing like being prepared; and we are going far away from doctors, if we wanted their help. We may none of us be unwell, but it is quite likely that we may, either of us, get a touch of fever. Besides, we might meet with an accident; and for my part, as I have a little knowledge of medicine and surgery, I know nothing more painful than to find people sick and to be unable to give them the remedy that would make them well. We shall be sure to find some sick people amongst the natives, and they have a wonderful appreciation of the white man’s medicine.”

“Well, look here,” said Jack, “if you’ll shut the box up very tightly, I’ll consent to come.”

Mr Rogers smiled, and did shut the little box up very tightly, after which the preparations went on; and it was perfectly wonderful to see what that waggon would hold.

There was a moderate case of wines and spirits, also to act as medicines; several dozens of coloured blankets for presents; waterproof sheets. A cask of paraffin oil was swung under the floor, and by it a little cooking-stove, while beside these swung a long box containing spades and shovels, for digging the waggon-wheels out of holes, tools for repairs, wrenches, and jacks and axes, till it seemed as if there would be no end to the stores and material.

Then leather slings were nailed up under the tilt for the rifles and guns, so that they might always be ready to hand; for they were going into the land of wild beasts and savage men. Above all, their stores had to be so packed that their positions could be remembered, and they could be obtained when wanted, and yet leave space for blankets to be spread, and the travellers find room to sleep beneath the tilt upon the top.

The preparations went on; the black driver who was to manage the oxen busied himself along with the foreloper, whose duty it is to walk with the foremost oxen, in getting their great whips in trim, and in seeing the trek-tow and dissel-boom—as the great trace and pole of the waggon are called—were perfect; and they practised the team as well.

Many of the readers may not know that for an expedition like this, where the waggon party expect to be travelling for months, perhaps for a year, through a country where roads are almost unknown, and where the great heavily-laden, but wonderfully strongly-made waggon, has to be dragged over rocks, through swamps, and into and out of rivers, a team of fourteen, sixteen, or, as in this case, even twenty oxen, will be yoked to the great chain or rope called the trek-tow. For some of the poor animals are sure to succumb during the journey; or they may be killed for food, the loss being not so much felt when a superabundant number is taken.

With the leading pair of oxen walks the foreloper, whose duty it is to choose the best road, and to avoid stones and marshy places where the wheels would sink in; and the success of an expedition depends a good deal upon having a good foreloper.

In this case Mr Rogers had secured a trusty Kaffir, who had been frequently into the interior; but his appearance was against him, for he had lost one eye, from a thrust of a bullock’s horn. But Dinny said that the one left was as good as two, for when Dirk looked at you, it seemed to go right through your head and tickle the hair behind.

READY TO START.

Chapter Four.

Inspanning for the Trip.

The eventful morning at last! Bright, clear, and the dew lying thick upon the thirsty earth. All the arrangements had been made; the waggon stood ready. Peter the driver was upon the box in front of the waggon; the boys were mounted, and a couple of neighbours had ridden over to see them start; but to the infinite vexation of Dick and Jack, the young Zulus had not returned. They had started off on the day when they killed the coranne, and that was the last that had been seen of them.

"Now, Dinny, you may let the dogs loose," cried Dick, who looked brighter and better, his father thought, than he had been for days. Dinny at once obeyed; when, yelping and barking with delight, the four dogs—Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, and Rough'un—came bounding about, leaping up at their masters, and taking short dashes out into the plain and back.

"Where are those two boys?" said Mr Rogers suddenly. "I haven't seen them for days."

"Dinny offended them," said Jack petulantly, as he patted the arched neck of Stockings. "He told them they shouldn't go."

"Sure I only hinted to the black young gintlemen that it was just possible the masther might lave them behind, when they took

themselves off in the most ondacent way; and that's all I know, sor."

"Here they are!" cried Jack suddenly, "Hi-yi-yi-yi—Coff! Hi-yi-yi-yi—Chick!"

"Hi-yi-yi-yi-yi!" echoed back; and the two boys came running up, one on either side of a fierce-looking, very powerfully-built Zulu—a handful of assegais, and his long, narrow, oval shield in one hand, and for costume a fringe of skins round the waist, a sort of tippet of the same over his back and chest, and smaller fringes just beneath each knee. His back hair was secured in a knot behind, and depending from it were some feathers, one of which drooped right down his back.

He was a noble-looking specimen of humanity, and as he came up he gazed almost haughtily round at the party, seeming as if he had come as an enemy, and not as a friend.

"Been fetch de father," cried Coffee, pushing the great Zulu towards Mr Rogers. "Father going to boss. Kill and hunt lion."

Mr Rogers raised his eyebrows a little, for he had not reckoned upon this; but one more or less on such an expedition did not matter, for plenty of provisions would be killed; and a man like this was no little addition to their strength.

"Oh, very good," he said. "Dinny, run into the house, and fetch the bread and meat we left. I daresay the boys are hungry."

Coffee and Chicory understood that, and they began to grin and rub their "tum-tums," as they called a prominent part of their persons; but the next moment they had dragged their father to introduce him to Boss Dick and Boss Jack, smiling with delight on seeing their young masters shake hands with the Zulu warrior.

Dinny did not look at all pleasant as he brought out the bread and meat, which was rapidly shared by the Zulu and his boys, who evidently meant to eat the food as they went along; so after one more look round, and a glance at the two great water-casks

swung behind the waggon, Mr Rogers gave the word, Peter the driver stood up on the great chest strapped in front, cracking his whip with both hands, and Dirk the foreloper followed suit.

"Trek Hans! Trek Buffler! Trek Zulu! Trek boys! Trek!" shouted Peter, dancing about on the chest in his excitement.

"Trek, beauties! Trek, beauties! Trek! Trek! Trek!" yelled Dirk.

The oxen slowly tugged at their yokes, the great trek-tow tightened, the wheels of the fine new waggon creaked; and as Mr Rogers mounted the big bay, his sons took off and waved their caps, giving a loud cheer, for now they were really off to the wilds.

Chapter Five.

A Taste of Something to come.

There was but little in the way of incident for some time. The dogs seemed to be never weary of hunting here and there, thrusting their noses under every rock, their heads into every hole; but they found nothing till after the midday halt, when a furious barking from the setter Rough'un took the attention of all, and Mr Rogers and the boys cantered up to a thin cluster of trees, where, on what seemed to be at first a broken stump, but which on nearer inspection proved to be a tall ragged ant-hill, a vicious-looking snake was curled, swinging its head about threateningly, and darting out its forked tongue at the dog, which kept its distance, barking furiously.

"A poisonous fellow—cobra evidently. Now, Dick, bring it down."

"No; let Jack shoot, father," said Dick. "My head aches, and I'm tired. Well, yes, I will."

"That's right, my boy. I want you to master this weakness," said his father. "And besides, I want you to try how your horse stands fire. Nip him tightly with your knees."

Dick cocked his double-barrelled breechloader—fired—and the serpent hissed loudly and began to descend, but a shot from Jack's rifle laid it writhing on the ground, when, before it could be prevented, Rough'un seized it behind the head, worrying it furiously.

Fortunately the creature was mortally wounded, or it might have gone hard with one of the dogs, its poison being very violent; and the others coming up soon tore it to pieces.

SOMETHING TO BARK AT.

"Your horses behaved admirably," said Mr Rogers. "You must train them, my boys, so that they will stand where you leave them, and take no more notice of a shot fired over their heads than at a distance."

They halted directly after for a midday meal, the oxen finding a plentiful supply of fresh grass and water, and after a good rest they were once more on the way, the horses behind under the care of Dinny and the Zulu warrior.

Mr Rogers and his sons were close to the oxen, Coffee and Chicory were close behind, and they were inspecting the team, which was pulling steadily and well, when Mr Rogers said,—

“Well, boys, we may as well get our guns. We shall soon be in the hunting country now.”

“Hi! Yup-yup-yup!” shouted Coffee.

“Ho! Yup-yup-yup!” yelled Chicory. The dogs began to yelp and bark; and in the excitement, as they saw an animal like a great long-eared spotted cat dash out of a clump of trees and make for some rocky ground, all joined in the chase; Mr Rogers ran as hard as the rest, forcing his pith hunting-helmet down over his head. Coffee got well in front, waving his arms and shouting; but Chicory trod upon a thorn and began to limp. As for Jack, in his excitement he tripped over a stump, and fell sprawling; while Dick had hard work to save himself from a similar mishap. Last of all, whip in hand, came the foreloper, who had left the oxen in his excitement, flourishing and cracking his lash.

There was a sharp hunt for a few minutes, during which the followers toiled on over the rocky ground, seeing nothing after their first glimpse of the lynx—for such Mr Rogers declared it to be; then they met the dogs coming back, looking very stupid, and quite at fault.

Rough’un, however, went on with Coffee, and Jack followed, to find that the lynx had evidently gone down a deep rift, where it was impossible to follow it; so they went back to the waggons, both Jack and his father determining that in future they would never be without either gun or rifle in hand.

Every minute, almost, as they journeyed on, the boys realised the value of having the waggon made in the best manner, and of the strongest wood that could be obtained, for it bumped and swayed about, creaking dismally beneath its heavy load, and making the casks and pots slung beneath clatter together every now and then, as it went over some larger stone than usual. They saw too the value of a good foreloper; for if a careless man were at the head of the oxen, the waggon might at any moment be wrecked over some rugged rock or sunk to the floor in a black patch of bog.

The dogs seemed rather ashamed of themselves after the chase of the lynx, and went with lolling tongues to trot behind the waggon, Pompey now and then making an angry snatch at Caesar, while Crassus threw up his muzzle and uttered a dismal yelp. Rough'un, too, did not seem happy, but to have that lynx on his conscience; for he kept running out from beneath the waggon, and looking back as if bound to finish the chase by hunting the cat-like creature out; but he always altered his mind and went under the waggon once more, to walk close to the heels of the last pair of oxen, one of which looked back from time to time in a thoughtful meditative way, with its great soft eyes, as if in consideration whether it ought to kick out and send Rough'un flying.

This act made Rough'un run forward, and as the ox bent down snuffing at it, the dog leaped up at its muzzle, then at that of the next ox, and went on right along the whole span, saluting all in turn without getting trampled, and ending by retaking his place beneath the waggon front.

For Rough'un was a dog of a different breed to his fellows, and though he hunted with them he did not associate with them afterwards, but kept himself to himself.

There was not much to interest the boys after the first excitement of the start was over, for they had to travel over plain and mountain for some distance before they would reach ground that had not been well hunted over by the settlers; but every step took them nearer, and there were endless matters to canvass. For instance, there were the capabilities of their horses, which grew in favour every time they were mounted; the excellences of their guns, presented to them by their father for the expedition, light handy pieces, double-barrelled breechloaders, the right-hand barrel being that of an ordinary shot-gun, the left-hand being a rifle sighted up to three hundred yards.

It would be hard to say how many times these guns were loaded and unloaded, slung across their owners' backs and taken down again, while the eagerness with which they looked forward to some good opening for trying their skill was notable.

But beyond an occasional bird which fled with a loud cry at the approach of the waggon, and a little herd of springbok seen upon the edge of a low hill quite a mile away, there was little to break the monotony of the journey over the hot sandy waste, and every one was pretty weary when, just at sundown, they came in sight of a low house, the abode of a Boer who had settled there some years before, and who, with his large family, seemed to be perfectly content, and who smiled with satisfaction on being presented with some sweets in return for his civility in pointing out the places where the out-spanned oxen could find an abundance of grass and water.

Here the first experience of sleeping in a waggon was gone through, and very comical it seemed to boys who were accustomed to the comforts of a well-regulated home.

Dick laughed, and said that it was like sleeping in the attic, while the servants slept in the kitchen, for the drivers and the three Zulus made themselves snug under the waggon, Dinny joining them very unwillingly, after a verbal encounter with Dick, who, however much he might be wanting in bodily strength, was pretty apt with his tongue.

“Sure, Masther Dick, sir, Dinny’s the last boy in the world to grumble; but I’m a good Christian, and the blacks are as haythen as can be.”

“Well, Dinny, and what of that?”

“Why, ye see, Masther Dick, I’m a white man, and they are all blacks; and,” he added with a grin, “I shouldn’t like to catch the complaint.”

“What complaint, Dinny?”

“Why, sure, sir, it would be very painful to you and Masther Jack there, and the masther himself, if you found poor Dinny get up some fine morning as black as a crow.”

“Get along with you,” cried Jack.

“Oh, be easy, Masther Jack, dear,” cried Dinny; “and how would you like to slape under a waggon wid five sacks of smoking and living coals like them Zulus and Kaffirs is?”

“I wouldn’t mind,” replied Jack. “We are on a hunting expedition, and we must take things in the rough.”

“Sure an’ it is rough indade,” grumbled Dinny. “I’m thinking I’d rather go sthraight home to my poor owld mother’s cabin, and slape there dacent like, wid nothing worse in it than the poor owld pig.”

Chapter Six.

A False Alarm.

Mr Rogers had felt a little hesitation in giving the fierce-looking Zulu permission to make one of the party, but as they journeyed on across the apparently interminable plains between the Vaal and the Great Crocodile rivers, he awoke more and more to the fact that he had secured a valuable ally. For the old warrior entered into the spirit of the expedition at once, helping with the oxen or to extricate the waggons in difficult places, showing himself quite at home in the management of horses, and being evidently an excellent guide, and above all a hunter of profound knowledge and experience.

As soon as he realised the intentions of Mr Rogers, he became most earnest in his endeavours to get the party well on their way farther and farther into the wilds, making the eyes of the boys dilate as he told them in fair English of the herds of antelope and other game he would soon show them in the plains; the giraffes, buffaloes, elephants, and, above all, the lions, whose haunts he knew, and to which he promised to take them.

Whenever the father began to talk in this strain his two sons grew excited, and started to perform hunting dances, in which the number of imaginary lions and buffaloes they slew was something enormous. Every now and then, too, the boys killed some

imaginary elephant, out of whose unwieldy head they made believe to hack the tusks, which they invariably brought and laid at their young masters' feet, grunting the while with the exertion.

Dick soon grew tired of it however.

"It's all very well," he said; "but if that is the way we are to load the waggons with ivory, we shall be a long time getting enough to pay the expenses of the journey."

Mr Rogers joined them one day as they were walking along in advance of the slow-moving waggon, and began to question the Zulu about the game in the wilds north of where they were; and in his broken English he gave so glowing an account that his hearers began to doubt its truth.

He said that when he had had to flee from his own people for his life, he had at first gone right away into the hunting country, and stayed there for a year, finding out, in his wanderings, places where hunting and shooting people had never been. Here, he declared, the wild creatures had taken refuge as in a sanctuary; and he declared that he should take the boss who had been so kind to his boys, and both the young bosses, to a wild place where they would find game in abundance, and where the forests held the great rhinoceros, plenty of elephants, and amongst whose open glades the tall giraffe browse the leafage of the high trees. There in the plains were herds of buffalo too numerous to count, quagga, zebra, gnu, eland, and bok of all kinds. There was a great river there, he said, full of fish, and with great crocodiles ready to seize upon the unwary. The hippopotamus was there too, big and massive, ready to upset boats or to attack all he could see.

Mr Rogers watched his sons attentively as the Zulu narrated his experience of the land, and he was delighted to see how much Dick was already leaving off his dull languid ways, and taking an interest in what was projected. One thing the father wished to arrive at, and that was whether Dick would be frightened through his weakness, and the hunting parties consequently do him more harm than good. But just then a question put by his son showed

him that he was as eager as his brother for an encounter with the wild creatures of the forest and plains.

“And do you say there are lions?” said Dick.

“Yes, plenty lion,” said the Zulu. “They come to camp at night, and try to get the ox and horse.”

“Oomph! oomph! oomph!” growled Coffee, in an admirable imitation of the lion’s roar.

“Keep big fire,” said the Zulu, “then no lion come.”

“Well, Dick,” said Mr Rogers, “how do you feel? Ready for the fray?”

“Yes, father, I am longing for the time when we shall get amongst the wild beasts. I want to try my gun; and I want to grow strong and manly, like Jack.”

“All in good time, my boy,” replied Mr Rogers, smiling. “We shall soon be leaving civilisation almost entirely behind, and then you shall make your first attempts at becoming a mighty hunter.”

Comparatively uninteresting as the journey was, they still had plenty to take their attention—grand views of distant mountains; wondrous sunsets; great flights of birds; but the absence of game was remarkable; and twice over, in spite of their being so well armed and provided, Mr Rogers was glad to purchase a freshly-killed springbok of a Boer, at one of the outlying farms that they passed.

On the seventh night out though, their fortune was better, for they had out-spanned, or loosened their oxen from the waggon, just by a clump of trees in a wide plain, and the Zulu went off the moment they stopped.

Both Peter and Dirk began to complain, for they expected help from their black companion; but upon this occasion they had their

work to do without aid, Coffee and Chicory having also gone off with their kiris in search of game.

Mr Rogers and his sons started off to see if they could provide anything palatable for supper; but though there was a swampy lagoon about a mile away, they did not catch sight of a single duck, and were returning tired and disappointed when they caught sight of the Zulu signalling to them to come.

“He has found something,” cried Jack eagerly; and they hastened over the rugged intervening space, to find that the father of Coffee and Chicory was evidently a keen hunter, and ready enough in knowing where to look for creatures that would do for food.

With almost unerring instinct he had found out this clump of trees, evidently one where guinea-fowl came to roost; and full of hope that they would now obtain a good addition to the larder, or, in plain English, a few birds to roast for supper, guns were supplied with cartridges, and the little party waited for the coming of the spotted birds.

The pleasurable anticipations of the boys, who had a lively recollection of the toothsome bird with a flavour half-way between roast fowl and pheasant, seemed likely to be damped, for they had been waiting quite half an hour without hearing or seeing anything, when suddenly the Zulu laid his hand upon Jack’s arm, and pointed in a direction opposite to the waggon.

“Well, what are you pointing at?” said Jack. “I can’t see anything. Yes, I can; there they are, father. Look out!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

Half-a-dozen rapid shots, and then, amidst the whizzing of wings and cries of the birds, some of which flew off, while others ran through the short grass at an astounding rate, Coffee, Chicory, and their father ran out beneath the trees; and the result of the firing was brought in—ten fine plump birds for their supper.

This was the first night that they had passed in the open, the previous halts having been made at some farm; so after the supper the blacks were set to gather in more wood, the fire was well made up, and the oxen secured, it being decided to begin at once upon the regular plan that they would have to adopt in the enemy's country, the enemy being formed of the various wild creatures against whom they were having their campaign.

Years back the spot where they were encamped had been famous for lions, but from what Mr Rogers had heard, none had been seen here now for a considerable time. Still he thought it better to take precautions, the party being divided into three watches, the first of which he took himself, with Chicory for a companion; Jack was to take the second, with the Zulu; and Dick, Coffee, and Dinny were to form the third.

The oxen and horses having been all secured, the fire was piled up, and those who were to rest gladly availed themselves of the opportunity, and in a very short time nothing was to be heard but the fluttering noise made by the burning fire, and the snorting sigh of one or the other of the horses.

In due time Jack was aroused, to sit up and stare at his father.

"What's matter?" he said sleepily.

"Nothing, only that it is your turn to watch," said his father.

"Why, I've only just lain down," replied Jack. "It can't be time yet."

But a good rub at his eyes seemed to bring a little thoughtfulness as well, and he climbed put of the waggon and descended to the ground.

"I don't think you will have anything to alarm you, my boy," said his father. "Wake me up though if there is the slightest sign of danger."

Jack promised, and, shivering and uncomfortable, he crept up to the fire, which the Zulu renewed; but though he roasted his face and knees, his back felt horribly cold, and he heartily wished himself at home, and in his snug bed. But the Zulu began to look round at the cattle, to satisfy himself that all were safe; and then seating himself with his assegai across his knees close to the fire, he began to tell the young Englishman about the dangers that would have surrounded them if they had encamped here a few years earlier; and, then he lapsed into such vivid accounts of his own hunting adventures and escapes, that the four hours' watch seemed to have passed like magic, and Jack was ready to finish the next; but recalling the last injunctions he had received from his father, he went to the waggon, roused up Dick, and from under it Dinny and Coffee, and soon after left them to finish the morning watch.

Jack felt as if it would be of no use to try and sleep again; but knowing that their next day's journey would be very fatiguing, he lay down in his brother's place, found the blankets very warm and cosy, and then, with the sound of Dinny yawning loudly, he fell fast asleep. He seemed hardly to have closed his eyes, when a shout aroused him, just as he heard his father seize his double rifle, and go to the front of the waggon.

Jack did likewise, with as much speed as his sleepy confusion would allow; and on reaching the opening he found that it was still dark, so that he could not have been long asleep, the fire was burning brilliantly, and every one was on the alert.

"Yes, I seemed to hear it myself in my sleep," said Mr Rogers, in answer to some words spoken by Dick. "Did it sound near?"

"Sure, sor, it was close by, and I thought the bastes had got one of the bullocks."

The Zulu was with them now, having sprung from his place beneath the waggon, asking eagerly what was wrong.

"They heard a lion prowling round," replied Mr Rogers.

“No, no,” said the Zulu. “No lion here.”

“But I heard it quite plainly,” said Dick, who felt angry at being doubted.

“Sure and I did too, so close to me shoulder that I could feel the baste’s breath blow over on to me chake.”

“No, no,” said the Zulu. “Look! see!”

He pointed towards the oxen and horses in turn.

“But it would be impossible to see it in this darkness,” said Mr Rogers.

“Yes, but the oxen,” said the Zulu. “They would not lie quiet if there was a lion.”

“Of course not,” said Mr Rogers, envying the savage his knowledge. “Then what caused the alarm?”

There was no reply; and after satisfying themselves that all was safe, and piling up the rest of the wood upon the fire—for the streaks of the coming dawn could be seen—the tired watchers returned to the waggon, and slept until roused for breakfast, when the secret of the alarm came out, Coffee having been afraid to confess at the time that he knew it was his brother imitating the lion’s cry in his sleep, his proximity to Dick and Dinny making it seem the more real. Feeling sure that he would be punished if he spoke, Coffee had remained silent, and so the matter ended, Dick laughing heartily at the false alarm, though Dinny would not believe that the cry emanated from the boy.

“Jist as if I was such a biby as to belave that story, Masther Jack,” he said. “I tell ye it was the lion himself attacking the bastes, and you’ll see he’ll be about the camp now every night, as regular as clockwork. It’s very good of the masther to try and put one at his aise about the wild bastes; but that there was a lion—I know it was; and if, Masther Jack, dear, I’m missing some night, ye may know that there’s a lion aiting of me; and I hope ye’ll take me

bones back and give me a dacent burying somewhere among Christians, and not lave them kicking about out here in a foreign land."

"But how can you be so stupid, Dinny? Father says it was Chicory, and you know how he imitates the wild beasts."

"Ah, do ye take me for a baby, Masther Jack?" said the man, reproachfully. "There, let it go. I'm your father's servant, and he must have his own way; but it's cruel work this coming out into such savage lands; and there's one man as will niver see home parts again."

When once Dinny had got an idea in his, head, to use his own words, "a shillelagh would not knock it out;" so he remained perfectly certain that the camp had been attacked by a lion; and he went about prophesying that the coming night would produce two.

Chapter Seven.

How the Boys found it was not Easy to Shoot.

The oxen were in-spanned and the horses saddled, on as glorious a morning as ever shone over the great African continent. The breakfast things had been stowed away, a glance given round to see that nothing had been left behind; the driver's and foreloper's whips cracked; and with loud shouts of, "Trek, boys, trek!" the great waggon slowly went on its course, every one forgetting the troubles of the disturbed night, in the glorious sunshine and dew-glittering herbage.

Coffee and Chicory ran and bounded and spun their kiris in the air, catching them again, and then running on beside the cantering horses of their young masters, while their father ran beside Mr Rogers' big bay. Above all, the dogs showed their delight by barking, yelping, and making insane charges here and there, Rough'un's great delight being to run his head into one or other of the holes made by the burrowing animals of the plains,

and then worrying and snapping at nothing until he was called away.

As the waggon lumbered on, father and sons wandered off to left or right, exploring, examining the trees and strange plants, and sometimes bringing down some bright-plumaged bird, which was carefully laid in a tin case carried for the purpose by the Zulu, ready to be skinned and dressed to keep as a specimen on their return.

That they were approaching the game country was now hourly becoming plainer, for from time to time little knots of bok could be seen upon the hills; but when Dick or Jack eagerly drew the attention of the Zulu to the fact, he laughed, and said it was nothing, bidding them to wait.

“We must have some venison for dinner to-day, boys,” said Mr Rogers, cantering up; “so one of you had better try your rifle. Who’s it to be?”

“Let it be Jack, father,” said Dick, quietly; “my hands are not steady yet.”

“Very good,” said Mr Rogers; while the Zulu listened attentively, trying to comprehend every word. “Now then, Jack, how shall you go to work? There is a little herd of half-a-dozen springbok there, on that hill, nearly a mile away.”

“Get close and shoot them,” replied Jack, stoutly.

“Say, if you can, my boy,” replied Mr Rogers, smiling. “Now look here, Jack, this is the way the Boers shoot springbok, and I don’t think you will find a better plan. Have a few cartridges handy, so that you can load quickly, and then gallop easily towards the herd, which will begin playing about, till they grow too alarmed to let you get nearer, and then they’ll bound off. This is your time: gallop up as close as you can, and when you see they are about to go, leap from your horse and fire—reload, and fire again. If you are very quick you may get three shots at the herd before they are out of range.”

“But suppose I miss, father?” said Jack.

“Don’t suppose anything of the kind, my boy,” said Mr Rogers, smiling; “but go and do it. Time enough to consider failure when you have failed.”

Jack nodded, opened the breech of his gun, placed half-a-dozen cartridges ready, leaped down to tighten the girths of his saddle, the cob standing perfectly still. Then mounting once more, he waved his hand, touched his horse’s sides with his heels, and away it went like the wind.

As he started, Chicory, who seemed to have adopted him as his leader, made a bound at the saddle, caught hold of the pommel, and ran by his side with marvellous speed.

The springbok seemed to pay not the slightest heed to their approach, and Jack was beginning to feel excited with the chase, and to calculate how far they should be able to get before having to dismount, when all at once there was a sudden check; he went flying over his horse’s head, his double barrel escaped from his hand, and he found himself lying on the hard sandy earth, confused and puzzled, with Chicory trying to pull him up; and Stockings standing close by, snorting and shivering with fear.

Jack got up, and limped to where his rifle lay, feeling stupid, and wondering how it was that he had been thrown; and he had but regained his piece, and was ruefully examining it, when his father and Dick came galloping up.

“Much hurt, my boy?” cried Mr Rogers, eagerly.

“Only my leg and arm a little,” said Jack, rubbing first one and then the other; “but I did think I could ride better than that, father.”

“Ride, my boy? Why, no one could have helped that. Don’t you know how it was?”

“I know Stockings threw me,” replied Jack.

“Threw you? Nonsense, boy! He set his fore feet in an ant-bear hole, and turned a complete somersault. We were afraid that he had rolled upon you.”

“Then a good rider couldn’t have helped it, father?”

“Helped it? No, my boy.”

“Oh, I feel better now,” said Jack, laughing; and, limping up to his horse, he patted its neck and remounted, though not without difficulty. “Where’s the bok, Chicory?”

Chicory pointed to where they were, nearly a mile away, and looking exceedingly small, but quite clear in the bright African atmosphere; and without a word he set off again.

“Ought he to go, father?” said Dick.

“Yes, my boy. He is not much hurt, and it will be a lesson to both him and his horse. I am glad to see that he has so much spirit.”

A short chuckle close by made Mr Rogers turn his head, and he saw that the Zulu understood his words, and was smiling approval.

“Brave boy! Make big hunter warrior, some day,” said the Zulu.

“Boss Dick big brave hunter too,” cried Coffee indignantly, as he went and laid a hand upon the neck of Dick’s horse. “Boss Dick go shoot bok?”

“Not now, Coffee,” replied Dick, smiling; and then the little group remained watching Jack, who was in full chase of the springbok, which, as he came nearer, began to skip and bound and gambol together, leaping over each other’s backs, but all the time watching the coming enemy.

It was an exciting time for Jack, and in it he forgot the pain in his shoulder and the stiffness of his leg. He had the rifle-barrel ready cocked, and his feet out of the stirrups, and at last, when he had galloped up to within a couple of hundred yards, he saw such

evident preparations for flight on the part of the little bok, that he leaped down, dropped upon one knee, and fired straight at the flying herd.

Before the smoke had risen he had another cartridge in the rifle, and fired again. Once more he threw open the breech and loaded—and fired, though by this time the bok were seven or eight hundred yards away. But in spite of the care in the aim taken, no bok fell struggling to the ground, and Jack rode back slowly to join his father, wondering whether the bore of his rifle was true, for he knew, he said to himself, that he had aimed straight.

When he hinted at the possibility of the rifle being in fault, his father smiled, and Dick gave him so comical a look that Jack said no more, but rode on silently by the side of the waggon, till, seeing his disappointment, his father joined him.

“Why, you foolish boy,” he exclaimed, “it was not likely that you would hit one of those flying bok. It is a matter of long practice; and even the Boers, who have studied such shooting for years, often miss.”

“But you see, father, I did make such a dreadful mess of it,” pleaded Jack. “I came off my horse; and then I shot over and over again, and missed. I can’t help feeling what a muddle I made.”

“Well, for my part,” said his father, “I am rather glad that you failed. If you had succeeded, my boy, without effort at the first trial, it would have made you careless. These failures will teach you the necessity for using care, and trying to perfect yourself as a marksman.”

“But there’ll be no bok for dinner,” said Jack ruefully.

“Never mind,” replied Mr Rogers. “I daresay the boys will bring in something.”

He was right, for Coffee and Chicory brought in six great plain partridges, which they had knocked down with their kiris, and

these were roasted at the midday meal, and eaten with the appetite found in the desert.

As the day wore on, and after the refreshed oxen were once more doing their duty, the effects of the last night's scare began to show itself, Peter, Dirk, and Dinny declaring that they had seen lions creeping after the waggon in the distance, ready to pounce upon the oxen as soon as it was dark.

Dirk reported this to Mr Rogers, who gave them all a good, talking to about their cowardice.

"Why, look at these Zulu boys," he cried; "they don't show any fear, while you grown men are almost as bad as children."

"Sure, sor, an' the Zulu boys don't know any better," said Dinny. "They're little better than the bastes themselves."

"Well, there are my own boys," exclaimed Mr Rogers. "They are not afraid. I wonder at you, Dinny, an Irishman, and to set such a bad example to these blacks."

"And is it afraid?" said Dinny. "Not a bit of it. I'm not a bit afraid at all; but I can't help thinking of what my poor mother's feelings would be if she came to know that her only son Dennis had been aiten up by wild bastes. I don't mind a bit, but I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world."

OUTSPANNED.

"Then oblige me, Dinny, by holding your tongue, for if I hear any more complaints I shall send you back."

"Sind me back!" ejaculated Dinny, as soon as his master had gone. "Sind me back across the big desert all alone by meself. Why, it would be worse than murther. It's meself wishes I hadn't come."

Whatever he may have wished, these sharp words had the effect of silencing Dinny for the time being; but when the Zulu had led them at last, just at sundown, into a dense patch of forest, where the overhanging trees made the gloom quite oppressive, Dinny's eyes showed white circles round them; and if it had not been for the fact that they found a Boer and his family encamped by the water they had been seeking, the Irishman would have probably turned, and at all risks have fled.

People are ready enough to make friends out in the desert, and the Boer gladly offered the use of the fire he had made, and a part of the springbok he had shot, on receiving a share of some of the good things brought by the newcomers. Then, with the great camp-kettle simmering over the fire, and with the boys patiently waiting for their share of the provisions, guns were cleaned and laid ready for use, the men the while busily attending to the oxen and horses, while the Zulu and his boys collected wood into a pile to keep up the fire.

"Sure an' it's a dreadful melancholy-looking place," said Dinny with a shudder. And then he listened attentively while the Boer expressed his belief that there were lions in the neighbourhood, though they were not often seen.

Chapter Eight.

How Nature was Stronger than Training.

Days and days of steady travel, and the slowly gained miles mounted up till they had journeyed far into the interior. Mr Rogers, yielding to the importunities of his boys, had several times over been ready to come to a halt; but the Zulu still pointed forward, and feeling that there must be much truth in his declarations regarding the game country on ahead, he was allowed to act as guide.

It was a long journey, but though they did not have much sport, it was not monotonous, for Mr Rogers was a good naturalist, and eager to collect everything curious in beetle, butterfly, and bird, so that all hands were pretty busy from dawn to dark. Coffee and Chicory, after they had been taught not to pull off the feathers, became very clever at skinning birds, some of which had been denizens of the woods, some of the lagoons and marshes they had passed, and which were shot at daybreak, or else after sunset, from amongst the great beds of reeds. Then if they were ducks, the bodies became occupants of the great pot; if they were not considered eatable they fell to the share of the dogs.

That great iron pot, which was always suspended from three poles over every fire that was made, became an institution. The idea was taken from a hint given by a hunting-party, one of the gentlemen forming it telling Mr Rogers that, upon returning weary and exhausted to camp, there was nothing so restorative us good rich soup. Consequently, whenever a buck was shot, great pieces of its flesh were placed in the pot, and allowed to stew till all their goodness was gone, when the blacks considered them a delicacy, the rich soup being the portion of the hunting-party.

Game was scarce, but they got a sufficiency of either small bok or birds to supply their wants; and, whether it was the constant change, the fresh air, the rich meat essence which Dick partook of with avidity, or whether it was a combination of the effect of all these, the change in the boy was magical. He could take a long ride now without feeling weary, and wanting in appetite; he was ready to buckle to and help when the waggon was stuck, literally putting his shoulder to the wheel with a will, and in place of hanging back, he was now the first to spy out game, and set off in chase, making Jack quite envious by coming back in triumph with a couple of springbok hanging from his saddle-bows, both having had to succumb to his rifle.

But this was not to be borne; and Jack at once took Chicory into his confidence.

“I must shoot a springbok, Chick,” he said. “Dick has shot two.”

“Boss Jack shoot springbok to-morrow,” said the boy, decisively; and soon after daybreak roused his young master, and pointed out across the plain towards the rising sun.

“Bok,” he said laconically; and while Jack was giving a finishing touch or two to his dress, the boy ran off, and began to saddle Stockings, having the little horse ready by the time Jack was prepared to mount.

The others were not awake, saving the Zulu and Dick, who had the morning watch; so Jack got off unquestioned, and rode away in the direction pointed out by Chicory, whose dark eyes made

out the presence of the little bok long before they could be seen by his young master, who began to think that he had been deceived, and expressed his doubts upon the point.

But Chicory smiled, and laid his hand upon Jack's arm, pointing to where some shadow shapes of animals could be seen through the faint mist hanging over a low clump of hillocks; and with a cry of joy the boy pressed his horse's sides, and went off at a swinging canter, without discomposing Chicory in the least, for the boy held on to a strap at the pummel of the saddle as before, and there being no ant-bear hole in the way, or, the horse having learned better through his fall, they rapidly neared the little herd, which began the antics peculiar to these animals, till the lad was getting close up, when they began to flee at a tremendous rate.

Quick as thought, Jack had sprung from his saddle, and sent a bullet after the herd; then another, and another; but all apparently without result. Then disappointed and vexed, Jack turned to Chicory as if it was his fault. But the boy had climbed an old ant-hill, and was watching the flying herd with his eyes shaded by his hand.

"One down—two down," he cried, sending joy through Jack's breast; for, on galloping after the herd, it was to find one bok lying dead, and another so badly wounded that it became an easy capture.

It was with no little importance then that Jack rode back with his two bok, ready to receive the congratulations of his father, for his manifest improvement in handling his rifle, and in hunting the bok according to the accepted plan.

At last their guide, after looking-on with something almost supercilious in his face at this, to him, puny style of hunting, and contentment with such small game as birds, springbok, and the like, announced that the next day they would be entering upon what he termed his hunting country.

The travellers had now reached a more rugged tract of land, scored with deep ravines, along which, at some time or another,

small rivers must have coursed, while now the narrow stony tracks were found convenient for waggon tracks, though often enough the way was cruelly difficult, and all had to set to and clear a passage for the wheels by bodily removing some of the worst of the stones.

There was no hesitation or hanging back at such times, for all had to set to, even Dinny playing a pretty good part, considering that he abhorred manual labour.

Quite a change seemed to have come over the General, as Dick aptly dubbed their Zulu guide; for though he gave way in everything connected with the management of the waggon, and was exceedingly respectful to Mr Rogers, no sooner did any hunting matter come to the front, or a question of the best direction to take, than he seemed to take the lead as if in spite of himself.

At first Mr Rogers felt annoyed, and ready to put the man down; but in a very short time he saw that the Zulu's sole thought was for the success of the expedition, and that his actions were the natural results of his former life; for, savage though he was, and servant to this expedition, he had been a prince in his own tribe, and a leader amongst the people.

The night was coming on fast, when one day, after a long and weary trek, the heavily-laden waggon was approaching a belt of elevated forest-land, where the General had assured Mr Rogers they would find water.

It had been a toilsome day, hot and dusty, and at their midday rest there had been hardly a mouthful of herbage for the tired oxen, while water there was none. The contents of the two casks swinging behind the waggon were jealously guarded for the travellers' use; but so miserable did the cattle seem that the two boys asked their father to tap one of them for the oxen and horses.

"It will be but a taste a-piece," he said; "but perhaps you are right, boys."

Then the tap being set running, every ox and horse had a refreshing taste, though it was hard work to get the pail away from each thirsty mouth.

Then all through that long parching afternoon they had toiled on, with the draught cattle growing more listless, the horses sluggish and restless; and a general feeling of weariness seemed to have seized upon all.

The result was shown in the silence with which they progressed. The driver and foreloper ceased to shout and crack their whips; the Zulus trudged slowly on behind the waggon; and out of compassion for their horses, Mr Rogers and his sons walked beside the weary beasts.

"You are sure we shall find water at sundown?" said Dick to the General.

"Nothing is sure out in the wilds, young master," said the Zulu gravely. "There should be water there. If there is not, we must trek on through the night, to the first river or spring."

"But will there be water there?"

"We shall be in the game country then, and I can soon find where the game goes to drink, and can lead you there."

This was satisfactory, and they trudged on and on, with the land gradually rising, making the pull more heavy for the oxen, whose tongues were lolling out, and whose efforts at last became so painful that Mr Rogers at once accepted his sons' proposal, which was that the horses should help.

A halt was called, and great stones were placed beneath the wheels to make sure that there should be no running backwards on the part of the waggon, and then the tethering ropes were fastened to the horses' saddles; the Zulus and the boys took their head; the word was given to start; the ropes that had been secured to different parts of the waggon tightened; and though the horses could not pull as if they were properly harnessed, the

impulse they gave relieved the weary oxen, and after half an hour's toilsome drag, the waggon was drawn to the top of the incline, and the travellers had the pleasure of seeing that a tolerably level way lay before them.

But there was no sign of water, and Mr Rogers looked serious as he swept the dimly seen country before him with his glass.

"Had we not better outspan here?" he said, "and let the oxen rest. We could start again at daybreak."

But the General shook his head.

"No, boss," he replied. "Let us go on. We may find water yet."

Mr Rogers gave way, and in a listless, weary fashion the heavy waggon was dragged on.

"Oh, I am so tired," cried Jack; "and I'd give anything to be able to walk right into a big pond and drink, and soak myself outside. My skin feels as if it was cracking."

"I'm very tired, too," said Dick; "but not so tired as I thought I should be. Why I must have walked twenty miles to-day. I wonder whether that means that I am growing stronger."

"You need not wonder," said Mr Rogers, who had heard his words. "You may be sure, my boy. But how dark it is growing! There are the stars."

"What's the matter with the bullocks?" cried Jack suddenly. "Why, father, they're gone mad with thirst."

"Water," cried the General, pointing ahead. "They smell the water."

The sensitiveness was caught up by the horses, which, like the oxen, quickened their pace, craning with outstretched muzzles, their fine instinct telling them that there was water on ahead, towards which they struggled to get.

Great care was needed now lest the water should prove to be merely a well or pool, into which the bullocks would rush, muddying the water, and perhaps trampling one another to death in their efforts to reach the refreshing liquid. But strive hard as they would, it proved to be impossible to keep the thirsty creatures back. The waggon had not proceeded so fast since they started; and the speed was growing greater, causing the great lumbering vehicle to rock and sway in a most alarming fashion. If they had encountered a rock, however small, there must have been a crash. But as it happened, they came on very level ground, sloping gently towards the north.

Klipmann, the foremost ox, a great black fellow with long horns, had proclaimed the find, and communicated the fact with a deep-mouthed bellow; and the next minute all was excitement and shouting, as the great waggon thundered and groaned along.

The first thing to be done was to detach the horses, which was no sooner done than they seemed to take fright, and went off at a gallop into the gloom ahead; then, amidst the yells and shoutings of Peter and Dirk, who danced about as if mad, efforts were made to check the oxen; but the poor beasts were frantic with thirst, and any serious attempt to stop them would have meant goring, trampling down, or being crushed by the wheels of the ponderous waggon.

The wild race lasted for a mile, during which every moment threatened to be the waggon's last. The oxen lowed and trotted on, the waggon creaked, and the loose articles rattled and banged together. Mr Rogers and his sons panted on at the sides, momentarily expecting to see it go over, and Coffee and Chicory, who had been very slow and silent for hours, whooped and yelled and added to the excitement.

"It's all over with our trip, Jack," panted Dick. "We shall have to pick up the pieces to-morrow and go back."

"Wait a bit, and let's see. Why, what's the General going to do?"

For all at once the Zulu had darted on ahead after snatching a kiri from Chicory's hand, seized the foremost bullock, old Klipmann, by the horn, and, at the risk of being impaled or trampled down, he beat the stubborn bullock over the head with the club, and treating the other, its yoke-fellow, the same, he forced them into taking a different course, almost at right angles to that which they were pursuing.

"Stop, stop!" roared Mr Rogers. "You will upset the waggon."

But he was too late. The course of the leading oxen being changed, the others swerved round, giving such a tug at the dissel-boom that the waggon's wreck seemed certain. The whole team taking, as it did, a different course, the waggon was dragged side-wise, and for a few seconds tottered on its two nearside, or left-hand, wheels.

It seemed as if it must go over crash—that nothing could save it; and Jack uttered a cry of dismay, and warning to his brother to get out of the way. Then, as if by a miracle, it fell back with a heavy thud on to the other wheels, and bumped and jolted on after the long team of oxen into the obscurity. And then, when ruin seemed to have come completely upon the expedition, *wish-wash*! *splish-splash*! the foaming of water—the crunching of wheels over stones and sand—a quick rush—and the waggon was standing, axletree deep, in a swiftly flowing river, down whose shelving bank it had been dragged, and in whose cool waters the oxen and horses were washing their legs, and drinking deeply with delight.

Chapter Nine.

An Awful Ford to Cross.

It was a wonderful relief, and following the example of the animals, every one waded into the cool stream above the oxen, and drank deeply of the delicious water.

“Oh, I say, father,” cried Jack, “I never thought water was so good before. This *is* a river.”

And really Jack had an idea that he had tumbled upon a stream whose waters were wine-like in their flavour; and but for a few words of warning he would have gone on drinking more deeply still.

“Thank goodness!” cried Mr Rogers, as soon as he could gain his breath. “But what an escape! The waggon nearly went over. Where is that scoundrel of a Zulu? Oh there you are,” he cried excitedly. “How dared you touch the oxen, sir! Your mad folly nearly spoiled our journey.”

The General looked back at Mr Rogers, drawing himself up in savage pride, and his eyes seemed to flash in the darkness; but he did not speak, only turned away with a dignified look of displeasure.

“I know why he did it, father,” cried Dick, excitedly. “Look, don’t you see? The ground slopes down here to the water. Up there it’s all rock, and the team would have gone over a precipice. See, it’s twenty feet deep.”

“Of course! To be sure!” cried Mr Rogers eagerly. “His keen sight showed him the danger. I beg your pardon, my man,” he cried, “I did not know the reason, and ought not to have acted and spoken so rashly.”

He held out his hand to the stern scowling Zulu, as he spoke; but for a moment the savage hot blood that had been roused by his leader’s injustice refused to be tamed down, and he remained with his arms folded; but glancing at Dick’s eager countenance, and recalling how it was due to him that the real truth of his actions was made known, the General let his better feelings prevail, and snatching Mr Rogers’ hand in his, he held it for a moment to his broad breast, and then let it fall.

“Why you saved the waggon,” said Mr Rogers, after walking to the edge of the sudden descent where the rock went down sheer to the water, which bubbled and foamed against its side.

“Yes; all gone over together,” said the General quietly. “Now all go across.”

“But is it wise—is it safe—to attempt to cross to-night?” said Mr Rogers.

“Will see,” replied the General; and going down into the water, he walked straight out past the heads of the oxen, literally disappearing into the darkness as he waded on.

“Isn’t he very brave to do that, father?” asked Jack, who had watched the Zulu go from where they stood by the hind part of the waggon, whose back wheels were on the dry sand.

“Coffee no ’fraid to go,” said that young gentleman.

“Chicory go too after father,” said his brother; and the two boys dashed into the rushing water past the oxen, and then disappeared.

“What madness!” said Mr Rogers. “Why the stream runs swiftly enough for them to be swept away.”

Both Jack and Dick gazed eagerly out over the swift river; but the black figures of the young Zulus seemed to disappear in the darkness, and for some few minutes there was an excited pang while they listened to the bubbling of the water against the fore wheels of the waggon, or the plashing made by the oxen as they lazily moved their legs, apparently enjoying the pleasant coolness of the water after their toilsome march.

“I ought not to have allowed them to go,” said Mr Rogers suddenly. “Here, Dinny, bring me the bay. I’ll mount, and try and ride over to their help.”

“Bring the what, sor?” said Dinny.

“The bay,” cried Mr Rogers. “Quick, man! quick!”

“An’ how’ll I be getting at him, sor?” said Dinny. “Sure he’s standing out there in the wather catching cowld, and I couldn’t reach him widout getting very wet.”

“Why you did wade in to drink,” cried Jack, indignantly.

And with a rush and a splash he ran into the water, to where he could dimly make out the form of the big bay; and catching it by the halter, he drew it after him, the rest of the thirst-quenched horses coming *plash*! *plash*! out of the water, and following the bay like so many sheep.

Mr Rogers was about to mount, when the General’s voice was heard hailing Peter and Dirk; and directly after their hearts were set at rest about Coffee and Chicory, who could be heard laughing in the darkness.

“All shallow water,” cried the General. “Trek, Peter; trek, Dirk. Good place all across.”

Mr Rogers hesitated as to the advisability of crossing in the darkness; but the oxen were already in, the waggon was also nearly in the river, and if allowed to stay for a few hours it would probably sink deeply in the sand. So, leaving his men to pursue their own course, he also waded in, while Dirk cracked his whip, Peter mounted on to the box and followed suit, and Klipmann, the black bullock, headed on into the stream. The shadowy-looking team could be dimly seen to straighten out; there was a heavy pull at the waggon, and another, and another, before its fore wheels were extricated from the sand in which they were sinking fast, showing the wisdom of at once proceeding; and then, *plash*! *plash*! and with the water rushing against them, the party began to cross.

“My! how strong the current is,” cried Jack.

“Take hold of the waggon, my boy,” said Mr Rogers.

But as the water did not come up to his waist, Jack did not mind. And so the heavy load was dragged slowly through the stream.

“I say, Jack,” said Dick, suddenly, just as they started, “there are crocodiles in these rivers, ain’t there?”

“Oh, murther!” ejaculated Dinny, who had gone into the water very unwillingly, and had wanted to ride, but Mr Rogers had refused to have the waggon loaded any more, preferring himself to walk.

Then there was a rush and a splash, that passed unnoticed in the bustle of crossing; and at the end of ten minutes, by the General’s guidance the team was led to a gentle slope, which they easily mounted, and dragged the dripping waggon forth on to a level grassy plain.

The horses had followed, to stand about snorting and stamping, fresh and bright with their bathe; and it was now determined, dark as it was, to trek on for a couple of miles to a rich grassy spot that the General said was ahead, and would be a good place for outspanning and camp, when a dismal yell was heard from the farther shore.

“What’s that?” exclaimed Mr Rogers.

But no one answered.

“Some one must be in the river,” cried Dick, excitedly. “Where’s Coffee?”

“Here Coffee,” cried the Zulu boy, who had quite accepted his name.

“Then who is it?” said Jack, looking round in the darkness. “Here’s Chicory.”

“Why, it’s Dinny,” cried Dick. “Ahoy! Dinny!”

“Ahoy! Help now, Masther Dick, sor,” came from some distance off.

“The poor fellow is being swept down the river,” exclaimed Mr Rogers, leaping on the bay to ford or swim down to the drowning man. “Dinny! Shout, man! Where are you?” he cried.

“Sure, I’m here. How’ll I get over at all?” came back.

“What! Are you ashore?” cried Mr Rogers.

“Yis, sor.”

“Then wade across, man. It isn’t deep.”

“Sure, sor, and I daren’t.”

“Dare not!” cried Jack. “Why we did.”

“Yis, sor; but a great baste of a thing laid howlt o’ me, and I had to go back.”

“Are there any crocodiles here?” said Mr Rogers, to the Zulu.

“No, boss; no crocodile. All in Limpopo river.”

“I thought so. Here, Dinny.”

“Yis, sor.”

“Come across directly, man! There’s nothing to be afraid of!”

“Sure, sor, I’m not afraid a bit!” yelled Dinny.

“Then come over.”

“If I did, sor, the crockydiles would be aiting me, and thin what would you do?”

“Let me fetch him, father,” cried Jack. “I’ll wade over.”

“No, let me,” said Dick. “I’m not afraid.”

“I don’t think a second wetting will do either of you any good,” replied their father. “Here, Dick, take the bay and go across, and

make the stupid fellow hold on by your stirrup-leather. Take care to go straight."

"Help. What'll I do now? Are ye going to lave me?" cried Dinny, in piteous tones.

"He really deserves to be left," said Mr Rogers. "We shall have to cure him of this cowardice. Go on, Dick."

Dick leaped into the saddle, touched the willing bay's sides, and the horse began to ford the rapid stream, hesitating just a trifle as they reached the middle, where the current pressed most hardly against his flanks; but keeping steadily on till he was safe across.

"Ah, Masther Dick, dear!" whined Dinny. "An' it's you, thin?"

"Yes, it's me, my brave Irish boy!" said Dick.

"An' ye didn't bring another of the horses for me, sor?"

"No, Dinny, I didn't," replied Dick, smiling at the other's cowardice. "My father said you were to hold on by the stirrup-leather."

"What, and walk acrost?"

"To be sure."

"Saints alive! I daren't do it, Masther Dick, dear. Sure the bottom of the say—I mane the river—there's paved wid crockydiles; an' every step I took I could feel them heaving up under me."

"What, as you were going across, Dinny?"

"Yis, sor. Not as I minded as long as they kep' quiet; but whin one hungry baste laid howlt toight o' me trousers, and scratched me leg wid his ugly teeth, I felt that it was time to be off back, and I jist escaped."

"Hoi, there, Dick! Look sharp!"

“Coming!” roared Dick. “Now then, Dinny. There are no crocodivils here.”

“Hark at him now!” cried Dinny. “Why the river swarms wid ’em. Did they ate the black boys?”

“No, of course not. What nonsense! Come, catch hold, and let’s go.”

“Masther Dick, dear, I’ve a mother at home in the owld country, and if anything was to happen to me, she’d never forgive the masther.”

“Catch hold, Dinny. I tell you there’s nothing to fear.”

“Sure, Masther Dick, dear, an’ I’m not afraid—not the laste bit in the worrld; but I couldn’t go across there to-night. Wouldn’t ye fetch one of the horses, Masther Dick?”

“No,” cried Dick impatiently. “I couldn’t do that. Here, I’ll get down and wade, and you can ride.”

“Thank ye, Masther Dick, dear. Sure, it’s an honourable gintleman ye’ll make, if ye don’t let the crockydivils get ye before your time. That’s betther,” he said, mounting. “Howlt on very tight to the horse’s mane, Masther Dick; and if ye feel one of the bastes feeling and poking ye about wid his nose before getting a good grip, jist you call out, and I’ll put on the speed to drag ye away.”

“I wouldn’t let my feet dabble in the water, Dinny,” said Dick, wickedly. “The crocodiles snap at hands or feet held over in their track.”

“What’ll I do, then?” cried Dinny, in alarm.

“I’d put my feet in my pockets, if I were you,” said Dick.

“Sure, an’ it’s a boy ye are for a joke, Masther Dick,” cried Dinny grimly. “I’ll howlt me legs up very high. Ah! what are ye shouting about? We’re coming.”

“Make haste there, Dick. Is anything wrong?”

“No, father!” shouted back Dick. “There, get along with you. Give him his head, Dinny, and he’ll go straight across.”

“I’d better make him canter, hadn’t I, Masther Dick, dear?”

“Canter? Nonsense! Why, the poor thing has enough to do to keep his feet walking.”

“Then it isn’t safe at all crossing the river, Masther Dick, dear. And ah, I daren’t go like this, wid me riding the good honest baste and you walking. What’ll the masther say?”

“That you are a terrible coward, Dinny,” replied Dick.

“Be aisy, Masther Dick. It isn’t being a coward, it’s thinking av my poor mother, and taking care of meself for the poor owld sowl’s sake. Whisht, Masther Dick, dear, jump up behind and hold on by me, and the baste’ll carry us both over.”

“It’s rather hard on the horse, Dinny, but I don’t want to get wet, so here goes. Hold tight.”

Dick took a leap, “fly the garter” fashion, and came down astride the bay, but startling it so that it began to rear and plunge.

“Aisy, Masther Dick, dear, or I’ll be off. Be quiet, ye baste. What’s the matter wid ye? Quiet, now!”

“Is anything the matter there?” came from out of the darkness across the river.

“No-o-o-o!” roared Dick, drumming the bay’s ribs with his heels. “Trek! go on, old fellow.”

“Oh, take care, Masther Dick, dear, whatever ye do,” whined Dinny.

“Oh, I’ll take care,” cried Dick, assuming the lead, and leaning forward so as to get the reins. “There, I’ll guide; you hold him tightly with your knees. Go on, bay.”

On went the bay steadily enough; and there was no disposition to waver now, even in the sharpest parts of the stream, for the extra weight upon his back made him firmer. But just as they reached the middle of the river a mischievous idea entered Dick’s head, and suddenly with one foot he made a splash, while with the other he pressed Dinny’s leg against the horse’s side.

“Murther! Help!” yelled Dinny. “He’s got me at last!” and throwing himself in the opposite direction, Dick only managed to save himself by nipping the horse. As for Dinny, he went head over heels into the running stream, being borne back, however, by the current against Dick’s legs, when, grasping him by the collar, Dick urged the horse on, Dinny supplementing his young master’s hold by a most tenacious grasp, till the horse’s hoofs began to plash in the shallower water, and poor Dinny was dragged out on to dry land.

“Why, what have you been about, Dinny?” cried Mr Rogers angrily. “Why didn’t you come over with us?”

“Sure, sor, I’m kilt entoirely,” groaned Dinny, rubbing his leg. “Twice over the savage bastes have had hold of me, and if I hadn’t thrown meself on the other side of the bay horse, it’s this minute they’d be aiting of me up.”

“Jump up and come along,” cried Mr Rogers. “It’s my belief, Dinny, that you are a great coward. Here, make haste, the waggon’s nearly a mile ahead.”

“Oh, masther, it was a narrow escape,” groaned Dinny, who did not attempt to move.

“It will be a narrower one, Dinny, if you stay there, for the Zulu tells me that this is a favourite spot for lions to lie in wait for the bok and zebra that come down to drink.”

“Oh, masther dear, why didn’t ye say so before?” cried Dinny, jumping up with alacrity. “Sure I’d be the first to tell a man if he was in danger.”

Mr Rogers did not reply, but went on with his son, Dinny keeping very close behind, till they overtook the waggon just as it reached the camping-place, where a fire was soon burning, and the oxen contentedly cropping the ample supply of excellent grass.

Chapter Ten.

A Glorious Sight for a Hunter.

Watch was set in the usual manner, so that the fire might be well kept up, and after a good dry, and a hearty meal—such a one as is made by those who have toiled all day in the open air—those who were at liberty so to do soon sought their blankets, and slept soundly and well.

To Dick and Jack it seemed that they had only just lain down, when there was a firm hand laid upon them, and they were awakened by the General, who signed to them in the grey morning light to get up.

They crept out of the waggon yawning, but that sign of slothfulness was soon chased away, and their father joining them, they took their guns and followed the General, leaving Dinny with orders to wake the boys, and to get breakfast ready by their return.

“Where are we going, father?” asked Dick.

“I can’t say, my boy. The Zulu awakened me as he did you. He has something to show us, I suppose.”

Their way lay up a woodland slope, where the trees had a park-like aspect, and beneath their shade it was still quite dim, but here and there they caught glimpses of the sky, which was flecked with little clouds of orange, and vermilion, and gold, while the light was rapidly growing in the east.

The General went on rapidly, as if quite sure of his route, and it seemed that the point at which he was aiming was the highest part of a ridge.

And so it proved, for when he had reached the summit the Zulu chief walked cautiously along for a short distance, and then stopped and stooped down, motioning to those who followed to do the same.

They obeyed him implicitly, preparing their pieces at the same time. Then creeping up to him cautiously, they found that they were on a ridge looking down into a widespread valley, flooded with the light of the approaching sunrise.

It was a glorious scene, and worth all the trouble and patience of their long journey to see. It was almost breathlessly that they gazed at the broad, grassy valley, with its clumps of trees, patches of wood, and portions dotted with masses of rock, whose tops were bathed in the amber morning tints, while in the direction where the little party gazed the shadows of tree and stone lay dark.

Facing them in the east the clouds were now gorgeous in their hues, one layer forming a grand arch of light, towards which darted upwards the rays of the coming sun.

But it was not only the sunrise that was glorious in the extreme, nor the beauty of the broad valley that held the spectators' eyes, but the occupants of the scene below.

The General had undertaken to guide them to what he called the great game country, and he had kept his word. For below them—to right, to left, and away towards the golden burst of glory where the sun was about to rise—the land was literally alive with game.

Down to their right spread broad marshy lagoon after lagoon, in which swam, dived or waded, countless ducks and crane. Here, writhing its snaky neck and curious head and beak, was the flamingo, all white and rose; there, soft grey cranes and others, with a lovely crest, as if in imitation of the rays of the rising sun.

But it was not the wondrous variety of birds alone that took their attention, but the large game, feeding, gambolling, and careering in countless herds. To the left were zebras, and beyond some quaggas, or wild asses, the peculiar bray or cry of *quay-gah*! *quay-gah*! reaching to their ears. On their right there were gnus, or wildebeestes, as the Boers called them, brindled and the blue—curiously fierce-looking little animals, partaking both of the character of the deer and the buffalo. Some grazed placidly in the morning light, others were engaged in tilting at each other with their horns, while their companions looked on as if waiting for their turn; and every now and then the sound of the striking horns ascended to the woody ridge with a loud crash.

But while these creatures contended together, groups of antelopes were dotted here and there, while others careered at lightning speed over the plain.

The sight was wonderful, and the boys felt as if they would never tire of watching the evolutions of the graceful creatures, which, with their skins glistening and horns looking golden in the morning light, seemed to be going through a series of military evolutions with the greatest precision.

"Koodoo, pronghorn," said Mr Rogers, looking at the herd through his glass. "There are a dozen elands too," he continued, and then passed the glass to his sons.

"Oh, this is grand," cried Dick enthusiastically. "I could stay here for ever watching the graceful creatures."

"So could I," said Jack, after breakfast. "I say, father, hadn't we better shoot something—the stock's getting low?"

"Yes," said Mr Rogers quietly; and he longed to go himself and bring down a good fat buck for the replenishment of the larder; but the expedition was for his sons, and he gave place to them. "Now, Dick," he continued, "here is a chance for you to try and stalk one of those hartebeestes; or better still, a nice fat antelope. Pick out one with a fine head of horns, and then aim straight at the shoulder, and be sure and bring him down."

“At what distance would you fire, father?” asked Dick.

“I’d get as close as I could, my boy, but I’d fire at six or seven hundred yards sooner than miss a shot. Now go!”

Dick crept off, his father giving him a warning word about not losing his way, but to impress the land-marks upon his memory, so as to recognise them if he went astray.

As he disappeared down the valley side of the slope, Mr Rogers turned to Jack.

“Well, my boy, would you like a try as well?”

Jack’s whole face, as well as his tongue, said yes, and Mr Rogers smilingly pointed down into the valley, in the other direction.

“Be careful,” he said, “and don’t fire either in our direction or in your brother’s, for a rifle-bullet flies far.”

“All right, father,” cried Jack; and he too crept down the slope from bush to bush, to try and stalk one of the bok that came nearest to the clump of wood upon his right.

“So this is the game country?” said Mr Rogers.

“Yes, boss, this the game country, but only bit outside. I show you big game yet—elephant, lion, all the big animal, only wait.”

Mr Rogers was ready to set self aside in every way in his efforts to educate his sons, so he took out his glass and sat down beside the General, watching the various herds of wild animals in the glowing morning light, and thinking how grateful he ought to be to see his boys daily growing in health, strength, and confidence. For it was unmistakable; Dick, the weak, half-consumptive lad, was altering rapidly, and the anxious father’s heart rejoiced as the dark shadow that had hovered over his life seemed to be chased away.

As he sat there thinking, and bringing his glass to bear upon the various herds, while waiting for them to take the alarm, he could

not help feeling that Dick and Jack were managing uncommonly well to have gone on so long without alarming the game. It showed thoughtfulness, and ability in the hunter's craft; not, of course, that he wished them to turn out hunters, but he believed in thoroughness, and he used to say that if it was only play it ought to be done well.

He was letting the glass rest upon his knees, with his eyes running dreamily over the landscape, when he became aware of the fact that the Zulu was watching him intently, as he sat there with a couple of assegais across his knees.

"I am sorry I was so unjust to him that night," thought Mr Rogers. "It is a pity one's nature prompts one to be so hasty and suspicious."

Then as his eyes met those of the General, as it was fast becoming the custom to call him, he cudgelled his brains for some way of showing his confidence in him, who was so completely their guide.

Suddenly a soft smile beamed on the Zulu's fierce countenance, and he said gently,—

"Boss thinking about his boys. Fine brave boys; make big warriors and chiefs. Zulu wish his boys here too. Love his boys same as white man."

Mr Rogers stretched out his hand to the Zulu on the instant, for he had touched the chord of their common humanity, and white man and black man, as their hands joined in one firm grip, felt that henceforth they would be friends who could trust each other to the end.

"Look!" cried the Zulu suddenly; and he pointed down into the plain, where the alarm had been taken in the direction taken by Dick.

Antelopes that had been feeding, suddenly threw up their heads and galloped together, seeming to form square—first with horns outward to resist attack; then they reformed, and charged in one

direction; halted, turned, and charged in another—as if alarmed, and yet not knowing which way to go.

The wildebeestes that had been fighting stopped, erected their tails, pawed the ground, and then, throwing their heads side-wise, began to plough it with one horn, but only to snort loudly and tear over the plain; while the zebras and quaggas began to toss their heads and tear about over the grassy wild, kicking and plunging, and scattering the light antelopes like the wind.

Suddenly there was a puff of smoke from a clump of bushes quite a mile away, and after an interval the faint crack of a rifle.

“That’s Dick’s gun, General,” said Mr Rogers, bringing his glass to bear upon a little herd of antelopes that must have formed the object of the shot; but not one of them fell, neither did either of them seem to be lamed.

“Miss, this time,” said the General, quietly.

Just then there was another report, evidently a shot at long range; but the only effect was to drive the game more in the direction of Jack’s position, or what they supposed to be Jack’s position.

Seeing then that Dick was not likely to get another shot, Mr Rogers turned his glass in the other direction; but there was nothing to see but the great herds of game, going more and more towards a clump of timber—trees that were of glorious shades of green in the morning sun. But, all at once, as a troop of gnus were trotting by, three or four large birds came rushing out, as if alarmed, and the gnus took fright, tearing off at a frantic pace. But before they had gone far there was a white puff of smoke from the end of the clump.

“Well done!” cried Mr Rogers. “He did well to get so far. But it is another miss. We must not depend on the boys yet for our dinners.”

The whole plain seemed to be now alive, and herd after herd of game, that had been hidden from them by the trees, had rushed

into sight, and was now careering onward, and away from the dangerous proximity to the woods.

“Poor boys! All their trouble for nothing,” said Mr Rogers, closing his glass. “I wish I had gone too. I might have hit something.”

“Boss Jack has hit,” said the Zulu, pointing.

And just then, to the father’s great delight, he saw one of the curious antelopes suddenly stop short, the rest of the herd galloping onwards. Then it shook its head, turned, and seemed giddily to gallop back, and finally fell dead.

Almost at the same moment they saw Jack run out from the clump of timber, gun in one hand, cap in the other, which latter he began to wave frantically above his head.

“Well done, boy! A good shot,” cried Mr Rogers. “Ah, there’s Dick.”

For Dick now showed himself, a mile away to the left, and began to cross the open to join his brother, whose success he must have seen.

“The next thing is to get the game home,” said Mr Rogers. “We’ll go back, and send Peter and Dirk.”

He placed a shrill little whistle to his lips as he spoke, and as its piercing note rang out, the boys, who had been making for the fallen gnu, turned to come back.

“I’ll go!” said the General. “Mustn’t leave the game. Look, boss.”

He pointed, and in the distance there was a great vulture winging its way towards the fallen gnu; and, directly after, another and another came into sight, sailing heavily along upon its great dusky flapping wings.

It seemed as if telegrams had been sent in all directions to the vultures’ roosting-places that there had been a wildebeeste slain; and it was so evident that, if steps were not taken to save it, the vultures would destroy the provisions of three or four days, that

Mr Rogers rapidly blew twice upon his whistle—a preconcerted signal, which made the boys turn and go towards the game.

As it was, a vulture would have reached the fallen animal before them but for a shot from Dick's gun, which had the effect of more than scaring it as it was just alighting, for, evidently hit by the bullet, it flew a few yards, and then fell, flapping its wings for a few moments, and then lay still.

This checked the others for the time, and Mr Rogers waited till the General should set the boys at liberty, when he meant to return to the waggon.

Chapter Eleven.

Getting into Work.

It seemed some little time before the Zulu appeared at the bottom of the slope; but when he emerged from the woods, Mr Rogers could see that he had been cutting some sticks, and on bringing the glass to bear he made out that the Zulu was straightening them as he ran.

The boys saw him coming, and waved their caps; while, when the General joined them, they all bent over the game together, the Zulu apparently being very busy, and making Mr Rogers impatient, for he wanted to get back to breakfast, which must then be ready.

"There is some reason for it, I dare say," said Mr Rogers, gazing through his glass. "Why, they are all coming away! The animal will be devoured. It is bad, perhaps."

He waited patiently, seeing the little party return; and as they left the fallen gnu he saw the vultures come dropping down from the trees where they had been waiting, till there were over twenty by the game, round which they formed a circle, but they did not approach near.

“Strange!” thought Mr Rogers. “I wonder they don’t tear it up. Perhaps it is still alive. If so they ought to have put the poor thing out of its misery. I shall speak sharply to Master Dick about such wanton cruelty.”

Mr Rogers wanted his breakfast, and, as he had had no excitement, he felt cross, so that it seemed as if the boys would get what Jack irreverently called a wigging. But the sight of his sons’ bright excited faces as they ran up the slope, drove away his ill-humour.

“Why, Dick!” he cried, “how you run!”

“Do I, father?” cried the boy, excitedly, “But did you see what a splendid shot Jack made? I missed twice, but he brought his gnu down. It’s a fine young bull.”

“Then you are not jealous of his luck?” said his father.

“Oh, no,” laughed Dick. “It will be my turn next time.”

“Bravo, Jack!” cried Mr Rogers. “But why did you leave the game to the vultures? Dick says it was a fine young bull.”

“Oh, it’s all right, father,” cried Jack, who now ran panting up to his father’s side. “The General has cut it up partly, and has brought the liver and kidneys, and a bit or two to cook for breakfast.”

“But it was a pity to leave so much good meat, my boys; I don’t like wanton waste.”

“But it’s all right, father,” said Dick. “The General has stuck some pieces of wood round and over it, and he says the vultures won’t go near it for hours, for fear it should be a trap.”

Mr Rogers opened his glass, and looked at the fallen game; and sure enough there sat the vultures in a ring, contemplating the sticks that the General had stuck up round it, but not one went near.

The Zulu smiled as he came up, bearing the delicate portions of the gnu skewered upon one of his assegais; and hurrying back to the camp, Peter and Dirk were given full directions which way to go, and sent off with three oxen, and a roughly-contrived carriage for the game formed by cutting down a great forked branch of a tree to attach to the oxen yokes. But when ready for starting they suggested the advisability of their having guns, which being supplied, they started off, looking rather longingly though at the preparations for breakfast.

A good fire was burning, and coffee was made, Dinny looking very disconsolate and miserable; but the sight of the fresh meat seemed to do him good, for a broad grin expanded his features, and getting the frying-pan out of the box that held the cooking apparatus, he soon had some savoury morsels peppered, salted, and sputtering on the fire.

"I feel as if I could eat heaps," said Jack. "Oh, I say, father, isn't breakfast lovely out here under these green trees?"

Mr Rogers agreed that it was; and certainly nothing could have been more glorious than the scene—the deep blue sky, the glorious sunshine, the bright green of the trees, the chirping, whistling, and screaming of the birds that thronged the brambles, and above all the delicious fragrance of the endless flowering shrubs and flowers.

It was all enjoyable in the extreme, the abundant breakfast adding wonderfully to the pleasure. Even the oxen and horses seemed perfectly happy, for there was an abundance of short, sweet grass for them to crop, while the little Zulu party seemed happiness itself.

A goodly portion of the gnu had been given over to the General, and despising the frying-pan, he and his boys toasted the pieces of flesh in the fire, and ate them hissing hot; the effect upon Coffee being that he did nothing but grin, and rub the portion of his brown person which he called his "tum-tum," while his brother gave vent to his excitement and pleasure by either lying down and rolling himself over and over, or else by trying to stand upon

his head, a very agreeable style of acrobatic trick, but decidedly inconvenient at breakfast-time.

As, however, just when he had arrived at a perfect equilibrium, and had his heels straight up in the air, he overbalanced himself, and instead of coming back upon his toes he went over upon his heels, which he planted in the hot ashes, Chicory thought the performance had gone sufficiently far, and went on eating his breakfast in what Dinny called a more Chrishtanly-like way.

Just as they had finished, and Jack had thoroughly recovered from a violent fit of coughing and choking, consequent upon seeing Chicory stick his heels in the fire, while he—Jack—was drinking his coffee, there came from behind them the crack of a whip, and Peter's harsh voice shouting, "Trek, boys! trek!" accompanied by the rustling, scrambling noise made by a great branch being drawn over the ground; and directly after the slow, patient oxen came into sight, chewing away at their cuds, as they used their tails to whisk away the flies, and dragged Jack's game into camp.

It proved to be a splendid young gnu, and the boys examined with curiosity its shaggy head, with its curiously bent down and curved up horns, and general likeness to horse, antelope, and bull, as if it were related to each. Then the Zulu, with Dirk's help, rapidly skinned it; portions were set apart for immediate use, some of the best cut up in strips by the General, and hung in the sun upon the bushes to form what is called "biltong," that is, strips of sun-dried meat, the sun baking it up so quickly that it has not time to go bad, and the rest was left for another fate.

For it was most amusing to watch the dogs, sitting all four in a row, hungrily looking at the skinning and cutting up of the gnu. They watched with the most intense interest the whole process, following the General to and fro, and thankfully swallowing any scraps he threw them.

When the skin was taken off and spread upon the waggon-tilt to dry, Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus followed, as if to see that it was properly spread out, Rough'un being the only one who protested against the plan, for his look plainly said that he wanted

to lick that skin on the fleshy side; and as he was not allowed to go through that process, he kept uttering low, dissatisfied whines, to Jack's great delight; while, when he saw Peter climb up, and Dirk hand him the skin, he uttered a yell of disappointment at what he evidently considered to be the waste of so much good fat.

This yell from Rough'un had its effects upon Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus, which triumvirate did not behave at all after the manner of the stolid, patient, noble Romans whose names they bore; but one and all set up their noses as high as they could, getting mouth and throat in a direct line, and sang a trio—but so dolefully out of tune, that Dinny picked up the General's assegai, and gave each one a tap on the head with the handle.

At least he meant to do so. He certainly hit Pompey and Caesar sounding cracks; but Crassus made a movement, and received his blow on the neck—so unfair a place, he evidently supposed, that it roused his temper, and he snapped at and seized the handle of the assegai in his teeth.

Now Dinny's hands were greasy with helping to skin the gnu, and the handle of the assegai kept slipping through his fingers, and threatening to cut them against the blade; to avoid which, as the dog tugged fiercely and dragged at the handle, Dinny kept taking a fresh hold hand over hand, as if he were hauling rope, abusing the dog at the same time.

"Ah, get out, ye dirty baste," he cried. "Let go, will ye?"

Worry! *worry*! *worry*! growled Crassus, holding on with all his might of jaw, which was really great; and seeing the successful effort made by their companion, Pompey and Caesar began to bark and bay at Dinny on either side of Crassus.

"Oh, here's a game, Dick!" cried Jack, holding his sides and laughing.

"Call 'em off, will ye?" cried Dinny. "Ah, get out, ye dirty, yelping bastes."

“Serve you right, for hitting them in that cruel way,” said Dick cynically; while seeing the fun, as they seemed to consider it, Coffee and Chicory each seized his kiri, and began to perform a war-dance round Dinny and the dogs.

“Lave go, will ye?” cried Dinny to Crassus. “Sure it’s a taste of the other end I’ll be giving ye dreckerly.”

Crassus evidently believed him, for he held on all the tighter. Dinny dragged hard, but the dog’s jaws had closed upon the wood like a steel trap, and though Dinny dragged him here and there, he did not leave go; and so sure as the man began to obtain a little advantage, Pompey and Caesar made such a desperate attack upon his rear that he immediately lost ground, and the French and English tug-of-war continued, the dogs barking, Dinny abusing them, and the boys, black as well as white, shouting with delight.

This was very good fun for the latter, but anything but pleasant for Dinny. In fact, so bad was his case, and so threatening the aspect of the dogs, that any one who would have insured the legs of Dinny’s trousers from being torn by the dogs, would have been guilty of a very insane act, especially as Rough’un, after sitting up on end encouraging Crassus to hold on to the assegai staff by a loud bark now and then, suddenly took it into his head to join in the fray.

For Dinny had not been particularly friendly to him since they started. Upon one occasion Dinny had tickled him—so he called it—with Peter’s whip, the tickling consisting in giving the dog so severe a flick that it seemed like taking out a piece of the flesh; while no later than that morning Rough’un felt that he had been misused in the matter of the skin that he wanted to lick.

So, unable to bear matters any longer, Rough’un, who had momentarily grown more excited, suddenly made an open-mouthed onslaught upon the assegai stock.

“Carl him off, Masther Dick, Masther Jack. Oh, murther, what’ll I do. Ah! get out—get—”

Dinny said no more, but loosed his hold of the assegai, and fled, leaping on to the front box of the waggon, and then climbing in beneath the tilt, while the dogs chased him, barking and baying him furiously.

This did not last, however, for the denuding of the gnu's bones was pretty well ended, and one of the oxen dragged the remains into the forest, when the dogs were called up, and Dinny was forgotten.

Chapter Twelve.

A Buffalo Run.

The General owned that there would be good hunting here, but he wanted to get the party well into the interior, where, taking up a central position, they could make excursions in any direction according to the way in which the game lay. If they stayed where they were, all they would do would be to drive the game away, and it would grow more scarce.

The boys were as eager as the General, and looking upon the interior as a land of mystery and romance, they readily backed up the proposal to go farther.

"Well, my boys, I hardly know what to say," replied Mr Rogers. "I want for you both to grow sturdy, manly, and inured to danger; but I scarcely like running the risk of taking you where we may be constantly encountering the lion, the rhinoceros, and the elephant and hippopotamus."

"But we shall be very careful," said Jack.

"And we are growing better marksmen every day, father," exclaimed Dick.

"Yes, my boys, I dare say you are," replied Mr Rogers. "But please remember that taking aim at and shooting a timid deer is one thing; standing face to face with some fierce beast ready to take your life, quite another."

“Oh, yes, father, I know that,” said Jack; “and I dare say I should be horribly frightened, but I wouldn’t run away.”

“It might be wiser to do so than to provoke the animal by firing,” said Mr Rogers, smiling. “What do you say, Dick?”

“I say I should like to go on, father, in spite of the risk,” replied Dick. “Now we have come so far, I want to see more of the wonderful Central African land, and I should like to shoot a lion, an elephant, a rhinoceros, and a hippopotamus.”

“And a giraffe, a crocodile, and a boa-constrictor,” said Jack.

“And would you both like to make that bag in one day, young gentlemen?” said Mr Rogers, smiling.

“Ah, now you are laughing at us, father,” said Dick. “Of course we don’t expect to shoot all those creatures, but we should like to try.”

“Yes,” added Jack; “that’s it, Dick. We should like to try.”

“Then you shall try,” said Mr Rogers, quietly; “on condition, mind, that you will neither of you do anything rash, but follow out either my advice or that of the General, whom I feel disposed to trust more and more.”

The country seemed to grow more romantic and grand the farther they trekked on away from civilisation, and they travelled now very few hundred yards without seeing something new and full of interest. Game was so abundant that there was no difficulty in keeping up a plentiful supply. Dinny even threatened to lose the frying-pan, for, as he said, he was frying steak morning, noon, and night; but as he loved dearly to fry one particularly juicy piece always for a gentleman named Dinny, there was not much fear of his keeping his word.

But somehow Dinny did not add to the harmony of the expedition. He proved himself again and again to be an arrant coward; and, coward-like, he tried to tyrannise over the weaker.

He was afraid of the General; and when, upon one or two occasions, he had quarrelled with Peter or Dirk, those gentlemen had displayed so much pugnacity that Dinny had prudently resolved to quarrel with them no more. He, however, made up for this by pouring out his virulence upon Coffee and Chicory, the dogs having been too much for him; and the Zulu boys bore it all in silence, but evidently meant to remember Dinny's behaviour when the time came.

One day, soon after entering the game country, the General, who was on ahead alternately scanning the horizon and the ground, while the oxen slowly lumbered on behind, suddenly stopped, and began to examine some footprints in a marshy piece of ground which he had just told Dick to avoid.

"What is it?" said Dick, coming up.

"Look," said the General, pointing to the great footprints.

"Why, it looks as if a great cat had been here," said Dick.

"Yes; great cat; lion!" said the Zulu.

And when Mr Rogers and Jack had cantered up, and seen the spoor, as such footprints were generally termed in South Africa, they knew that there would be real danger now hovering about their nightly camps.

That afternoon, as they were passing through a woody portion of the country, Chicory, who was well ahead, assegai in hand, eagerly looking out for game, was heard suddenly to yell out as if in agony; and as all ran to his help, he was found to be rolling on the ground, shrieking the native word for "Snake! snake!"

Mr Rogers was the first to reach him, being mounted, and as he drew rein by the prostrate boy, he saw a long thin snake gliding away.

He was just in time, and leaning forward he took rapid aim with his fowling-piece; and as the smoke rose, a long thin ash-coloured snake was seen writhing, mortally wounded, upon the ground.

The General caught the boy by the shoulder, and proceeded to divide his jet-black hair, examining his scalp carefully, but without finding any trace of a wound; though Chicory declared that he was killed, and that the snake had seized him by the head as he was going under a tree.

He had felt it, and when he threw himself forward to avoid it, the creature writhed and twisted about his neck, till in his horror he rolled over and over, partly crushing the reptile, which was making its escape when Mr Rogers's gun put an end to its power of doing mischief.

The General having satisfied himself that his boy was not hurt, sent him forward with a cuff on the ear, before giving his master a grateful look for destroying a virulently poisonous serpent—one, he assured them, whose regular practice was to hang suspended by the tail from some low branch, and in this position to strike at any living creature that passed beneath.

"He would have been dead now," said the General, "if the snake's teeth had gone through his hair."

It was with no little satisfaction then, after this adventure, that the hunting-party passed through the woody region they were then in, and came into the open, for during the last few hours everybody's eyes had been diligently directed at the overhanging branches of the trees, Dinny being so observant that he two or three times tripped over prostrate boughs, and went down upon his nose.

As they passed out into the open they were in a rough plain, covered as far as they could see with coarse herbage; and hardly had the waggon emerged before Mr Rogers, who was using his glass, drew the General's attention to some dark objects upon a slope some distance ahead.

The Zulu glanced at the dark shapes for a few moments, and then cried eagerly,—

“Buffalo!”

“Come along, Dick,” shouted Jack.

“Stop, stop!” exclaimed their father. “What are you going to do?”

“Shoot a buffalo, father.”

“If we can,” added Dick.

“But you must be careful. These buffalo are pretty fierce creatures, and dangerous at times.”

“Yes, very dangerous,” assented the Zulu. “Boss Jack—Boss Dick shoot one, and the boys drive one to him.”

The General undertaking to do his best to keep his sons out of danger, Mr Rogers consented to let them go; and soon afterwards, having made his plans, the General started off with his boys, pointing out a course for Jack and Dick to take upon their cobs, advising them both to fire at the same buffalo as it galloped past them, and then to keep hidden till the herd had gone by.

This they undertook to do; and away they cantered in one direction, the General and his boys going in another, so as to get ahead of the herd, and then show themselves, and that, they expected, would drive them towards the young hunters.

All turned out exactly as anticipated. Dick and Jack sat like statues, in a low hollow, with rifles cocked, and cartridges handy for a second shot, waiting for the coming of the herd; and at last, just as they had given up all expectation of seeing them, there was a low rushing sound in the distance as of wind—then a roar, ever increasing, until it was like thunder; and then down came the vast herd of heavy animals, surprising the boys at first by their number, so that they had nearly all gone by before either of the brothers thought of firing.

Dick was the first to rouse himself from his surprise.

“Now then, Jack,” he cried, as their horses stood motionless, watching the passing drove; “fire at that slate-coloured bull. Now then, take aim together—fire!”

The two rifle-shots pealed almost like one, and, to the delight of the boys, they saw the young bull they had shot stagger forward on to its knees, and then roll over upon its side.

“Hurray! First buffalo!” cried Jack; and together the boys cantered out into the plain, when, to their intense astonishment, instead of the herd continuing its flight, about a dozen bulls stopped short, stared at them, pawed the ground, stuck up their tails, wheeled round, uttered a fierce roar, and charged.

Even if the boys had felt disposed to meet their enemies with a couple more shots, the cobs would not have stood still. They were well-broken, and trusty; day by day they had seemed to gain confidence in their riders, and they would stand perfectly still if their bridles were drawn over their heads and allowed to trail upon the ground; while if Jack or Dick liked to make a rifle-rest of their backs, they were perfectly content, and stood as rigidly as if carved out of stone.

But there are bounds even to the confidence of a horse. When the little steeds saw the fierce looks of the buffaloes, heard their angry bellowings, and found that with waving tails, menacing horns, and hoofs that seemed to thunder as they tore up the ground, the bulls were coming nearer and nearer, and evidently with the full intent of burying those sharp horns in their chests, Shoes and Stockings snorted violently, turned round so suddenly that had not Jack and Dick been excellent horsemen they would have been thrown, and tore away over the plain.

This was a reverse of circumstances; and naturally feeling startled at such a change, their boys gave their horses their heads, sat well down, and kept giving furtive glances behind to see if the bulls were gaining upon them.

At the end of a few moments, though, it occurred to Dick that their speed was greater than that of the buffaloes, and consequently that they would have no difficulty, failing accidents, in galloping away. Then he began to think of his rifle and ammunition, but felt that under the circumstances fire-arms were useless.

Last of all he began to feel very much ashamed of his position, in being hunted like this.

The same feeling seemed to have affected Jack, who looked at his brother as they raced on side by side.

The consequence was that all of a sudden they both sat up more erect in their saddles, and took a pull at the reins, bringing Shoes and Stockings by degrees into a hand gallop, instead of the *ventre à terre* progress they were making before.

“This won’t do,” cried Dick, as he glanced back to find that

GOOD WORK FOR THE COBS.

the bulls were still lumbering on behind them, snorting savagely, and shaking their horn-armed fronts.

“No,” said Jack, “we are taking them right down on the waggon, and they’ll charge straight over the camp.”

“Yes; let’s turn off to the left,” shouted Dick; and as if by one impulse they wheeled round to the left, and galloped on over the plain. “I tell you what,” he cried, as a happy idea struck him; “let’s wheel round to the right now.”

“What for?” shouted back his brother.

“So as to ride round and round the waggon in a circle. Father will bring one or two of them down.”

For answer Jack wheeled to the right, and if the manoeuvre had been kept up it would have answered; but, as it happened, Mr Rogers had gone away from the waggon in search of some beautifully plumaged birds which had settled in the trees above the camp, and then gone on to a grove a mile or so away.

The General and his boys were of course far away out on the plain, where they had been driving the buffalo, and therefore Dinny was the principal man in camp.

He was busy with the frying-pan frizzling himself a venison steak, when, hearing the thunder of hoofs, he dropped the pan in the wood ashes, and stood staring with horror.

"What'll I do now?" he cried.

Then a bright idea seized him, and pulling his knife from his belt, he dashed at the place where his enemies the dogs were tied up by stout thongs to the waggon-wheels, and divided them one by one.

"There, ye bastes," he cried, "be off and get tossed." And as the dogs rushed off, delighted with their freedom, Dinny chose what he thought was the safest place in the camp, namely, the space between the four wheels beneath the waggon, and there lay down and wished himself back safely in his mother's cabin.

The dogs had been for some moments past tearing at their thongs to get away, so that no sooner were they freed than, barking and baying fiercely, they raced down after the buffaloes, and Dinny never did a better act in his life. Certainly it was prompted by cowardice; but it had its good fruits, for it was the saving of poor Dick's life.

The boys had galloped on as had been suggested, gradually inclining to the right, so that they drew the little herd of bulls into following them in a circle; and in this way they had nearly gone round the waggon at about a couple of hundred yards' distance, wondering why their father did not shoot, when, all at once, just

as the baying of the dogs reached their ears, Dick turned a piteous look at his brother.

"I'm—I'm not strong, yet, Jack," he faltered. "Ride on fast."

To Jack's horror he saw his brother's eyes close, and that he fell forward upon his horse's neck; the next moment he had glided as it were out of his saddle, and fallen—his horse, from its good training, stopping short by his side.

The buffaloes were only about thirty yards behind, and as Jack reined in, and turned to help his brother, the bulls lowered, their horns, and in another moment or two they would have been trampled and gored, perhaps killed; but just as the great shaggy animals were upon them, the dogs made their attack, Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus each seizing a bull by the lip, while Rough'un kept up a furious barking as he tore at the various animals' heels.

The effect was magical upon the buffaloes, which tossed their heads furiously in the air, and dislodging their assailants, turned and rushed off, with the dogs now biting their heels or leaping viciously at their flanks, all attack now being changed to flight.

Chapter Thirteen.

"Oomph! Oomph! Oomph!"

"Are you much hurt, Dick?" cried Jack anxiously, as he knelt on one knee by his brother.

"No, I think not," panted Dick, opening his eyes. "I came over all giddy, and couldn't sit my horse. Did he throw me?"

"No: you fell."

"But where are the buffaloes?"

"Yonder they go," replied Jack. "Don't you hear the dogs? There, lean on me, and let's walk in to the camp."

“Oh, no,” cried Dick. “I’m better now.”

“No, no; don’t try to mount.”

“Yes, I shall,” was the reply. “I was overdone from being weak; but I’m better now, and I’m going with you to bring in the buffalo we shot.”

“Oh no, Dick, don’t try,” cried his brother anxiously.

But Dick would not be persuaded, and, mounting his horse, he rode with his brother up to the waggon, gave the necessary instructions to Peter and Dirk, and in a few moments those sable gentlemen were leading a small ox-team over the plain to where the General and his boys were busily dressing the fallen bull; and by the time Mr Rogers reached the waggon, the choicest parts of the buffalo were there, the remainder having been left for the vultures and wild creatures of the plain.

They trekked on for some miles that evening, and soon after sundown halted by the side of a wood, whose edges were composed of dense thorns, and here, at the General’s suggestion, all set to work, after the waggon had been drawn up in a suitable position, to cut down the bushes so as to make a square patch, with the dense thorns on three sides and the waggon on the fourth, the lower part of the waggon being fortified with the bushes that were cut down.

The object was to form a sound enclosure, which was duly strengthened, so as to protect the horses and bullocks from the wild beasts that haunted the neighbourhood.

It was very hard work, and Dinny grumbled terribly, till Dick said quietly to his brother, in Dinny’s hearing,—

“I wonder that Dinny don’t work harder. The General says this part swarms with lions; and they’ll be down upon us before we’ve done if he don’t make haste.”

Dinny seemed to be turned for the moment into stone, at the bare mention of the word lion; but directly after he was toiling away with feverish haste, and in quite a state of excitement, bullying Coffee and Chicory for not bringing in more dead wood for the fire.

By dint of all working hard, however, a satisfactory place was contrived, into which, after a good long feed, and a hearty drink of fresh water from a bubbling stream, the bullocks and horses were shut, the horses having a division of their own, where they would be safe from the horns of their friends as well as the teeth and claws of their enemies. Then the blazing fire in front of the waggon was utilised for cooking purposes, and buffalo steaks and thick rich soup from Dinny's big pot soon restored the losses felt by the little party in their arduous evening toil.

The waggon was on the very edge of the forest, and a couple of trees stood out on either side, spreading their branches over it as shelter, while the ruddy fire that was being steadily fed to get it into a good glow, with a bright blaze free from the blinding smoke emitted by burning wood, seemed to turn the waggon and trees into gold.

"I'll take the first watch, my boys," said Mr Rogers, who, after their hearty supper, had read his sons a lecture about the necessity for care in hunting, "for," said he, "but for the dogs your lives would certainly have been sacrificed."

"Yes, father, we'll be more careful; but how is it the dogs have not come back?"

"They overtook and pulled down one of the buffaloes," said Mr Rogers. "They will glut themselves, and, after a long sleep, take up our trail and follow us. I dare say they'll be here to-morrow."

The boys, who were fagged out, gladly crept into the waggon, the last thing they saw being Dinny putting some pieces of buffalo flesh and half a pail of water in the big pot, so as to let it stew by the fire all night. Then they drew up the canvas curtains of their tent-bed as they called it, leaving Mr Rogers and Peter to keep up

the fire, and to call them in four hours' time, the boys having begged that they might keep one of the watches together.

They were fast asleep directly, and in five minutes' time—so Jack declared—Mr Rogers aroused them to relieve guard.

"Come, boys," he said, "be quick. Do you know how long you've been asleep?"

"Five minutes," said Jack, sleepily.

"Nearly five hours, sir."

"Then they weren't good measure," grumbled Jack.

"There's plenty of wood, Dick," said Mr Rogers, "and I'd keep up a good blazing fire. I have not heard a sound; but if you are alarmed, a piece of blazing wood thrown in the direction is better than firing at random; but keep your rifles ready."

These words drove drowsy sleep from the boys' eyelids, and clambering out of the waggon, the fresh cold night air finished the task.

They saw Mr Rogers climb into the waggon and their black followers crawl under it; then taking the rifles, they saw to there being a ball cartridge in each, and big slugs in the shot barrel; and after throwing on a few sticks to make the fire blaze, they walked slowly up and down.

"How dark and strange the forest looks, Jack," said Dick, "I say, I'm not ashamed to say that it does make one feel timid."

"It makes two feel timid," said Jack, sturdily. "Look at the dark shadows the fire throws. Why it almost looks as if there were all sorts of horrible creatures watching us. If I didn't feel that father had been sitting here watching, and wasn't afraid I'd give it up."

"Perhaps he did feel afraid," said Dick.

“Not he,” said Jack sturdily. “If he had felt afraid, he wouldn’t have let us watch here.”

“Oh, yes, he would,” said Dick thoughtfully. “Father wants us to grow up manly and strong, and ready to laugh at what would alarm some lads. Hark! what’s that?”

He caught his brother’s arm, for just then, apparently from beneath their feet, they heard a peculiar noise.

“Oomph! oomph! oomph!” a peculiar, vibrating, shuddering, deep-toned cry, which seemed to make the air, and the very earth beneath them, vibrate.

There was no mistaking it. Over and over again they had heard Coffee and Chicory imitate the cry; but how pitiful their attempts seemed now, as compared to the noise heard there in the solemnity of the silent night! “Oomph! oomph! oomph!” a peculiar grunting, shuddering roar, which made a perfect commotion in the strongly-made cattle-kraal or enclosure, the oxen running about in their dread, and the horses whinnying and stamping upon the hard ground.

“How close is it!” whispered Jack, stretching out his hand to get hold of his rifle.

“I don’t know. It seems sometimes just by this patch of bushes, and sometimes ever so far away. Hark! there’s another.”

“Yes, and another.”

“Or is it all made by one lion?” said Dick.

“I don’t know,” replied Jack, in an awe-stricken whisper.

“Shall we call father, and tell him there are lions about?”

“No,” said Dick sturdily. “He’d laugh at us for cowards. We’ve got to get used to lions, Jack; and it’s our own doing—we wanted to come.”

“Yes, but I didn’t know they’d come so close,” replied Jack. “Hark at that!”

There was a deep-toned quivering roar, apparently from the other side of the fire, and Dick felt his heart beat rapidly as he threw a handful of small twigs upon the fire to make it blaze up.

“Let’s go and talk to the horses,” he said. “Yes; that’s right,” for Jack had also added an armful of dry wood to the fire, which now blazed up merrily.

They went to the thorny hedge which protected the horses, and on making their way through to where they were haltered to a pole, carried on the waggon for the purpose, they found the poor creatures trembling, and with dripping flanks, while when they spoke to them they rubbed their noses against their masters’ hands, and whinnied with pleasure, as if comforted by the presence of the boys.

“What’s that, Dick?” cried Jack excitedly, for there was a crashing noise as if something had leaped at the hedge.

The answer came in the panic of the bullocks and the dread of the horses; and, without hesitating, Jack lowered his piece in the direction of the sound, to fire both barrels rapidly one after the other.

There was a savage roar for response, and a rush as of some creature bounding through the bushes. Then all was silent.

“I wonder whether I hit him,” said Jack, proceeding to throw out the empty cartridges and reload.

“Is anything wrong? Shall I come?” shouted Mr Rogers, from within the waggon.

“No, father,” replied Dick steadily. “You needn’t come. We only fired at a lion.”

But as they reached the fire again, a tall dark figure crawled to their side, and nodded to them gravely.

“Plenty of lion here. I stop and help you.”

It was the General, and glad enough the boys were of his company.

Almost before they had seated themselves they heard a sound on the right, and taking a burning stick from the fire the General whirled it in the direction, the wood blazing up in its rapid passage through the air, and falling amongst some dry grass, which it set on fire, to burn for a few moments vividly, and then leave the surroundings apparently darker than before.

As the burning brand fell in the forest there was an angry snarl, and these snarls were repeated again and again as from time to time the General skilfully threw the wood wherever his quick ears told him there was one of the lurking beasts.

“Is there more than one lion?” said Dick, in a whisper at last.

“Three, four, five,” said the General. “They want horse or bullock. Hist! look! see!”

He pointed to a dark patch at the edge of the forest, where, upon Dick directing his eyes, he could see nothing; but the next moment there was the reflection of the fire to be seen in a couple of glaring orbs.

“Can you shoot him?” said the General.

“Let me by, Dick. My hand’s steady,” whispered Jack. “I think I could hit him.”

“Go on,” was the whispered reply.

To fire it was necessary for Jack to take aim across the Zulu, who leaned forward so that the barrel of Jack’s rifle rested upon his shoulders; while, kneeling, the boy took along and careful aim, right between the two glowing orbs, and drew trigger. There was

the sharp report, a furious roar, a rush, the falling of some heavy body, and the scattering of the fire-brands. Then all was silent; and they rapidly collected the scattered embers to make the fire blaze up again; for the lions, far from being scared by the noise of the shot, renewed their awe-inspiring "Oomph! oomph!" on all sides; and the fear of the cattle was such that they threatened to break out of the kraal.

Again Mr Rogers roused himself, and asked if there was any need for him to come. But Dick replied steadily that there was not—feeling as he did pretty confident, in spite of his dread, that they could keep the lions at bay.

The fire blazed up so brightly, that the boys glanced anxiously at the supply of wood, thinking of the hours they had yet to pass before daylight, and what would be the consequences if the fire went out.

One thing was very certain, and that was that a large fire would be necessary now every night. And though the boys felt a strange kind of tremor as they felt the risks they were incurring, there was so much romantic excitement in the life they were leading, that they would not have given it up on any consideration.

The lions roared and prowled about them during the remainder of the night, sometimes coming very close, sometimes retreating, for the fire was very bright. And then came the two boys, Coffee and Chicory, with Peter the driver, to relieve them, just as day was breaking, and the young travellers gladly went back into the waggon for a sleep.

Chapter Fourteen.

Tracked by an Enemy.

They did not have a long sleep, for Mr Rogers soon roused them to say that breakfast was ready; which meal being discussed, the oxen were in-spanned, and the horses mounted, so as to have a

good long trek towards the Limpopo, or Crocodile River, before the heat of the day.

Before leaving their camp the boys had a good look round with the General, in the expectation and hope of seeing the lion at which Jack had shot, lying dead. But though he felt certain that he had hit the monster, and though footprints were about in all directions, there was no dead lion, and they had to hope for better luck the next time.

“I don’t care,” said Jack discontentedly; “I’m as sure as can be that this gun don’t shoot straight.”

“Try again, Jack,” said his father, laughing.

And on they walked, over what was now a plain covered with great coarse, reedy grass, such as would afford plenty of cover for game.

This, however, was scarce, and beyond the boys knocking down three or four large birds of the partridge kind, there was very little done.

The General, for some reason which he did not explain, had taken his great Zulu shield from where it hung behind one of the waggon-wheels, and, armed with a couple of assegais, kept making expeditions to right and left—and quite as often hung back, watchfully keeping an eye to the rear.

It was a case of man's cunning against that of a beast;

AN AWKWARD POSITION.

and after being away some hours, he came up with the not very pleasant information that a huge lion, one of the ferocious maneless kind, was tracking the waggon, and would no doubt hang upon their trail until it had pounced upon one of the horses, and carried it off.

"Oh, that would be horrible," cried Jack. "I'd almost sooner that he would take me than my horse."

"Have you seen it, General?" said Dick; "or do you think it is following us, from its footprints?"

"I have seen it," said the General gravely. "I felt sure from some footmarks I had seen that some great beast was following us—one of those that scented the horses last night. Once or twice I thought the steps might be those of some lion that had passed this way; but, after watching, I found them so often that at last I lay down amongst the long grass, covered myself with my shield,

and waited. It was very, very long, and nothing came, and I thought again that I was mistaken; but I knew that if it was a lion, tracking down the horses and bullocks, he would come close between the wheel marks of the waggon, and there slay."

"And did you mean to kill him, General?" said Dick eagerly.

"One man cannot kill a lion with an assegai, Boss Dick," said the Zulu, "and live afterwards and hunt with his friends. It takes the little bullet from a gun to kill a lion well, for you can stand and shoot farther off than a lion can spring. No, I only wanted to know and be sure; and if I was sure I said, Boss Dick or Boss Jack will shoot him. So I waited till I thought he would not come, and then I was going to follow the waggon, when I heard something come steal—steal—steal along; and when at last I looked from under my shield, there he stood amongst the grass, close to me, watching the waggon. If I had stood up I could have speared him; but I was lying down, and if I had tried to get up he would have sprung upon me, the great thing; so I held the shield more over me, like an animal with a shell, and crept a little way on to meet him, and then made a jump at him, and he roared and dashed away."

"But why didn't he seize you?" said Jack.

"He did not see I was a man, and he did not understand what the long thing with black legs was that jumped at him; and a lion is big and strong, but he is a coward about what he does not understand."

"And have you frightened him right away?" asked Dick. "Fancy frightening away a lion!"

"No," said the Zulu; "only a little way. He is following the waggon now, crawling softly through the grass; and I am sure it is the one Boss Jack has shot last night, for there was a mark and blood upon his forehead. It is a great lion, with no mane; and he is savage and wild, and will follow the waggon always till he is killed. We must kill that lion soon."

“An’ is he following us up, Muster Gineral?” said Dinny, who had heard some of the last words.

The Zulu nodded; and Dinny looked from one to the other with such a look of hopeless dread in his countenance, that even Mr Rogers could not forbear to smile.

“Sure it’s the onsafest place I iver came noigh, sor; and it’s not meself that will stir away from the front of the waggon till that great baste is killed.”

The General’s account of his proceedings, and his conversation as a rule, was not in the plainest of English, so it is more convenient to give it in ordinary colloquial form; but he was very earnest, and tried hard to make himself understood.

When Mr Rogers consulted him as to the best means of getting rid of so unpleasant a follower, the Zulu said that the only way would be to ride on in front of the waggon, and then suddenly strike off to right or left, form a wide curve, and ride inward so as to strike the track of the waggon quite a mile behind.

By this means, the General said, they would probably get a shot at the monster as he was crawling furtively after the horses, and probably bring it down.

“It is a risk,” said Mr Rogers thoughtfully; “but it will be impossible for us to go on with an enemy like that always in our wake.”

“When do you think he will try to attack us, General?” said Dick.

“When the sun has gone down, Boss, and the horses and oxen are having their evening feed.”

“And he might take my beautiful Shoes,” said Dick.

“Or my lovely old Stockings,” cried Jack, quite unconscious of how absurd his words sounded.

“We shall have to follow out the Zulu’s plan, my boys,” said Mr Rogers; “and the sooner we try the better.”

The midday halt was called by a beautifully transparent pool of water, where some richly succulent grass awaited the cattle, and which for some hours they cropped, the heat being intense, and any object exposed to the full power of the sun soon becoming hot enough to burn the hand.

Hot as it was, Dinny, being assured that the lion was not likely to attack in open daylight, lit a roaring fire, and soon had the pot simmering with its rich thick meat gravy, a basin round of which, and a portion of a cake made and baked upon an iron plate brought for the purpose, formed their dinner.

Then there was a siesta, and at last, the most fiery hours being gone by, broad-brimmed straw hats were taken from the waggon—for it was still intensely hot—and the Zulu undertaking to lead the team on between two mountains through which the broad valley ran, the horses were saddled, rifles taken, and father and sons mounted to go on what might prove to be a very dangerous adventure.

The first thing done was to carefully take in the bearings of the country, and then, after a few words of advice from the General—whom Mr Rogers would have liked to have, only his presence was necessary with the waggon, he being the most trustworthy of their followers—they rode on at a brisk canter through the crisp long grass, and amongst the bushes, and always onward towards the head of the valley, where, towering up, stood the twin mountains, which were like the ends of a couple of ridges or chains.

Scrupulously following out the General's advice, they struck off to the left, and taking quite a two-mile circuit, they saw the waggon crawling along in the distance, while they cantered on, feeling wonderfully free and light in spite of the heat, till they were a long distance behind the waggon, when they halted and carefully swept the surface of the country.

"Nothing in sight," said Mr Rogers.

"I hope we shan't have our trip for nothing, father," replied Dick.

“Are you eager to meet with the lion, then?” said his father, smiling.

“I don’t know, father; but I should like to shoot him,” replied Dick quietly.

“Well, my boys, I hope we shall shoot the animal; and as we are now a couple of miles at least behind the waggon, if he is following it he should be before us now, so come along.”

Rifles were cocked, and every eye carefully scrutinised the dry drabby-yellow grass through which the lion would be stealing its way, and so much like the withered stems in colour that, unless moving, it was quite possible to miss seeing such a creature as they rode along.

The plan arranged was, that no sooner was the lion sighted than they were all to dismount, and fire as opportunity occurred, loading again as rapidly as possible for a second shot.

But though they followed steadily on in the waggon track, riding all three abreast, and scanning every clump and bush, they had approached the bend of the valley without seeing anything but a few bok, which offered tempting marks now that they did not want to shoot.

The waggon had evidently passed through the opening, for it was quite out of sight, and the sinking sun was casting long shadows. So at last Mr Rogers grew impatient and spoke out,—

“We had better ride on, my boys, and catch the waggon. I want to halt early and form a good stout fence for our protection. We shall see no—”

“Lion!” said Dick sharply. “Dismount.”

He threw himself from his horse on the instant, and stood ready to fire, his father and brother imitating his example.

“Where?” said Mr Rogers quietly. “I see nothing, Dick.”

“There,” replied Dick, “fifty yards away, stealing through those thick sedgy grasses. Don’t you see?”

“Yes,” said his father, “I see the monster now. Keep cool, boys, and make your shots tell. If he is wounded and charges, you must stand firm and fire again.”

Mr Rogers waited a few moments, during which the lion, a monstrous yellow, maneless fellow, was half-crawling, half-creeping, through the long sedgy grass; and at last he showed so plainly that Mr Rogers took careful aim, fired, and evidently hit, for the lion uttered a furious roar, and made a tremendous bound to escape, with the result that Dick’s cob started, and threatened to dash off; but a few words from its master calmed it; and taking advantage of the good view he had of the lion, Dick now fired, a shot from Jack’s rifle following directly after. But, so far from the monster being crippled, it ceased its efforts to escape, and turning, took a few steps forward, crouched like a cat, and then bounded at Jack.

“Stand firm and fire!” cried Mr Rogers.

Jack obeyed, and as he fired the lion was in the air launching itself at him, but falling short, rolling over upon its side, and beginning to tear and gnaw at the dry grass in its death agony.

Mr Rogers approached, but drew back in favour of Dick.

“Go and give it the *coup de grâce*, my boy,” he said. “You may as well have the honour of killing the monster, for a monster it is.”

Dick had replaced his empty cartridge with a full one, and was approaching boldly to fire the necessary shot, when, to his horror and astonishment, the lion rose, crouched, and showed its glistening teeth. But in spite of the terror that seized him he stood firm, took careful aim, fired, and with a savage roar, the lion rolled over, dead.

It was indeed a monster, and its glistening fangs were very long, while upon examination there was the mark of Jack’s last night’s

bullet, which had ploughed up the skin between the creature's ears, though the wound was now half dry.

The shots brought the Zulu into sight with his boys, for the waggon was halting at a pleasant spring at the foot of one of the mountains not a mile away, for here were wood and a good place for forming a kraal.

The General and his sons raced down, and the boys danced round the lion and called it names. But there was no time to lose, and it was impossible to stop and skin the animal that night, so the General stuck some branches round it, and then led the way to camp, which was rapidly formed. And though they heard lions in the distance, they had a less disturbed night than the preceding one, greatly to the satisfaction of all, especially Dinny, who declared that it was a blessing that the lion was killed, for now they would be at peace.

But Dinny was wrong, for there were other lions in the land.

Chapter Fifteen.

Good Practice for Gunners.

The day had hardly broken before Coffee and Chicory were shouting at the opening of the waggon for Boss Dick and Boss Jack to "come and 'kin a lion."

They wanted but little rousing up, and after a good souse in the pure cool spring, that ran bubbling over and amongst some rocks with delicious-looking broad-fronded ferns drooping gracefully over, they went and rubbed their horses' muzzles, patted their arched necks, and gave each a taste of sugar—for which Shoes and Stockings regularly looked now, and would follow their masters like dogs to obtain—they shouldered their rifles, and followed the General to the place where the lion lay.

Rested and refreshed, everything around looked lovely, for they were at the head of a very fertile valley, where flowers bloomed

in profusion, and the springs that rose in the sides of the mountains sent down moisture enough to keep miles of the country round of a perpetual green.

“Plenty game here,” said Chicory, pointing to a bare, muddy spot by a water-hole.

The General turned aside, and stooped down to look at the hundreds of footprints in the soft mud.

“Koodoo,” he said, “eland, buffalo, bok, wildebeeste, quagga, zebra, lion,” and he pointed out in turn the spoor, or footprints, of the various beasts he named. “Yes, plenty of game here.”

As they went on, the boys noticed the abundance of the pretty little whidah bird, a lovely little creature, about the size of a lark, but with a tail of such enormous length that in a breeze the power of the wind upon the tail drives the bird to take flight into shelter, so that it shall not be blown away. Pigeons in abundance flew over their heads, and parrots of such gaudy colours that Dick felt obliged to shoot three or four as specimens, to skin and add to their collection.

But the lion pretty well filled the thoughts of all, and Jack was intensely eager to see the monster that he took to himself the credit of having shot.

As they drew near the place where the adventure of the previous night had taken place, the verdure began to give place to brown, parched-up sedgy grass, and the boys could not help noticing how much it seemed to harmonise with the skin of the beast of prey they had slain.

As they drew nearer there was no difficulty in finding the spot, for a party of great, dusky, bare-necked vultures were sitting about, gazing hungrily at the dead beast, but afraid to approach on account of the sticks and branches stuck about to imitate a trap.

They were so near now that they could make out the shape of the lion amongst the dry grass, when, apparently always upon his

guard, the General suddenly presented the point of his assegai. Coffee and Chicory said nothing, but they did the same; and Dick and Jack, fully under the impression that the lion had come back to life, cocked their rifles and stood ready to fire.

Just then there was a low muttering growl, a moving of the long grass as if something was passing through, and a smooth-coated lion bounded into sight, gazing at them menacingly, and lashing its sides with its tail.

Wisely or no, the boys' rifles were at their shoulders on the instant, and they fired together as Coffee and Chicory threw their spears.

There was a tremendous roar, a bound, a crash, and then silence, broken only by the clicking of the mechanism of the rifles, as the boys rapidly reloaded them with heavy ball.

As the smoke cleared away the General beckoned Dick and Jack to his side, and they advanced cautiously through the grass, which they pushed aside with the assegai and the muzzles of the rifles, till they saw, a short distance off, the handle of an assegai sticking up.

"There him is," shouted Coffee; "my assegai!" And he seemed ready to run forward and get it, but was checked by a sign from his father.

The young hunters raised their rifles to their shoulders, ready to fire again, at the sight of the lion; but the staff of the assegai did not even quiver; and, gaining confidence, the General went closer and parted the grass, for his young companions to fire.

The next moment he had sprung forward, and shouted and waved his spear above his head; for there, upon its side, lay the lion, quite dead, the second within twenty-four hours.

"That was your shot, Dick," said Jack.

"No, no: yours," said Dick.

“No; I felt as if I didn’t hit it far enough forward,” cried Jack. “But we’ll soon see.”

“Ah, yah, yah! Inyami, Inyami!” shouted Coffee and Chicory; and they began to kick and bang the dead lion with their kiris, till their father stopped them, and bade one of them go and fetch Peter or Dinny to come and help to skin.

As it proved, there was a bullet right in the centre of the second lion’s forehead, and another in the shoulder, which ball Jack claimed, so that Dick had, as he really deserved, the honour of shooting the monster, and he gazed with no little pride at its tremendous proportions.

But big as it was, it was a lioness, and slighter in build than the tawny monster killed upon the previous evening, to which they now turned, looking in awe at its huge claw-armed paws, and legs one mass of muscle. There was something almost stupendous in the power that seemed to be condensed in its short thick neck, and broad deep shoulders, for, being one of the maneless kind every muscle of the neck, throat, and shoulders could be plainly seen.

“Why, Jack, we should be like rats in the jaws of a cat if he took hold of us,” said Dick.

“More need to practise our shooting. Dicky, I shall always aim at their eyes.”

“I want to get back and tell father,” said Dick. “Oh, look! here he comes.”

In effect, Mr Rogers, who had heard the firing, was coming on at a fast run, in dread lest anything should be wrong; but a smile of satisfaction appeared upon his face as he came up, and heard Dick’s joyful cry, “Father, I’ve shot a lion.”

The skinning of the dangerous monsters was a tough job; but in the Zulu’s skilful hands it seemed comparatively easy, for he knew exactly where to divide the muscles to make the limbs give way,

and how to thrust the point of his knife through various membranes; so that by breakfast-time, with the help of Peter, both trophies were removed, and borne to the camp in triumph.

The place being so lovely, and game being evidently abundant, Mr Rogers decided to stay where they were for a day or two, especially as the work of making a kraal of thorns every night became an arduous task and there was nothing to be gained by hurrying through the wonderful country without stopping to examine its beauties.

Then, too, the abundance of rich fine grass growing near the rivulets that came down from the mountains was invaluable for the oxen, which had begun to look a trifle thinner; and as the good patient beasts worked so willingly and well, it was a pleasure to see them knee-deep in grass, placidly munching away at the rich herbage, and in company with the horses.

So holiday for the animals was proclaimed; Dinny, Peter, and Dirk were ordered to keep a watchful eye upon the grazing cattle, and Mr Rogers proposed a short walking, shooting, and natural-history-collecting expedition.

Of course it was all nonsense, but Dick vowed that Rough'un went and told what was to be; for the dog, who had been looking at his masters with bright, intelligent eyes, suddenly jumped upon all fours and barked twice, after which he trotted off to where Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus were tied to the wheels of the waggon, put his nose to each, and barked; and in the place of a patient attack upon tormenting flies and fleas, the dogs leaped up, strained at their thongs, and barked and bayed furiously.

"Let them loose, boys," said Mr Rogers, to Coffee and Chicory, who ran to perform his orders, but found it hard work; for the dogs leaped at them, twisted the thongs between and round their legs, and upset them twice; while as soon as they were at liberty they seemed to have mutually agreed that this was one of the dog-days, and that it was their duty to go right off mad.

Their antics were wonderful. First they rushed off as hard as they could tear, as if going straight back home to Mr Rogers' farm; the next minute they were back, as if they had forgotten to kill Rough'un first, for they charged down upon him, rolling him over and over, biting, worrying, and tumbling upon him in the exuberance of their delight; while Rough'un retaliated by biting again, and getting such a good grip with his teeth on Pompey's tail that this sturdy fellow dragged him for yards before Rough'un let go.

Altogether, for a few minutes there seemed to be what Dick called a dog-storm, after which they all crouched down, with open mouths, starting eyes, and quivering tongue, staring at the preparations going on, and ready to be off.

"Good old dogs! Old Pomp! old Caesar! What old Cras! Hi, Rough'un!" cried Jack, caressing all the dogs in turn, and patting their heads, with the effect of making them seize and pretend to worry him, seizing his legs, jumping up, and showing their delight in a dozen ways.

Then the ammunition had to be obtained, satchels stored with provisions, Coffee and Chicory carrying a supply for their own and their father's use; and when the grim-looking old warrior held up a warning finger at them and said they were not to eat the provisions, they brought a smile to his lips by running off together and pretending to devour the contents of the bag.

At last all was ready, and after a few words of warning to Dinny and the others to be watchful, the little party started, Mr Rogers referring to a small compass he carried in his pocket, and taking the bearings of the two mountains, so as to be sure of their return.

For though the General was with them there was always the possibility of being separated; and missing the way back in the great African wilds may mean missing one's life.

There was plenty to see. Flowers grew in abundance in the rich moist places; fleshy plants abounded in the sterile rocky parts; and in every shady niche the ferns were glorious. The trees alone

were enough to satisfy any one with a love of beauty. Great candelabra-shaped euphorbias, with wondrous thorns and lovely scarlet blossoms; huge forest-trees that seemed to have lost their own individuality in the wreathing clusters of creeping flowering plants they bore. Everything was beautiful; and as they walked on in the glowing sunshine, they seemed to have come to one of the most glorious spots of earth.

They had not proceeded far beside one of the little rivers that came bubbling down from the mountain they were approaching before Rough'un began to bark.

Click, *click*, went Dick's rifle.

"Look, father, look! a crocodile!" cried Jack. "I wanted to see a crocodile."

There was a rush, a splash, and a scurry, and Rough'un came out of the water, looking about him and staring up at his masters, as if asking what they had done with the reptile he had chased.

"It was not a crocodile, Jack, but a large water-lizard," said Mr Rogers.

"Plenty of crocodiles soon," said the General, "big as three of me."

He marked off a space of about twenty feet upon the ground, to show the length the reptiles of which he spoke, and then roughly marked out their shape.

"Not here," he said; "over there." And he pointed to the north.

"Here's another," cried Dick.

And this time it was Pompey and Caesar who had hunted out a reptile, which hissed, and snapped, and fought vigorously for a few moments when driven to bay, but its defiance was short lived.

While the engagement went on, the reptile looked dragon-like in aspect, with its ruffled and inflated throat, serrated back, and writhing tail; but in a very short time the dogs had obtained the

mastery, and the creature was examined, proving to be a kind of iguana, nearly six feet in length, a great deal of which, however, was the attenuated tail.

The cracks and rifts in the hot bare stones as they climbed higher seemed to swarm with lizards of all kinds, ready to dart into their holes upon the approach of the dogs, while several times over the two Zulu boys came running back, beckoning to Dick and Jack to go and see some snake basking, twisted in a knot in some sunny spot.

Upon one of these occasions Jack was so struck by the peculiar swollen, short appearance of the little serpent that he ran back and hailed his father, who came up just as Coffee and Chicory were assuring Dick that if he did what he had proposed to do, namely, taken up the short, thick serpent, he would never have gone hunting any more.

In fact as soon as Jack had gone the serpent moved slightly, and wishing his father to see it, and eager to stop its escape, Dick had attempted to pick it up, when Coffee and Chicory threw themselves upon him, and a short struggle ensued, which made Dick very angry, and he was very nearly coming to blows.

“The boys are quite right,” said Mr Rogers sharply. “Dick, you ought to have known better. Don’t you know what that thick, short serpent is?”

“No, father,” said Dick, in an injured tone.

“Then you ought to know, my boy, for I have described it to you when talking about the reptiles of this part of the world. What do you say it is, Jack?”

“I don’t know, father; I’m not sure,” replied Jack, glancing at Dick, and feeling that it would hurt him to profess to greater knowledge than his brother.

“Nonsense! I’m sure you do know,” said Mr Rogers impatiently.

“Is it the puff-adder, father?” said Dick hesitatingly.

“Of course it is, and you ought to have known the deadly pest. No, no, don’t waste a charge upon it, and it may alarm any game. Let one of the boys kill it.”

That was soon done, for Chicory made a sign to his brother, who touched the puff-adder’s tail and began to irritate it, making it turn and strike viciously at the blade of his assegai.

That was what Chicory wanted.

The next moment his blade whished through the air, and the puff-adder’s head lay upon the ground.

“You cannot be too careful, boys,” said Mr Rogers, picking up the flat spade-shaped head, and opening the jaws with the point of his knife.

“Look, boys,” he continued, as he made the jaws gape, and then raised up a couple of keen transparent fangs that lay back upon the roof of the creature’s mouth. “Do you see? There are the hollow fangs through which a drop of deadly poison is injected in the blood and causes death. Don’t let’s destroy life unnecessarily; but if we want food, or come across any poisonous or dangerous beast, I think it is sentimentality to refrain from ridding the world of such a pest.”

Dick felt very ignorant, and wished he had known better; but he could not help being pleased at his brother’s manner; and the incident was forgotten the next moment in one of those natural history adventures of which they had all read, but had little expected to share in their lives.

As they had climbed higher they had found the mountain more rugged, and broken up into deep crevices and defiles, all of which were full of interesting objects—flowers, plants, and foliage—such as they had never before seen; while in the sheltered and often intense heat, beetles and butterflies seemed to have found these rifts a perfect paradise.

Dick had gone on first, and turning a corner he had found quite a rugged shelf running alone the steep side of a ravine, the bottom of which was carpeted with flowers that grew amongst the stones.

It was a very interesting spot, but as it seemed to lead right away into the heart of the mountain he was about to turn back and rejoin his party, when he caught sight of a gracefully-shaped large-eared gazelle about fifty yards away, gazing apparently in another direction.

He could have shot it easily, but it seemed so quiet and tame that he did not raise his piece, though if it had attempted to run, the thought of the delicious roast it would make would undoubtedly have made him bring it down.

Besides he wanted all the practice he could get with his rifle, and a shot at a running antelope or gazelle was not to be missed.

Half wondering why it did not feed, he remained watching it, supposing that it had heard some of the party lower down; when all at once the sun’s rays seemed to glance off something glistening and bright, and straining forward to get a better view, Dick became aware of the fact that a large serpent was twining fold after fold one over another, and as, half petrified,

FASCINATION.

he watched the reptile, he suddenly saw a monstrous neck and head reared up in front of the gazelle.

The creature seemed to be all glistening umber brown and dusky yellow, and its surface shone like burnished tortoiseshell in the glowing sun, while to the boy's eyes it seemed, from the height to which the swaying head was raised, that the body, half hidden from him by the herbage, must be monstrous.

And all the time, fascinated as it were, or more probably paralysed by fear, the gazelle stood perfectly still, watching the undulations of the serpent's neck, and calmly awaiting its end.

Dick was so interested that he forgot that he held a rifle and shot-gun in his hand. He knew that the serpent was, as it were, playing with its prey before seizing it, feeling probably, if it thought at all, quite certain of the trembling creature whenever it felt disposed

to strike, and preparing itself for its banquet by writhing its body into a more convenient place.

It was a horrible sight, and Dick waited to see the serpent seize the gazelle, wrap round it and crush its quivering body out of shape, and then slowly swallow it, till it formed a knot somewhere in the long tapering form, and go to sleep till it was hungry again.

“Ugh, you beast!” ejaculated Dick; and the sound of his own voice seemed to break the fascination of interest by which he had been held.

The next instant he was pitying the gazelle, and as he saw the serpent draw back its head he laid the barrel of his piece against a block of stone, waited until the quivering head was still and the jaws began to distend, and then his trembling hand grew firm, and he drew the trigger.

The puff of smoke obscured everything for the moment, and he could not start forward or he would have gone over the precipice, so he had to wait till the vapour had passed away, when, to his great disgust, he could see nothing.

The gazelle and serpent were both gone; so he began to load again, wishing he could take better aim, when he heard a shout, and Chicory came running up, followed by Coffee.

“Boss Dick shoot um? Boss Dick shoot noder lion?” cried Chicory.

“No,” said Dick; “it was a miss this time.”

“No,” cried Coffee; “I see um. Look, boss, look!”

Mr Rogers and Jack came hurrying up just then, and looking in the direction pointed out, there was the serpent, writhing and twining in the most horrible manner down in a narrow rift, out of which it now glided in a blind purposeless way, writhing, whipping the herbage with its tail, and tying itself in what seemed to be impossible knots.

“Coffee and Chick go and kill um,” said the latter, letting himself down the face of the precipice, followed by his brother; and, apparently quite without dread of the monster, they scrambled down over the rough stones till they came to the serpent, when, watching his opportunity, Coffee seized its tail and tried to drag it, but the creature seemed to whip him off, and Coffee uttered a yell as he was driven staggering back.

“Go down, Dick, and try and give the monster another shot,” said Mr Rogers. “No, stop; I dare say the boys will finish it.”

For just then, evidently enraged at the treatment his brother had received, Chicory drove his assegai through the serpent, and then again and again, the creature’s struggles being blind of purpose, for its head had been shattered by Dick’s shot; while fiercely leaping up, Coffee raised his own assegai, and holding it chopper fashion, he waited his time till the serpent’s head was handy, when he hewed it off.

The writhings now grew faint; and the General coming up, and descending with Mr Rogers and his sons and the dogs, which kept making rushes at the waving form and not biting it, the serpent was dragged out full length and measured, Mr Rogers making seven fair paces by its side, and setting it down at about eighteen feet in length.

“A nice monster to meet, Master Dick,” he said. “I congratulate you upon your success.”

“Have it skinned, father,” exclaimed Jack eagerly. “It would be such a capital thing to have, stuffed and coiled up, at home.”

Mr Rogers glanced at the great faintly-writhing monster, with its tortoiseshell markings, and shook his head.

“No, my boy,” he said; “I must confess to too great a dislike to the serpent race to care to carry about their skins. Besides, if we are going on like this, killing a lion a day, we shall have only room for the skins of our big game. Let’s leave the creature here.”

They climbed up out of the ravine, and after a couple of hours' more walking, full of interest if not of incident, they went slowly back, glad to get in the shade of the trees beneath which the waggon was halted, and finding everything right.

Chapter Sixteen.

How the Little Gintlemen interfered wid Dinny.

A few days were very pleasantly spent here collecting, for Mr Rogers was an enthusiastic naturalist. Birds of brilliant feathering were shot, skinned, preserved with arsenical paste, filled with cotton wool, and laid to dry with their heads and shoulders thrust into paper cones, after which they were transferred to a box which had to be zealously watched to keep out the ants. Certainly scores of these were killed through eating the poison smeared upon the skins, but that was little satisfaction if they had first destroyed some delicate bird.

Butterflies, too, and beetles were obtained in great numbers, being carefully killed, and pinned out in boxes lined with camphored cork. These insects the two Zulu boys soon learned to capture with the greatest ease, and after a little teaching they would bring in a handsome butterfly or moth, without crushing and disfiguring it first so that it was useless for preservation.

Bok or antelope of various kinds were plentiful enough to make the party sure of plenty of food; and both Dick and Jack were getting so skilful with the rifle that they could be depended upon to bring down a koodoo or springbok at four or five hundred paces.

The kraal had been strengthened, so that they felt no fear of a lion getting through; but fires were kept up every night, wood being plentiful, and the bright glow seemed to give confidence to the occupants of the camp, as well as to the horses and oxen. Watch was kept too, but though lions were sometimes heard at a distance they did not molest the travellers, and but for the stern suggestions of the General they would have grown careless in the extreme.

For experience and skill in the use of fire-arms made Dick and Jack more confident. They had looked upon a lion as a monster of such prowess, and of so dangerous a character, that they were quite surprised at the ease with which a good shot with a rifle could hold the king of beasts at his mercy.

As for Coffee and Chicory, the General several times punished them for being so daring and running such risks, especially as they were in a part of the country where lions really were plentiful, although, so far, little molestation of the travellers had taken place.

It had been decided that upon the next day they would trek onward for some distance, and perhaps on and on for days, according to the attractiveness of the country they were passing through, and the plentifulness of the game.

The General heard Mr Rogers' decision with a smile of satisfaction.

"I want to take you where the great tusker elephants are," he said, "and let you shoot the giraffe and rhinoceros. We have hardly begun yet."

He made the boys' eyes glow with excitement as he told them of the size of the hippopotami and elephants they would encounter, the height of the giraffes, and the furious nature of the rhinoceros, which beast seemed to be always mad if it saw a human being.

As they were going to start next day it was decided to let the horses graze in peace with the oxen, which, after a fortnight's rest, looked sleek-coated and in far better condition; but Peter, Dirk, and Dinny were bidden to keep a strict watch over the cattle, for just before starting the General announced that he had seen a lion-spoor, apparently two days old.

The day was passed very pleasantly, collecting, by Mr Rogers and his sons, several very beautiful birds falling to their guns, and their boxes being filled with splendidly burnished beetles; and at last tired out, they turned to get back to the little camp by midday, hoping to find a satisfactory meal ready, for the General had gone

out with a rifle in search of a bok; and his two boys had taken their kiris and assegais, to see if they could not knock down a few of the large partridge or quail-like birds.

What was their disappointment then to find that neither the General nor his sons had returned, while Dinny was in great distress.

“Sure,” he said, “I thought I’d take a fishing-line and a shtick, and go to the big pool by the little river over yonder, and catch a few of the fish things; bad cess to ’em, they’re no more like the fine salmon and throut of my own country than this baste of a place is its aiqual.”

“Well, Dinny, and you went and didn’t catch anything,” said Dick.

“Sure, Masther Dick, an’ you weren’t there,” said Dinny; “but ye’re right there; I didn’t catch a single fish, for the little gintlemen wouldn’t let me.”

“Little gentlemen, Dinny?” said Mr Rogers eagerly. “Did you see any natives?”

“An’ is it natives ye’d call the dirthy undersized little craytures?” cried Dinny indignantly. “Sure I’d take a couple of ’em up under my arms and run away wid ’em.”

“But you say they interfered with you, and wouldn’t let you fish,” said Mr Rogers.

“Faix, sor, an’ that’s what they did. Ye know the big pool.”

“To be sure,” said Mr Rogers. “There are silurus in it.”

“Are there though, sor?” said Dinny. “And there’s the big rocks up behind it, where the prickly trees wid red flowers and no leaves at all grow.”

“Yes, I know the place,” said Mr Rogers impatiently; “go on.”

“Well, sor, I sits meself down comfortable, baits my hook wid a nice bit of fresh mate as any dacent fish would like to have, and then I says to meself, ‘Dinny,’ I says, ‘while ye’re waiting to hook a nice fish for the masther’s dinner, I’d have jist a whiff o’ tibakky if I were you.’ ‘Ye’re right and I will,’ I says; and I outs wid my pipe, fills it, and was just going to light up, when *splash*! There was a great big stone thrown in the wather.

“‘Ah, be aisy, Masther Jack,’ I says, for I knew it was you.”

“Why, I was away with my father,” cried Jack.

“To be sure ye were, Masther Jack, dear; but don’t ye see I thought it was your thrick; and bang comes another big stone down be me side.

“‘I’ll tell the masther if ye don’t lave off,’ I says. ‘That’s you, Masther Dick, as throwed that.’

“Splash comes another, and then I recklected as ye’d both be far away, and that it must be one of them dirthy little varmints, Coffee or Chicory. So I lays down me rod and line, as nice and sthrait a rod as ye’d cut out of the woods anywhere, ye know, sor, and I picked up my bit of stick ready for them.

“‘I’ll wait till ye throw again, me beauties,’ I says; and just as I says it to meself, a big stone hits me on the back, and another goes in just by me line.

“‘Now ye shall have it, ye wicked little villains,’ I says; and jumping up I was going to run at ’em, when, murther! there was about a dozen of the craytures coming down from the rocks, shouting and chattering, and throwing stones.

“‘Will ye be off?’ says one, ‘ye’ve no business fishing there widout lave.’”

“How do you know he said that?” said Dick dryly.

“Sure an’ what else would he say, Masther Dick, dear? An’ ah, ye never saw such ugly little divils, widout a bit of nose to their dirty faces, and a grin as if they were all teeth.

“‘Sure I was only catching a fish for the masther’s dinner, gintlemen,’ I says, when, murther! if they didn’t run at me like mad, and if I hadn’t walked away I belave they’d have killed me. As it was one cowardly villain instead of hitting me dacently on the head wid his stick like a Christian, comes at me and bites me in the leg.”

“Let’s look, Dinny,” said Dick, for Mr Rogers listened but did not speak.

“Oh ye can look, Masther Dick. He tuk a pace out of me throusis, and he’d have tuk a pace out of me leg as well, if I hadn’t expostulated wid him on the head wid me shtick. Sure I was obliged to run then or they’d have torn me to pieces; and it’s my belafe they’ve been using the fishing-line ever since.”

“And so you’ve had an interview with the natives, have you, Dinny?” said Mr Rogers dryly.

“Ah, I wouldn’t call them natives, sor,” said Dinny.

“What then, baboons?” said Mr Rogers.

“Sure, sur, I don’t know the name of the thribe, but they’re a dirthy-looking little lot, and as hairy as if they never shaved themselves a bit.”

“Why he’s been pelted by monkeys,” cried Dick, indignantly; and Jack burst out laughing.

“Faix, Masther Dick, dear, they behaved like monkeys more than men, and they’re an ugly little thribe of natives; and if I’d had a gun I’d have given some of them the headache, that I would.”

“Ah, here’s the General,” cried Mr Rogers, as the great Zulu came striding up with a bok over his shoulder.

As he entered the little camp he threw down the bok, and began to skin it, looking about for Coffee and Chicory.

“Where are the boys?” he said at last.

“Sure they haven’t come back,” said Dinny; “and I hope they never will,” he added, taking the bok to cut up and cook a portion, for Dinny’s leg was very sore and bleeding from a severe bite, and his temper was also a little more sore from the doubt with which his story had been received.

The Zulu darted a fierce glance at him, but he did not speak. He only walked to the waggon, where Mr Rogers was examining some of the specimens he had killed, and said simply,—

“May I take the rifle, boss, and go and find my boys?”

“Yes, of course,” exclaimed Mr Rogers.

“I’ll go with you, General,” cried Jack eagerly.

“But you are too tired,” said his father.

“Oh, no,” cried Jack. “I don’t mind. I’ll go with the General.”

The Zulu darted a grateful look at Jack, and the latter took his rifle and bullet cartridges, starting off directly after in the way that the boys had been seen to go.

Jack began chatting to the Zulu as they went along, but after a few remarks he noticed that the General was very quiet and reserved, while when he glanced at his countenance it looked so strange that Jack felt startled, and began to think of how awkward his position would be if the Zulu were to prove unfaithful, and turn upon him.

But the next minute he was reassured, and found that it was anxiety upon the General’s part about his boys.

“I am afraid, Boss Jack,” he said hoarsely. “It frightens me to think. They may be killed.”

“Oh, no,” cried Jack hopefully. “They have only gone farther away, and have not had time to return.”

The Zulu shook his head, but he glanced eagerly at the speaker as if to silently ask him if he really felt like that.

“No,” he said softly; “one of them would be back by now, I am afraid.”

Jack tried again, but it was of no avail; and the Zulu having struck the boys’ trail, he had to be left to follow it without interruption, and this he did, all through the heat of that glowing afternoon.

Several times poor Jack felt as if he would faint, but his spirit kept him up, and at last they came upon Chicory, sitting down by a little pool of water with his assegai beside him, bathing his bleeding feet.

The Zulu uttered a low sigh of satisfaction as he saw one of his boys, and Chicory jumped up, and seizing his assegai, ran to meet them.

“My brother; has he got back?” he asked in his own tongue.

“No; I came to find you both. Where is he?” said the General sternly.

“Lost,” said Chicory disconsolately. “We got no birds and would not go back without, and we went on and parted. He is lost.”

“Lost!” said the Zulu scornfully; “my boy lost! Go find him. Watch the spoor. He must be found.”

Poor Chicory turned without a word, and in obedience to his father’s order he went off in the direction where he and his brother had accidentally parted, and at last led them to a beautiful park-like tract of land. Forest-trees sprang up in every direction, for the most part draped with creepers; clumps of bushy growth, and clusters of prickly succulent plants, grew on every side. It was in fact a very nature’s garden, but though they searched in all

directions through the lovely glades, golden with the rays of the scorching sun, there was no trace of poor Coffee; and after separating, when they met again from time to time poor worn out Chicory looked his despair.

Again they separated, Jack following, however, pretty closely upon poor Chicory's steps, till the excitement that had kept him up so long began to fail, and he sat down pretty well exhausted, with his rifle across his knees and his back against a tree.

Chapter Seventeen.

Jack Rogers goes to Sleep.

Jack could hardly tell afterwards how it all happened, for he felt that he must have gone off fast asleep from utter exhaustion, but his sleep could not have lasted above an hour, for when he awoke with a start the sun had only just dipped down out of sight, and there was a faint glow still amongst the trees.

All was very silent and he was drowsy, but a feeling of alarm now began to oppress him, and he wondered whether Chicory and the General would soon be there.

His next thought was about his rifle, which still lay across his knees; and feeling that he might at any moment be called upon to use it in his defence, he cocked both barrels, and was then about to get up and shout, when, not a hundred yards away down a broad vista of the open forest, he saw something which made him present his rifle and then sit motionless, with his heart going thump, thump, heavily beneath his ribs.

For there, stealing softly along, with its belly almost sweeping the ground, was a huge lion—not a smooth, maneless lion, such as the two they had slain, but a big-muzzled, rugged-maned, hairy monster, such as he was familiar with in pictures—the natural history lion that he had seen a hundred times.

To have attempted to fire would have been madness at that distance, and it was evident that he was at present in no danger, for seated as he was in the shadow, with his back to the trunk of a great tree, the lion had not seen him.

The next moment Jack saw why he passed unnoticed.

The lion was cautiously stalking some dark animal that was softly gliding through the bushes, following it step by step awaiting the time to spring.

It was an interesting sight, though painful; and Jack thought of his brother's adventure with the serpent, and whether he was not in duty bound to save this animal from its pursuer as his brother saved the gazelle.

The next moment Jack's heart seemed to stand still, for the dark animal passed out of the bushes into sight, and he saw that it was no wild animal, but poor Chicory, bending down, and evidently carefully tracing some spoor, perhaps his brother's, while the lion was following to strike him down.

It was a terrible position; for young as he was in woodcraft, Jack had not yet acquired the firmness in critical moments that comes to the old hunter, and for the time he felt paralysed.

He was a brave, self-denying boy, but in that emergency he could only sit there, turned as it were to stone, and watch the motions of poor Chicory, and the merciless beast that was stealthily creeping along in his wake without a sound.

Jack knew that Chicory's position was critical in the extreme, and that if he did not save him by a lucky shot the lion would strike him down; but he could not move; the muscles of his whole body refused to act, as if he was in a nightmare; all he could do was to move his eyes and watch the terrible tragedy about to be enacted.

The boy felt as if he would have given worlds to be able to fire, or even shout; but he could do nothing but wait, and see Chicory creeping patiently along in and out among the trees and bushes,

now hidden, now coming into sight for a few moments, but always so intent upon the footprints he was examining, that he did not hear his enemy.

And what an enemy! There was the great powerful beast, with glaring eyes and horrent mane, creeping along with its fur brushing the grass, and every foot touching the ground like velvet. At times Jack could see the great muscles moving beneath its skin, and the pliant tail swaying and quivering as it softly lashed it to and fro.

Several times over it crouched down, as if about to spring, but a quick movement on the part of the Zulu boy caused it to pause—and still the hunt went on.

As Jack sat there the great drops of perspiration gathered upon his forehead, and trickled down his face. The sun's light reflected from the glowing clouds grew less, and there was a grey gloom gathering round, which made the scene before him more painful. At one time he thought that as darkness came on Chicory might give up, become aware of his danger, and so escape. Even now, if he could have warned him the boy would have doubtless bounded into a tree, for he was as quick and active as a monkey; but no warning passed from Jack's lips, and the strange weird scene went on.

The forest glade before him might have been a maze whose path Chicory was trying to thread, and the lion some faithful attendant beast, watchfully following in his very steps. But though Jack's body was as it were enchained, his mind was in a fearful state of activity; and not only did he follow as if fascinated every step, but his thoughts even went in advance, and he felt sick as he thought of the catastrophe about to happen, seeming to see the lion make its final crouch and spring, hearing too the boy's death-shriek; and as the actors in the terrible scene drew nearer to him, Jack strove with all his might to cast off his inaction.

On still, and in and out, in a heavy weary way, as if he could hardly put one leg before the other, went poor Chicory; and slowly

and carefully followed the lion, the massive jaws thrust forward, and each great paw raised and set down without a sound.

It could not have lasted more than a few minutes, this exciting scene, but it seemed never ending to Jack as he sat there, till in one instant he was roused back into action, and to try and the poor boy.

In his wanderings in and out, as has been said, Chicory came nearer to where his young master sat, with his back to the trunk of the great forest-tree, and more than once Jack wondered that the lion had not seen him; though this was easily explainable—he remained perfectly motionless, and the animal was intent upon his prey.

Chicory had come on nearer and nearer then, till he was not above thirty yards from Jack, when, turning in amongst some long grass, the positions were suddenly reversed, for in place of following the Zulu boy, the lion crept round a clump of bushes so as to come face to face with him, and then crouched ready to spring—just as Chicory stopped short, leaning forward over something in the long grass, and, dropping his assegai, uttered a piercing shriek.

Not thirty yards away, and just in face of where Jack was; and he knew that Chicory had come upon something terrible, perhaps the body of his brother, while he, Jack, had been sitting there quite unconscious, and had even in his ignorance gone to sleep.

It was that cry that roused Jack into action, for, almost as the boy dropped his assegai and leaned over that something in the long grass, the lion gathered itself for its spring, and the watcher’s rifle rose to his shoulder. There was one quick aim—the sharp crack, followed by a multitude of echoes; and Jack sprang to his feet and on one side, to avoid the charge should the lion come his way.

There was a deafening roar, and the lion, which had fallen short in his spring and rolled over, evidently badly hit, struggled to his feet, and made at Jack, who sheltered himself behind the nearest tree; and when the great brute came on, with distended claws

and bristling mane, he fired again, at a distance of a couple of yards, forgetting that his charge was but small shot.

At that distance, though, small shot were as good as a bullet, and the lion fell in his tracks, snarling and growling horribly, as he struck impotently at his slayer; then his head fell back, the mighty paws grew inert, and he lay over more upon his side—for with a furious cry of rage Chicory forgot his weariness, and picking up his assegai, drove it deep into the animal's chest.

Hardly believing it true, Jack rapidly reloaded, congratulating himself upon what he had done, when he heard the rustling of leaves, and presented his piece, fully expecting that it was the lion's mate.

But no: it was the General, who ran panting up, having heard the sound of the rifle, and as he reached them Chicory took his hand, and led him to the patch of grass without a word.

Jack followed, instinctively knowing that something terrible was there. And then his heart seemed to stand still, as he heard a deep groan burst from the General's breast, and he sank down by the body of the son he had come to seek.

"Is—is he dead?" said Jack, in a hoarse whisper, as he gazed down in the gathering darkness at poor Coffee's bleeding form.

For answer the General was feeling the boy's chest, and he then laid his ear against his side.

"No, not dead!" he cried excitedly.

Then lifting the boy in his arms, he started off back towards the waggon, Jack and Chicory following behind, but not until the latter had rushed back to where the lion lay, and plunged his assegai once more deeply into the monster's chest.

Chapter Eighteen.

The Capture of a Cat.

It was a long and toilsome walk back, for the night had come on quickly, and every now and then the roar of some beast of prey, or the crash of some animal through the trees, was heard. But nothing interfered with them; and when from time to time they halted for a few moments, the General gladly made use of the strips torn by Jack from his handkerchief and shirt to bind up the poor boy's bleeding wounds.

It seemed wonderful to Jack that strength and determination on the part of the General, almost as wonderful as the unerring instinct with which he made straight for the camp.

He did not speak once, but there was something exceedingly tender in the way in which he tried to carry the wounded boy, so as not to cause him pain; for he did not realise that poor Coffee was quite insensible to suffering, and had not felt anything since he had been struck down.

At last, when Jack felt that he could no longer plant one leg before the other, there was the bright glow of the fire at the little camp, where they found Mr Rogers in a terrible state of uneasiness at their prolonged absence.

The moment, however, he found what was wrong, his surgical skill, which was not slight, was brought to bear, and the terrible gaping wounds of the poor boy were sewn up and bandaged.

Read by the light of all that Jack had to tell, it was plain enough what had befallen poor Coffee. He had been stalked, by the same lion probably as that which Jack had shot. The monster had sprung upon him, clawing his bare back and shoulder; and then, probably being surfeited with devouring some unfortunate beast, he had left the boy, and had been roused again by another intruder upon his domains, while, but for Jack's rifle, poor Chicory would have shared his fate.

“But a’ didn’t kill Chick, Boss Jack. Boss Jack kill um, and Boss Jack and Chick go and kill all a lion now, and not leave not one.”

This was the next morning, when the events of the past night had been talked over, and Mr Rogers had expressed a hope that the boy might live.

But, as he told his sons, it was very doubtful, for he had been horribly clawed by the lion, though fortunately upon his back. Had the creature seized him in front, he must have lost his life.

All attempts at continuing the journey were of course put off, a comfortable bed being made up for Coffee where he would feel the cooling breeze and be sheltered from the sun, while his father took his place by him, and sat and kept the bandages over the wounds wet and cool.

It was Chicory who proposed that the lion’s skin should be fetched in; and after a promise to be careful, the boys started off, taking with them Peter to skin the lion, Mr Rogers feeling that he could not leave, with Coffee in such a state. In fact he hesitated about letting his sons go, after such a shock, though he could not help feeling that they were beginning to display a courage and decision that was most praiseworthy, especially as it was linked with so much self-denial.

“But the skin would be such a trophy, father,” said Jack. “I should like to have it.”

“Go and get it, then,” said Mr Rogers; “but don’t stop. You may as well shoot a few birds, though, or any small bok, if you can. We must make our beef-tea of venison, Dinny says,” he added with a smile, “for the invalid must have plenty of support.”

Jack went to have a look at poor Coffee as he lay there insensible, and softly placed his cool hand upon the poor boy’s burning head.

Then he started, for, to his surprise, the General was at his feet with his arms round his legs, and embracing them closely.

He did not understand it then, but the Zulu was swearing fidelity, and to lay down his life for him who had saved, as he felt, both his boys.

Just then there was a yelping and baying amongst the dogs, a snarling noise, and Dinny's voice heard shouting—when Jack ran out, just in time to see something yellowish and spotted rush among the trees, sending the oxen into a terrible state of excitement, and making the horses gallop up to the waggon for protection.

Mr Rogers was out in the open with a gun—but it was too late, there was nothing to shoot, and the dogs, which had been off after the animal, came trotting back.

"What was it, Dinny?" said Mr Rogers.

"Sure, sor, an' it was a great big yellow tom cat, wid splashes like brown gravy all over his dirthy body; an' he came sneaking out of the wood and made a pounce on Rough'un there; but the dog was too quick for him, an' run bechuckst the big waggon-wheels, an' thin I threw a pot at him and aff he went, and the dogs after him."

"How big was it, Dinny?" cried Dick excitedly.

"About as big as ten tom cats, Masther Dick, if they was all biled down and made into one."

"Get along," cried Dick. "What would it be, father—a leopard?"

"Yes, my boy, undoubtedly. They are very fond of dogs, and will dash under the waggons sometimes after one. Rough'un has had a narrow escape. We must look out, for the creature may come again."

It was a long walk to the glade where the lion was shot, but they killed a couple of the dangerous puff-adders, and shot

three 
THE DOG'S ENEMY.
or four beautiful birds, besides bringing down a small gazelle, which they protected with sticks to keep off the vultures. But the most interesting part of their journey was during the first mile of their way. They had all separated so as to look out for game, and were crossing a patch of dense dried-up yellow grass where they expected to spring a large bird or two, when, all at once, something of a rich yellow and brown darted out before Dick, leaving one clump to make for another, closely followed by a little dun-coloured animal, evidently its young.

Dick's rifle was to his shoulder on the instant, and a bullet through the animal laid it low, while the young one leaped upon it, and turned and snarled, and spat at its mother's slayer.

"Why it's the leopard that came after poor Rough'un, I'll be bound," cried Jack, coming up. "It has got a young one, and that's what made it so daring. Hullo, little chap! We'll take you back for a pet."

But the young leopard was already in a pet, and it scratched, and swore, and behaved so cat-like, that it was no easy task to secure it. This, however, was done in a strong game-bag, which was hung in a tree while the mother was skinned for the sake of her beautiful hide.

As they neared the place where Jack's lion lay, Dick drew his brother's attention to the vultures that were winging their way overhead.

"You'll see if they haven't been at your lion," he said.

He proved a true prophet, for as they drew near the glade—Jack feeling a strange chill of horror as he recalled the last night's adventure—first one and then another vulture flew up, and when Chicory made a dash forward they rose in a cloud.

"Your skin's spoiled, Jack," said his brother.

But he was wrong, for the vultures had found two assegais leaning against a bush, and looking so ominous with their bright blades where the General had left them, that they had not dared to touch the lion, and the consequence was that a magnificent skin was obtained, one that proved to be no light load for Peter and Chicory, who carried it swinging from a pole resting upon their shoulders.

The load was increased as they picked up the skin of the leopard, while the boys carried the game.

The young leopard proved to be quite safe in the game-bag, which formed a comfortable hammock for it as it hung in a tree, but no sooner was it swung from Jack's shoulder, and felt the motion of the walker, than it became furious, spitting and tearing, and trying to get out.

One way and another they were so loaded that the sight of the waggon proved very welcome, and all were only too glad to partake of a good basin of what Mr Rogers called "Dinny's

restorative," namely the rich thick venison soup always stewing in the great pot, and being added to every day.

And it was wonderful how invigorating this rich meat essence proved. No matter how weary they were, a basin of it could be enjoyed, and its effect seemed to be almost instantaneous.

After a good dinner in the shade of the big tree by the waggon, both Jack and Dick had another look at poor Coffee, to find that he slept a good deal, and quite easily, Mr Rogers saying that he was less feverish.

"Well, boys, what do you think of the medicine-chest now? Was I not right in being prepared for emergencies?"

The boys agreed that it was right, and hoped all the same that they would never have to make any demands upon it, either for doses or lint and plaister—invaluable in poor Coffee's case now.

Then the lion's skin was admired, and laid out to dry. The leopard's followed, and was greatly praised by Mr Rogers; and indeed it was beautiful in the harmony of its brown and creamy-yellow tints.

"Bedad and that's the very baste," cried Dinny. "I know him by that spot at the back of his left ear, and the payculiar twisht of his tail."

"Now, Dinny," said Dick, "how could you tell it again when you saw it for a moment only."

"An' d'ye think it takes half-an-hour for one of me eyes to catch soight of a craythure like that, Masther Dick? Sure I knowed it the moment I set oise upon it as the very same baste."

"Then you must have excellent eyesight, Dinny," said Mr Rogers.

"Sure an' I have that same, sor," said Dinny proudly, as the boys next brought out the young leopard, which had to be held pretty tightly by the back of the neck to keep it from taking its departure,

while the dogs gathered round muttering growls, and longing to take revenge upon the young leopard for the insult put upon them that morning by the mother.

“I think Dinny’s right, boys,” said Mr Rogers, as he looked at the clumsy young leopard, which had a peculiarly heavy kittenish aspect. “I should say it was undoubtedly the mother that dashed in after the dogs, her young one making her the more daring.”

“Sure an’ I knew I was right,” said Dinny complacently. “It was an avil-looking baste, in spite of its foine skin.”

“What are you going to do with the leopard?” said Mr Rogers.

“Keep it, of course, father,” said Jack.

“I don’t see any, ‘of course,’” he replied, smiling; “but try and keep it if you can, though I’m afraid you will find it an awkward customer to tame.”

“Well, let us try,” said Jack; and setting to work he soon contrived a collar of stout wire, which was wrapped round and round with thin leather, a dog-chain attached, and then the dogs were called by Dick.

“I say, what are you going to do?” cried his brother; “they’ll kill the poor little thing.”

“Oh no, they will not,” said Dick confidently. “I’m going to give them a lesson.”

The dogs came bounding up, having been driven away during the manufacture of the collar; and now, evidently under the impression that they were to kill the young leopard, they became in a high state of excitement.

“Oh, Dick!” cried Jack. “Mind what you are about.”

“Down, down, down!” cried Dick sternly; and the dogs all crouched, awaiting the order to attack. “Now, Rough’un, smell him.”

Rough’un sprang up, and Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus made a rush; but a tap each from the stick Dick held stopped them, and laying hold of Rough’un’s ear, Dick pushed the dog’s nose close to the vicious-looking little leopard.

“Now, sir, you’re not to touch him; do you hear?”

Rough’un evidently heard, and after smelling at the little animal, he looked up in a puzzled way at his master.

“Lie down, sir,” said Dick, and the dog obeyed. “Now, dogs! Pomp, Caesar, Cras, old boy.”

There was a volley of barks here, and the dogs evidently thought that their time had come; but a few stern words and a sharp tap or two from the stick made them perfectly obedient, and they contented themselves with sniffing at the little animal, which, on its part, finding that it was not molested by the dogs, left off its angry demonstrations, gave each one a gentle dab on the nose, and then rolled upon its back and began to play.

The dogs looked more puzzled than before, Crassus uttering a loud whine and giving his strong jaws a snap; but just then Rough’un accepted the invitation to play, and began to pat and push the little animal, which responded at once by rushing off and dashing back, rolling over, biting playfully, and in less than a minute he and the young leopard were leaping one over the other and gambolling as eagerly as if they were the oldest of friends.

Pompey also played a little, and Caesar and Crassus looked tolerantly on, but they did not join in themselves, beyond smelling the leopard a few times over. Still there was no fear of their molesting the little captive, which was tied up to a wheel of the waggon, and from that time became one of the occupants of the camp.

Chapter Nineteen.

First Sight of Ostrich.

As soon as poor Coffee showed the slightest sign of amendment, he was carefully lifted on to a comfortable bed made for him at the back of the waggon, where he lay patiently smiling at those who came to look at him; the oxen were in-spanned, and once more the waggon creaked and groaned over the rough land towards a fresh halting-place.

Game was plentiful enough, and Dinny always had an ample supply for his iron pot, but more than once the difficulties with regard to water were very serious, and very long treks had to be made before a spring or river could be reached.

But they pushed steadily on, the excitement of their hunting and shooting excursions making them forget the troubles of their journey.

Whenever Mr Rogers talked of halting and making some snugly-sheltered position their headquarters, the General smiled and pointed north, promising more wonders if they kept on, and finer game.

Coffee did not seem to suffer much, his greatest trouble being his weakness, and the difficulty his surgeon had to deal with that of keeping him in his bed; but he was very patient, and grateful for what was done, while the General seemed to wait on Mr Rogers' every look and word as if he would never be weary of attending to him.

They were getting close to the neighbourhood of the river Limpopo, when one evening, towards sundown, Mr Rogers became separated from his sons as they were journeying back towards the waggon, in his anxiety to shoot one of the curious fox-like animals that he had several times seen but had never had a chance to hit. They were beautifully marked, with long ears almost like those of a hare, and carried brushes that would have made an English fox envious; but even out there in the African wild they seem to partake of the cunning of their European

relatives, and the more Mr Rogers tried, the less likely he seemed to succeed.

Upon this occasion he had seen one or two, and in his anxiety to obtain a shot he had dashed off into the bush, where the little animals seemed to delight in luring him on, showing for a moment and then disappearing.

It was a glorious evening, and the sky was one glow of warmly-tinted cloud, while his proximity to the waggon, which he knew was not far-off, kept him from feeling uneasy about the others getting back.

“There it is again,” he exclaimed, as he saw the little fox-like animal dart amongst the bushes; and going cautiously in pursuit, he went on till the gathering mists of the coming night warned him to return.

He had hardly turned to make for the waggon when he saw something that completely enchained his attention, for looming up through the mist, and appearing of almost gigantic size, he saw what appeared to be three large ostriches; but while he gazed they seemed to fade away into the evening darkness, and were gone.

He had not gone far on his way back before he heard voices, and luckily came upon the boys and the General, Chicory having been left behind to attend to his brother.

“I think I have seen ostriches this evening,” said Mr Rogers. “Are there many here, general?”

The Zulu said No, but that there might be a few. If there were any he thought they might get a shot at them for the sake of their glorious plumes; and promising to be on the look out

THREE SHADOWY GIANTS.

for their footprints, they went on chatting about them till the waggon was reached, to find that a couple more waggons, the property of an ivory-trader travelling south, had been out-spanned close by, so that there would be company for the night.

The ivory-trader proved to be an intelligent man, and he said that there were plenty of elephants in the neighbourhood, but warned them to beware of the rhinoceros and crocodile, while he declared that one or two of the tribes farther north were worse than either.

Lions were heard in the distance, but the fires kept up proved sufficient to warn them off, and a very good night was spent; but just as breakfast was being got ready Peter gave the alarm, Chicory echoed it; there was a rush for rifles and guns, and a general state of excitement, for five ostriches had suddenly made their appearance, right up close to the camp, their tall necks with their flat stupid-looking heads undulating like snakes above the long grass.

For a few moments they had appeared to be perfectly astounded at the sight of the various strange objects, the waggons and their accompaniments. Then the shouts alarmed them, and as the guns were handed out of the waggons and the huntsmen prepared to fire, the ostriches were getting up speed, running faster and faster, till, as Dick said, their legs seemed to twinkle; and the shots that were sent after them, though they might have whistled past, had not the good fortune to bring them down.

"Well," exclaimed Dinny who was standing by the fire. "Of all the things I ever did see run, them there do beat, and no mistake."

Certainly the speed with which their long, powerful legs sent the large birds over the ground was wonderful, and in a very short time, long before horses could have been saddled, they were out of sight.

"Why, thim birds can run almost as fast as my big brother," said Dinny musingly, as the last ostrich disappeared.

"Could he run fast, Dinny?" asked Dick, smiling at his brother, as much as to say, "Now you listen to him, and hear what he says."

"An' is it run fast, he asks?" cried Dinny. "Why, he was the fastest runner in Oireland, and they used to make races for him to run, and match him against toime, and he always won. Why, wheniver he run he came in widout his boots."

"Came in without his boots?" said Jack, laughing.

"To be sure he did, sor, always. They managed to kape up wid him ginerally about half the way, and thin they got so slow he always had to lave thim behind."

"It's a pity we haven't got your big brother here, Dinny," said Dick sarcastically. "He could have caught the ostriches for us."

"Caught 'em, Masther Dick. I should think he would, in no time."

“Would he have been as much afraid of the lions as you are, Dinny?”

“Hark at him, now,” said Dinny, looking round at the dogs, which had had a race after the ostriches, and had now come back, with their tongues out and curled up at the tip as they sat there panting. “Hark at him now. Jist as if I was the laste taste of a bit afraid of all the lions in Africky. Why I says to meself, ‘Dinny,’ I says, ‘ye’ll have to tak’ care of yerself,’ I says, ‘and not let the wild bastes ate ye till ye come back; for what would poor weeny, sickly Masther Dick do widout a good cook to make broth and stews to kape him alive? Take care of yerself, Dinny, for the poor sick gossoon’s sake,’ and so I do, Masther Dick; for it’s not on account of meself, only for you.”

“Why you said the other day, Dinny, that it was because of your mother,” cried downright Jack.

“And small blame to a man for being fond of his mother, Masther Jack. Sure I always was a good son.”

Dinny was always ready with an excuse, and in spite of his idleness and downright cowardice, he was generally merry and good-humoured, and the first with a laugh.

The coming of the ostriches was, however, quite an excitement, and there was plenty of talk about how to get hold of some of them for their plumes; but nothing was done until the strangers had gone, when, after moving on to a more suitable place for a few days’ camp, and cutting down and piling up the thorns for a good safe kraal, whose fence would keep marauding beasts from molesting the cattle, glasses were got out, and the beautiful park-like plain at whose edge they were now encamped, was scanned for game.

There was no difficulty found in supplying the big pot, and finding pieces for a good roast; for little herds of various kinds of antelope were often in sight, and with a fair amount of stalking one could generally be brought down. But the great aim now was to obtain

a few ostriches, and try how they would, these wary birds refused to let them get within shot.

“If we shoot one,” said the General quietly, “I get plenty.”

But the job was to shoot the first one. The General tried creeping continually from bush to bush, out and over the plain; but either the ostriches saw the glint of the sun upon the gun-barrel, or caught a glimpse of his dark skin, for they were off swift as the wind, with their legs twinkling like the spokes of a carriage wheel as they ran.

Then Mr Rogers tried again and again with the boys; but they had worse luck than the Zulu, for they never got near enough for anything but very doubtful long shots at many hundred yards, with the sole result of making the birds more shy.

If they could have known where the ostriches were likely to appear, and could have gone and lain wait, the task would have been easy; but the birds came into sight in the most out-of-the-way places, and at the most unexpected times, and not a plume came to be stuck up as a valuable trophy in the waggon.

The General, clever hunter as he was, felt hurt at his ill-success, and pointed out the reason; and that was that the few birds about them had taken refuge here from the pursuit of hunters, having been chased most persistently in all the country round.

“You must get an ostrich, Chicory,” he said to his son in his own language, as the boy was squatted down by his brother, who was recovering with rapid strides.

“Chicory shoot one,” said the boy.

And without a word he went to Dinny, and obtained some strips of dried bok for provender, and then started off upon his quest.

Chapter Twenty.

Drumsticks and Lions.

Chicory came back the next day, for his brother's assegais, having lost his own, as he said, sticking in an ostrich's back.

"Bring him back soon," he said, as he sat down and ate tremendously for about an hour, after which he lay down and went to sleep by his wounded brother, and did not awake till his father came back with a little bok slung over his shoulder, and stirred him with his foot.

Chicory sprang up as if pricked, and in reply to his father's angry words in the Zulu tongue, the boy made a reply which calmed the General's wrath directly, and then went away.

When breakfast was ready the next morning, and Dinny brought a number of skewers of wood laden with hot sputtering venison cutlets, to place before each hungry meal-seeker, Chicory was not visible; and on being asked, Coffee said his brother had gone as soon as the lions had left off roaring; but he came back before evening in a wonderful state of excitement, begging Dick and Jack to mount their horses and come to fetch in the ostrich he had speared.

"Where is it?" cried Dick.

The Zulu boy pointed towards the east, and just then Mr Rogers came up.

"He has speared an ostrich, father," cried Dick eagerly.

"Indeed! How did you manage it, Chicory?" said Mr Rogers.

"So!" said the boy, throwing himself into a peculiar attitude, and holding up one arm with the hand bent down, so that side-wise his figure took something of the aspect of the long-necked bird.

"Then the ostrich must have been stupid," cried Jack, laughing.

“Yes, ’tupid bird,” said Chicory, grinning. “Never be ’tupid any more. Come fetch him.”

The horses were soon ready, and they were about to start when Dinny expressed a desire to go.

“Shure, I haven’t sthretched me legs these three days, Masther Dick, dear, and I wouldn’t mind exercising one of the big horses if the Masther loiked.”

But “the masther” didn’t “loike,” not feeling disposed to trust a valuable animal to Dinny’s tender mercies; so that gentleman turned upon his heel, and went back to the waggon-fire in disgust, and sat over it to “warrum” himself, though every one else was complaining of the heat.

It was a long ride, but Chicory did not seemed tired. He laid hold of the mane of Dick’s or Jack’s horse, and ran easily along by the side. And had there been any doubt of the spot in which the game lay, the vultures going straight in one direction would have pointed it out.

The sun was getting very low as they neared the place to which Chicory pointed; and when they came up a perfect crowd of vultures rose, having been seated at a respectful distance, watching the bower of sticks with which Chicory had surrounded his prize.

It proved to be a full-grown ostrich, but it was in wretched plumage, and a little examination showed that there was a reason for Chicory’s success, the bird having been shot at and a good deal injured.

It was such a miserable object that it would have been left behind had not the little party known that the General wanted it for a particular purpose; so it was strapped on to the back of Mr Rogers’s saddle, to the great discomfort of the big bay, which immediately began to kick furiously.

This kicking process caused the ostrich's long legs and neck to fly about and belabour the horse's sides, driving it almost frantic, and had he not been securely held he would have gone off at full gallop over the plain, probably to go on till he dropped or was pulled down by the lions.

"Look at the old drum," cried Dick eagerly; "and how the drumsticks are giving it to his sides," a remark which ensured for the old bay horse the nickname of the "Drum" to the end of the journey.

Fortunately for the party the moon in its first quarter was well advanced, and as the sunlight faded in the west they had the advantage of the soft silvery rays to guide them on their way. But all the same, the journey back was toilsome and dangerous; for no sooner did they attempt to go fast—Chicory being mounted in turn behind one or other of the boys, than, as Dick said, the sticks began to beat the drum, and the drum began to go mad, and snort and kick most violently.

"Ah, father," cried Jack, "what a shame it was you did not lend Dinny a horse; it would have been such fun to have seen him with the ostrich tied on behind."

"Shure, he'd have been kilt intoirely," said Dick, mimicking Dinny's accent.

"I should not envy him his ride if it would have been anything like mine," said Mr Rogers drily. "Hark, boys! there's a lion."

"Oomph! oomph!" came the low deep roar, like muttering thunder at home on a summer's night; and over and over again they noticed the peculiarity of the deep-toned growl. For it was as if some ventriloquist were imitating the cry in different parts of the wilderness. Now it sounded close by, and the horses shivered and pawed the ground impatiently; then it seemed a little farther off; and again it was close by.

They would gladly have galloped on if it had not been for the drumsticks, as Dick called the ostrich's neck and legs, these

necessitating a very gentle progress; and all the time the deep roar of the lion grew nearer.

“Want the horses,” said Chicory. “Two—three—four lion.”

He pointed his hand in different directions; and now it was quite evident that that was no animal ventriloquism, but several lions attracted by the horses were cautiously approaching so as to make a successful spring.

At last their unpleasant neighbours grew so demonstrative, that Mr Rogers gave the word, and they drew rein at the edge of a patch of wood, where there was an abundance of dry brush and grass.

“We must not go any further, boys,” exclaimed Mr Rogers. “Dick, sit fast, and hold the reins of Jack’s and my horses. We’ll jump down and make a fire. Come, Chicory, dead dry grass.”

The boy no sooner understood what was wanted than he began rapidly to gather up the dry grass into a heap, while Jack and his father drew their heavy hunting-knives and chopped off the brushwood; but it was nervous work, for the low, muttering roar came ominously close, and at any moment Dick felt that one of the great cat-like creatures, which have a terrible hunger after horseflesh, might spring upon one of the poor creatures, which trembled and whinnied, and tugged at the reins.

“I shan’t do much good, father,” cried Dick, “but I’m going to shoot where I think the lions are.”

“Yes, fire,” cried his father, who was down upon his knees, vainly trying to get the dry grass to burn; “fire as quickly as you can load.”

Bang, *bang*, went Dick’s double gun on the instant; and apparently comforted by the noise, and perhaps an instinctive knowledge that the firing was for their protection, the horses ceased to embarrass their caretaker by tugging to get away, and crowded together, pressing one upon the other in their dread.

There was a pause of about a minute's duration, and then the lions' cry was heard again a little more distant, but coming nearer and nearer; and still the fire would not burn, but kept on emitting a dense blinding smoke, which hid one great beast from Dick's eyes, where he had distinctly seen the animal creeping along towards them. Directly after, though, he saw another quite plainly in the bright moonlight, creeping cautiously onwards, and stooping from time to time as if about to spring.

Dick had reloaded by this time, and taking careful aim he fired again, when there was a furious roar, and they all heard quite plainly the snap and gnashing of the monster's teeth.

"You've hit him, Dick. Keep it up, my boy. Chicory, here! Come and blow. I can't get this fire to burn."

Chicory threw himself upon his hands and knees, and as Dick, with agitated fingers, hastily reloaded, and tried to see the next lion so as to have a shot at it, there came a deep-mouthed roar from behind. Then another and another, and the horses grew frantic, for the beasts were evidently going to make their attack.

Dick raised his piece to his shoulder and prepared to fire, longing the while for some relief, when, all at once, there was a bright flash, and the fire that had refused for so long to burn, burst into a brilliant flame, showing three lions quite plainly, creeping along at a short distance; and as soon as they were a little farther off, they began growling again.

Jack and Chicory had, however, gathered together a goodly portion of combustible wood, and there was plenty more at hand, so that a roaring fire was soon casting its light away from the wood, which somewhat sheltered them behind; and as soon as some of the good-sized pieces of bush were well ablaze, Chicory began to send them flying in the directions where a low ominous growl or two told that the lions were waiting their time.

Farther progress was impossible, and, with the knowledge before them that they would have to pass the night where they were, a

steady onslaught was kept on at the trees and bushes, goodly pieces of which were hacked off and used to feed the fire.

Every now and then, in spite of the blaze, some hungry lion would make a charge, one which Dick, being pretty well experienced in such matters now, met by hurling a blazing stick at the beast, several of which sticks he kept burning and ready to his hand.

For firing in the deceptive light at creatures whose colour assimilated so with that of the ground, was not only doubtful but dangerous, from its likelihood to wound and infuriate the savage beasts. When it was tried before the fire blazed up, it was as a last resource, and in the hope that the flash might help to intimidate, which, as it happened, in this case it did.

There was very little rest, for, being unprovided with an axe, it was hard work to hack off the boughs with the hunting-knives, but as the night wore on and their enemies made no determined attacks, but, as it were, kept on skirmishing, one of the party did have a bit of a nap from time to time, though the horses neither ate nor slept, but stood shivering together, most probably longing, like their masters, for the morning light.

It was only natural that Mr Rogers should feel sincere regret that he had left the camp so late in the day, but he told himself that it was a lesson, hard as it was to learn; and the boys pretty well took it to heart as they sat there listening to the fierce muttering growls that came from all around. Nearer and nearer when the fire was allowed to burn a little lower, more distant when the blaze sprang up, and a few burning pieces were sent whizzing through the air like fireworks, Dick being particularly clever at making the burning brands spin round Catherine-wheel fashion, blazing furiously as they flew.

That weary night seemed as if it would never end, and to the dismay of all, it became very plain that the lions were madly excited at the presence of the horses, and that their hunger was beginning to make them think less of the fire and the burning brands.

So close were two or three of the rushes that it was all Mr Rogers and his sons could do to keep the horses from dashing away, one lion in particular coming so well into sight that Jack could not resist the temptation to fire; and so well placed was the bullet that the lion fell paralysed, and lay struggling impotently, till a second well-aimed bullet put an end to its pain.

This was one enemy the less, but matters looked more ominous than ever, for the supply of wood within reach was exhausted, and the last armful had produced more smoke than blaze.

There seemed to be nothing else for it then but to mount and ride for their lives, irrespective of the darkness, and trust to their good fortune to bring them safe away.

“When I give the word ‘Mount!’ leap on your horses, and dash off,” said Mr Rogers at last, for the mutterings of the lions were growing nearer and nearer.

“And how about you, father?” asked Dick.

“I shall be close behind you, my boy.”

“And Chicory?” said Jack.

“I shall cut the ostrich loose, and Chicory will jump up behind me, and hold on as best he can.”

“Let him come behind me, father,” said Dick.

“No, behind me,” cried Jack.

“Silence!” exclaimed Mr Rogers. “There is no time for argument. Be ready. We’ll all throw at the lions together as they come on, and then mount and off before they recover from their confusion.”

Each stood to his horse’s head then, and held a piece of blazing wood ready—when Mr Rogers uttered a thankful sigh.

“Morning at last, my boys!” he exclaimed, as a faint light began to make the trees around visible; and by rapid degrees the fire began to pale, and the various objects grow more plain.

Then there were a few golden clouds high up above their heads; and the big bay suddenly uttered a loud neigh, which was answered by a roar close at hand. But Dick hurled his burning brand in that direction, and there was a savage snarl, after which the weary party had peace, for the lions seemed to have departed. While the moment the sun’s edge appeared above the plain, all mounted, and keeping a sharp look out, went off at full gallop towards the camp.

They reached it without molestation, the horses seeming almost to fly; and there they found that all had been very uneasy, and that they had passed the night keeping up a blazing fire, and firing guns at intervals, so as to guide them back.

“But it’s a wonder ye found us at all at all, sor,” said Dinny.

“Why?” asked Mr Rogers.

“Shure, sor, the lions have been rampaging around the waggon the whole night through, and I had to kape them off by throwing burning sthicks and shouting at ’em, for Pater and Dirk were about as much good as a couple of babbies, and the big Sooloo went to slape and snored.”

“That’s just what I’m going to do, Dinny,” said Jack, yawning.

And to show that he meant it, no sooner had he tied up and seen to his horse, than he threw himself down, his example being followed by the others, so that it was getting close upon noon before breakfast was attacked.

Chapter Twenty One.

A Lesson in Ostrich Hunting.

That same afternoon Dick, who had taken the glass and mounted a tree for a look round, announced ostriches in sight, and the General smiled and said it was his turn now.

While the others had slept he had been very busy, skinning the ostrich, and stuffing its long neck, and, to the astonishment of Dinny, he placed four or five little assegais ready, and then threw the skin of the ostrich over his head and shoulders, holding up the head by means of a stick run through the neck, and then, turning on one side, only his bare legs were visible.

Jack burst into a roar of laughter, and Chicory began to get rid of his superfluous excitement in his usual way—by dancing round and round and indulging in a few kicks and jumps.

It was a very clumsy imitation of an ostrich, but experience had often proved it to be sufficiently near to beguile the great birds, especially when, after stalking along for a short distance, the head was lowered to the ground, for there were the head, neck, and feathers, and that seemed enough for the birds.

Thus accoutred, then, the General moved out of camp, laughingly asking that no one should follow and shoot him by mistake for one of the birds.

The three boys followed, Dick carrying a glass; and poor Coffee wistfully watched their departure.

They could not, however, go far, lest they should scare the birds, so they kept in the cover of the wood for nearly a mile, and then stood watching the proceedings of Chicory’s father.

The General went steadily on, with the ostrich's head

MORE LEGS THAN BRAINS.

held well erect; but every now and then he paused, lowered the long neck, and seemed to be engaged in feeding; and at such times he walked side-wise and away from the little group of three ostriches, which were feeding about a mile away.

As the Zulu got to be more distant, his motions had a very natural appearance; so much so that Dick and Jack began to feel that had they seen him without being prepared, they would certainly have had a shot at him, believing him to be the real thing.

He took advantage of every bit of cover he could see, passing amongst the trees and bushes, and whenever he was out of sight, hastening his steps till he was nearly abreast of the ostriches, when he came into sight again.

As he did so the three birds paused in their feeding, ran together, and for a moment it seemed as if all the labour was about to be

lost. It was very plain that they were diligently scrutinising the new comer; and this was the critical time. A moment's haste, the slightest false move, and the three birds would have gone off like the wind. But as they saw the stranger turn a little away from them, lower its head, and apparently make a dart at some great beetle or locust amongst the herbage, and then hunt out another and another, their timidity passed away, they troubled themselves no more about the new comer, and went on feeding.

It was very interesting to watch the disguised Zulu, apparently feeding away from the ostriches, but all the time softly edging himself nearer and nearer.

"Oh, I say! what stupids they are!" said Jack. "Look at his legs. They arn't a bit like ostrich legs, and yet they don't see."

"All 'toopids," said Chicory delightedly. "Wait a bit."

From where they stood the General now seemed to be touching the wary birds; but this could not be the case they knew; and they stood watching attentively, taking the greatest of care not to show themselves, lest they should alarm the ostriches, for experience had shown them that they would dash off if they saw any one a mile away.

"Now look," cried Dick excitedly. "Look!"

For the biggest bird of the group had suddenly seemed to take umbrage at the appearance of the stranger, and stalking straight up to it darted its head sharply, evidently giving a vicious peck.

The next instant it was seen to make a bound forward, and fall over upon its side, apparently kicking feebly.

The other two raised their heads and seemed alarmed; but one began feeding again, and the other stalked gravely up to continue the punishment the first had commenced.

This time, by the help of the glass, Dick saw the Zulu stoop down, and deliver a thrust with an assegai, and this bird toppled forward and fell.

The third seemed alarmed, but it did not take flight, only stood still while the General, imitating the gait of the other birds, ran up alongside it, and seemed to be staring like the other at the fallen birds.

This time they saw no motion on the General's part, only that the third he struck suddenly took to running at a tremendous rate, but dropped like a stone before it had gone a quarter of a mile, and the General rid himself of what must have been a very hot and uncomfortable disguise, and mounting an ant-hill signalled to them to come.

"Three ostriches," cried Dick delightedly; "their feathers ought to be worth a great deal. Run back and fetch my father, Chicory."

But there was no need, for Mr Rogers had seen the manoeuvres of his follower, and now came out of the camp, followed by Dinny.

"Ah," said the latter to the boys, "it was moighty well done, and I've come to help pick the big birds. They tell me that some of the payple here kape the horse-stretches like chickens in Connaught, and that they lay beautiful foine new-laid eggs. Bedad, one of them ladies ought to lay a dacent-sized egg, and I wouldn't mind having one for breakfast by way of a change."

It was with no little delight then that Dick pointed out the fact to Dinny that they were all cock-birds, when they got up and found each had been pierced through the heart with an assegai.

Their plumage was splendid, and after a great deal of tough, hot work several bundles of the valuable feathers were made up and carried to the camp, to spread out and dry and then store away, to help pay for the expenses of the trip.

The party had hardly turned their backs upon the denuded birds before the vultures, which had been gathering for some time,

suddenly began to drop down to act their part of scavengers; and before night fell, there were only a few scattered bones to show where the ostriches had been.

Chapter Twenty Two.

Look before you step: 'Ware Snakes.

Coffee was gathering strength every day, and the wounds in his healthy young flesh healing rapidly. So much better was he that there was no occasion to study him any longer on the question of danger in moving, so the well-fed oxen were in-spanned, and a few more treks brought the party to one of the tributaries of the Limpopo, whose main stream they hoped to reach on the following day.

The country here was much less regular, and the work for the oxen grew more difficult, but they found capital quarters, with plenty of good grass, strong thorn bush for a kraal; and as the place promised sport, and plenty of natural history specimens amongst the rocks and rifts into which the land was broken, Mr Rogers determined to rest here for a day or two.

So a kraal was formed, the cattle sent to graze; the boys mounted Shoes and Stockings, and starting to get something in the way of game, were pretty successful, bringing in a plump young bok; and as evening came on and they were resting, Dinny suddenly made his appearance with a long stout stick and a line.

"I've been looking," he said, "and there's some moighty foine water close by here, and a bit of salmon wouldn't be amiss."

"There are no salmon here, Dinny," said Dick.

"Then there are some good big fish, anyhow," said Dinny; and he went off some fifty or sixty yards to where the narrow little stream ran at the bottom of rather a steep declivity.

LANDING A FISH.

"Mind you don't have any of the gintlemen throwing stones at you, Dinny," shouted Dick.

"Ah, you'd better be careful," said Mr Rogers, smiling; "Those rocks look a likely place for baboons."

"Whist, schah!" exclaimed Dinny contemptuously; "as if I'd be afraid of a monkey;" and he soon disappeared from sight.

The soft coolness of the evening was creeping on, the occupants of the little camp were restfully listening to the *crop*, *crop*! of the cattle, and Mr Rogers was about to give orders for them to be driven into the kraal, when the peace of the camp was broken by a loud cry from towards the little river.

"Murther! help! masther dear. Help, or it's dead I'll be!" yelled the familiar voice of Dinny.

Guns always lay handy, and they were seized, and all ran towards where Dinny was yelling for help, a sharp look out being kept for baboons.

"I dare say they've attacked him," said Mr Rogers. "They are very vicious, and tremendously strong. Why, where is he? Dinny! Dinny!"

“Hee-ar! Help!” cried Dinny. And running in the direction of the sound, they came upon Dinny’s boot-soles, and were just in time to save him from gliding into the little river, head first, the tuft of grass to which he was clinging having given way.

“An’ did ye see the murthering baste?” cried Dinny, who looked white through his sunburning.

“No, I saw nothing,” cried Mr Rogers.

“Ah, but he’s down there in the muddy water. Shure I’d caught one great ugly fat fish like an overgrown son of an eel; there he lies where he wriggled himself,” said Dinny, pointing to a fine silurus lying in a niche of the rock. “And I’d hooked another, when a great baste of a thing wid the wickedest oi ye ever see, and a smile as wide as the mouth of the Shannon, came up and looked at me. ‘Oh, murther!’ I says; and he stared at me, and showed me what a fine open countenance he had; and just then the big fish I’d hooked made a dash, and gave such a tug that I slipped as I lay head downwards, bechuckst thim two bits o’ bushes, and I couldn’t get meself back agin.”

“Why, there’s the fish on the line still,” cried Jack, seizing the rough rod, and trying to land the captive of Dinny’s hook.

“Ah, and ye’ll take care, Masther Dick, for I belave it’s that great baste has swallowed the fish, and ye’ll be pulling him to land.”

Dinny was not right; and full of excitement, Jack was trying hard to land the fish, when there was a rush and a swirl in the water, and as they caught sight of the head and jaws of a good-sized crocodile the line was snapped, and the little party stood gazing at the muddy stream.

“Shure an’ that’s him,” said Dinny. “Did ye ever see such a baste?”

“A warning not to bathe,” said Mr Rogers; and after watchfully waiting to see if the reptile would give them an opportunity for a shot, they walked back to the camp, Dinny carrying his fish, and bemoaning the loss of the other and his tackle.

“How big should you think that was, father?” said Dick.

“About twelve feet long, to judge from the size of his head,” said Mr Rogers. “You must be careful, boys, and mind that the cattle are watched when they go down to drink. The crocodiles are most objectionable beasts, and I suppose the Limpopo and its tributaries swarm with them.”

They seemed now to have got into quite a reptilian paradise. Low down by the river the land was swampy, hot, and steamy to a degree; and here amidst the long rank reeds, canes, and herbage the crocodiles revelled, while water-lizards of great size made their tracks along the banks. Higher up out of the ravine where the river ran, the land was rocky and full of nooks and corners, which the sun seemed literally to bake. Here came flies innumerable, buzzing and stinging viciously when their abode was invaded, and over and about the sun-parched rocks the various kinds of lizards swarmed, and preyed upon the flies and beetles.

They were very beautiful, these flies and beetles, and lizards—the former with their brilliant colours and gauzy wings, the latter in their jewelled and polished armour, often of the most brilliant metallic tints, and always glistening in the sun.

Hundreds of the brightly armoured beetles were captured, and transferred to the boxes kept for the purpose; but it was dangerous work, for poisonous snakes lurked amongst these sun-baked rocks, twisted in sleepy knots, and so like in hue to the stones amongst which they lay that a foot might at any moment be inadvertently placed upon them.

Jack had an adventure of this kind the very day after their arrival.

There had been some talk of going, as the General proposed, after one or other of the herds of antelope feeding upon a plain a couple of miles distant; but Mr Rogers said the larder was well filled, and his idea of a pleasant hunting trip was not one where mere butchery was the rule, but where a sufficiency was killed for their daily use.

“By all means, let us destroy such noxious animals as we come across,” he said; “and I am keen sportsman enough to want to shoot some of the large game; but let us be naturalists, boys, and not simply slayers of all we see.”

The result was that they spent that day collecting insects and small reptiles, Chicory accompanying them to carry a large open-mouthed bottle of spirits with stopper and sling, and the glass protected by a stout network of soft copper wire.

Into this spirit-bottle little vipers, scorpions, spiders, and similar creatures, were dropped, Chicory holding the stopper, and throwing back his head and grinning with delight as some wriggling little poisonous creature was popped in. In fact, Chicory was an indefatigable hunter of great things and small, taking readily to natural history pursuits; but he had his drawbacks, one of which was a belief that the little snakes and tiny lizards dropped into the spirits of wine were to make some kind of soup; and he had to be stopped just in time to prevent his well amalgamating the contents of the great flask by giving it a good shake up.

“Dere’s one, Boss Dick. Dere’s nother one, Boss Jack,” he kept on saying, his quick restless eyes discovering the various objects long before his English companions.

They were up in one of the superheated rifts among the rocks, with the sun pouring down so powerfully that the whole party were very languid and disposed to seek the first shelter, when an incident that might have had a fatal termination came upon them like a shot.

Jack was in advance, and about to climb up to a shelf of rock in pursuit of some brilliant little lizards that were darting in and out of the crevices when Chicory shouted out,—

“Boss Jack! mind snake!”

It was too late. There was a great dust-coloured puff-adder lying in his way, with its thick clumsy body nestled in amongst the hot stones; and even as the Zulu boy’s warning was uttered, Jack’s

boot pressed heavily upon the lower part of the dangerous reptile's body.

Sluggish and dull before, this assault brought the reptile into a state of activity that was almost wonderful, and before Jack could realise his peril the short thick viper had struck twice at his leg. Before, however, it could strike again, its head lay upon the stones, cut off by a blow from Chicory's long-bladed assegai, and the body of the dangerous beast was writhing amongst and rattling the stones.

"Chicory 'fraid he broke a bottle," said the boy, who had dropped it in his excitement.

But the flask and its natural history contents formed a very minor consideration just then.

"Are you hurt, my boy?" cried Mr Rogers quickly. "Sit down there. Here, Dick, the spirit-flask. Now then, draw up your trouser-leg."

Jack obeyed, and Mr Rogers immediately stripped down the lad's rough worsted stocking, taking out his penknife and preparing to make the tiny punctures bleed freely, and to suck the fatal poison from the wounds.

"Does it pain you much?" said Mr Rogers excitedly; and his hands trembled for a moment, but only to grow strong directly.

"No," said Jack stoically.

"Don't be afraid, my boy; be a man. Now where was it?"

"I won't be afraid," replied Jack. "I won't mind the knife, father."

"Quick! Show me. Where was the wound?" exclaimed Mr Rogers.

"I don't know. It bit at me twice," replied Jack; "somewhere below the knee."

"These creatures' teeth are like needles," said Mr Rogers. "Look, Dick; can you see? two tiny punctures together?"

“Would it bleed, father?” said Dick.

“Most likely not.”

“I don’t see the wound, father.”

“Nor I, my boy; but my head swims, and I feel giddy. It is as if there was a mist before my eyes. Oh, my boy! my boy!”

“Snake never bite um at all,” cried Chicory sturdily. “All swellum and look blue by dis time. Only bite leggum trousers.”

Jack burst into a roar of laughter, and a strange reaction took place, for Chicory was undoubtedly right: the loose trouser-leg had caught the virulent little reptile’s fangs, and averted the danger.

For there was no gainsaying the matter. Jack felt nothing the matter with him, when, if he had been injured, he would have been under the influence of the terribly rapid poison by then, whereas he was ready to jump up and laugh at the mistake.

He did not laugh much, however, for his father’s serious looks checked him. And soon after, when they were alone, Mr Rogers said something to his son about thankfulness for his escape which brought the tears into the boy’s eyes. The next minute, though, father and son joined hands, and no more was said.

It was another warning to be careful, and of the many dangers by which they were surrounded, and the boys promised to temper their daring with more discretion for the future.

They afterwards called that the reptile day, for the number of scaly creatures they saw was prodigious.

“But I want to see one of those tremendously great boa-constrictors,” said Dick, “one of the monsters you read of in books.”

“As big round as the mast of a man-of-war, and as long, eh?” said his father.

“Yes,” said Dick.

“Then I’m afraid, my boy, that you will be disappointed, for from my own experience I think those creatures exist only in the imaginations of writers. I dare say they may grow to thirty feet long, but you may take a boa of eighteen or twenty feet as a monster, and as big as you are likely to see. That was a very large serpent you shot in the valley there.”

“Oh,” said Dick; “I don’t call that a long one.”

“This is just the sort of place to find a large one, I should say,” continued Mr Rogers. “Hot, dry, stony places for basking, and dense, hot, steamy nooks down by the little river and lagoons where it would be likely to lie in wait for its prey.”

But though they looked well about, they saw nothing, and the heat having now become intense, they found a clump of trees close by a trickling streamlet that ran along from the rocks to the river, and sat down to rest and eat their lunch.

They felt too drowsy and tired with their morning’s walking to care to do much in the afternoon, and they were quietly looking over their captures after shifting their places twice to get out of the sun as the shadow swept on, when Dick suddenly caught his father’s arm, and pointed towards the rocks.

“What’s that shining over there?” he said quickly.

Chicory had been asleep the moment before, but Dick’s movement and question roused him on the instant, and he glanced in the direction indicated.

“Big snake,” he said decisively. “Chicory go and kill um.”

The boy ran towards the rocks, and, picking up their guns, the rest followed—to see that it was a large serpent from whose scales the sun had gleamed. They could not even guess at its length it was so knotted up in folds; but its body was nearly as big round as that of Chicory, who seemed in nowise afraid of the great

reptile, but picked up a mass of rock larger than his head, balanced it on one hand, and advanced towards the sleeping serpent, which had chosen one of the hottest portions of the rock for its siesta.

"*Yap*! *yap*! *yap*!" shouted Chicory; and the creature moved slowly, its whole body seeming to be in motion.

This was not enough for Chicory, who drew his kiri out of his waistband, and threw it heavily at the reptile.

This seemed to rouse it into action, and after a more rapid gliding of one coil over the other, the creature's evil-looking head rose up, hissing menacingly at its disturber, who raised the piece of rock with both hands above his head, and dashed it down upon the serpent's crest, crushing it to the ground, after which the boy nimbly leaped away, to avoid the writhing of its body and the fierce whipping of the creature's tail.

"Well done, Chicory, my brave boy," cried Mr Rogers, patting the Zulu lad upon the shoulder.

"Yes, Chicory very brave boy," said the lad, smiling complacently, and quite innocent of his words sounding conceited. "Chicory kill all big snake for boss. Boss boys very kind to Coffee, and father love 'em."

This was a long speech for Chicory, who nodded and smiled, and ended by waiting his opportunity, and then seizing the boa's tail and running away with it to stretch the creature out. But it was too heavy, and its writhings continued even after the boys had fired a charge of small shot at close quarters through the reptile's head.

They wanted to measure it, but that was impossible from its writhings. Mr Rogers, however, made an approximate calculation, and then said, quietly,—

"I should say it was as near as can be nineteen feet long, and unusually large in girth."

“Oh, father,” cried Jack; “it must be thirty-nine feet long.”

“Ah, Jack, my boy,” replied his father, laughing, “that’s old travellers’ measurement—and they always allowed six feet to the yard—that is, twenty-four inches to the foot; and that’s why ourang-outangs, and whales, and serpents were always so large.”

But they had not yet arrived at the end of their reptile adventures.

They waited for some time to see if the boa would cease its writhings; but the muscular contractions still continuing, and the dark tortoiseshell-like markings of brown and yellow and black glistening in the sun quite two hours after the creature might reasonably have been said to be killed, they gave it up and went further afield.

“Suppose we leave this series of red-hot rocks, boys, and go down towards the water. From the appearance of the country over yonder I fancy that the stream widens out into a lake.”

“How do you know, father?” asked Dick.

“From the character of the trees and other growth. Don’t you see how much more leafy and luxuriant it looks. Keep your eyes well opened and your pieces ready. I dare say we may meet with a rare bird or two, perhaps some kind of water-buck—ready for the camp to-morrow!”

As Mr Rogers had predicted, a couple of miles walking brought them to what in parts was quite a marsh full of canes and reeds; but every here and there were beautiful pools of breeze-rippled water, spread with lovely lilies and other water-plants, while the edges were fringed with willow-like wands and waving sedges.

So beautiful was the scene where the little river widened, and wound through the low ground, that as they wandered about amongst the firmer ground they forbore to shoot, but paused from time to time to watch the lovely plumage of the various ducks and cranes that made the lagoons their home.

Not a shot then had been fired, and as they wandered in and out they found plenty to take their attention. Every here and there Chicory found for them some nest in amongst the reeds—the nursery of duck or crane. But the most interesting thing that they saw in the shape of nests was that of a kind of sociable grossbeak, a flock of which had built a town in a large tree, quite a hundred nests being together in common; while in another tree, whose branches drooped over the water, there were suspended dozens of a curiously woven bottle-shaped nest, with its entrance below, to keep the young birds from the attack of snakes.

“What’s that noise?” said Jack, suddenly, as he was on about a quarter of a mile ahead with his brother, Mr Rogers being busily transferring some water-beetles to Chicory’s spirit-bottle, which escaped breaking after all from the toughness of the wire.

“I don’t know,” replied Dick. “It sounds like some animal. And there’s a scuffling noise as well.

“It’s just like a cow moaning, a very long way off. I wonder what it is?”

“I don’t think it’s a long way off. It seems to me to be pretty close.”

They moved about among the reeds and bushes, but could see nothing.

“I know what it is,” said Jack, laughing. “It’s some kind of big frog or toad: they live in such marshy places as this, and they croak and make noises that seem to be ever so far-off, when they are close by.”

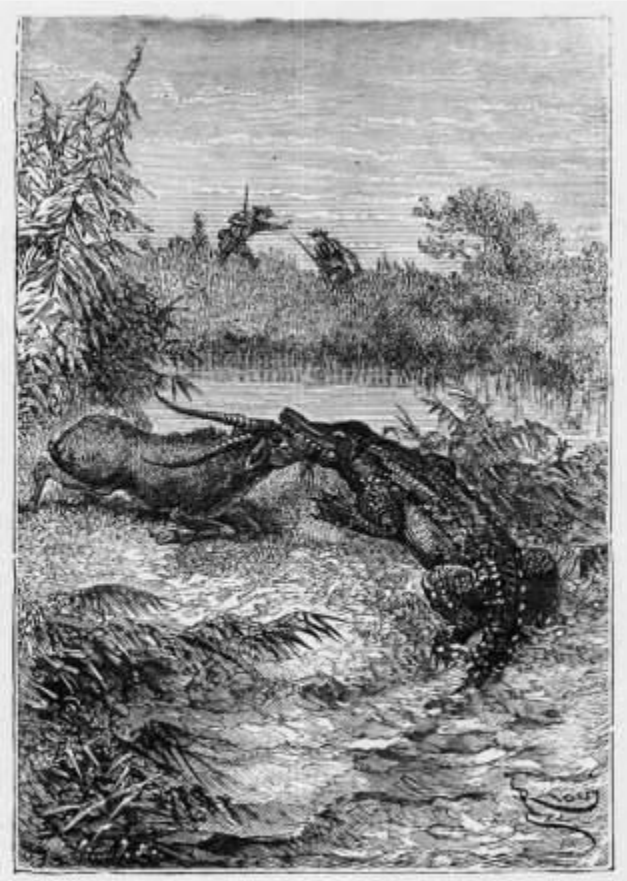
“Oh! Look, Jack! Oh, poor thing!” cried his brother.

“Where? Where?”

“Over yonder, across the water.”

Jack caught sight of the objects that had taken his brother's attention, and for a few moments the boys seemed passive spectators of the horrible scene.

Across the lagoon, and some fifty yards away, a beautiful antelope, with gracefully curved spiral horns, had apparently come out of the bushes to drink, at a point of land running a little way into the lake, when it had been seized by a hideous-looking crocodile. The monster's teeth-armed jaws had closed upon the unfortunate antelope's muzzle, and a furious struggle was going on, during which, as it uttered its piteous feeble lowing noise, something between the cry of a calf and a sheep, the crocodile, whose tail was in the water on the side of the point farthest from where the spectators stood, was striving to drag its prey into the lagoon.



WAITING FOR HELP.

The antelope made a brave struggle, but the tremendous grip of the reptile and its enormous weight, rendered the efforts of the poor beast vain: and as the boys gazed across, they saw the poor brute dragged down upon its knees and chest, and the crocodile shuffling slowly back into the water, an inch at a time.

“Oh, the poor, poor beast!” cried Dick piteously. “Oh, Jack, how dreadful!”

“Poor old crocodile!” said Jack coolly, for he had now recovered himself. “If he’s going to eat all that buck for his dinner he’ll suffer from indigestion. I say, Dick, let’s give him a couple of pills.”

As he spoke, Jack sank upon one knee in the reeds so as to rest his rifle well, and catching at his brother’s idea, Dick followed suit.

“Take a good, steady aim, Dick, right behind his eye, so as not to hit the antelope: and when I say fire, pull trigger as softly as you can. Take it coolly. Ready?”

“Yes.”

“Fire!”

It was none too soon, for the antelope was being dragged along, growing more helpless and its struggles more faint moment by moment, while the body of the crocodile was disappearing backwards down the slope of the point of land.

But that loathsome-looking head was still visible, dragging the helpless, striving antelope, whose piteous rolling eyes could be plainly seen by the boys.

The next instant, though, they had concentrated their gaze on the gleaming orb of the crocodile, thrown all their power of nerve into that aim, and, so as not to disturb their rifle-sights by the slightest movement, softly drew trigger.

The reports of the rifles were almost simultaneous, and for a few moments the boys could see nothing for smoke: but as the tiny cloud of vapour lifted, they looked eagerly across.

There was nothing to be seen.

Chapter Twenty Three.

An Interference with Washing, and the Result.

"Oh," cried Jack, "we both missed, and he has drawn the poor thing in."

"I don't believe I missed," said Dick. "No: look, Jack!"

For at that moment they saw a movement amongst the undergrowth behind where the antelope had been kneeling; and the poor beast, with bleeding nostrils and starting eyes, staggered down to the water's edge, drank with avidity, and then bounded back as another or the same crocodile half leaped out of the water to catch it.

But the antelope, weak and exhausted though it was, escaped, and bounded away into the dense reeds, while Jack as he coolly reloaded his rifle-barrel said,—

"Nice place this, Dicky. Let's take our clothes off and have a bathe."

"Ugh!" shuddered Dick. "The monsters!"

"What have you shot, boys?" said Mr Rogers, hurrying up. "I was afraid it was an accident, the two rifles went off like one."

They told him, and being eager to see if there was any trace of the crocodile, they went round the shores of the little lake to the other side of the point, for the river wound so that the incident took place on their own bank; but for a few minutes they could see nothing but muddy water.

“I’m afraid you did not kill him, boys,” said Mr Rogers.

“But we frightened him off,” cried Jack; “and that’s something.”

“Chicory find him; look!” cried the boy, pointing where he stood.

They went to his side, and there sure enough, with its light underparts showing, lay a great crocodile, its tail moving feebly to and fro, and, most satisfactory sight of all to the boys, a couple of threads of blood rising slowly from the monster’s head through the clear water.

“Hah!”

It was Chicory who shouted, and as he did so he struck back his young masters. For his quick eyes had seen what looked like a dark shadow in the river; and his effort was just in time, for a huge crocodile threw itself half out of the water, disappearing again with a sullen plunge as it missed its prey.

“I think that will do for to-day, boys,” said Mr Rogers. “Let’s get back to the waggon. For my part I feel disposed to spend the rest of our time shooting crocodiles, so as to try and rid the country of a few of the pests.”

“Only all we could kill would be as nothing, would they, father?” said Dick.

“No, they would hardly count,” replied Mr Rogers; and they made the best of their way back to the waggon, only too glad of the meal Dinny had ready for them, roast and boiled.

Chicory turned a rough kind of somersault as he caught sight of his brother sitting up and doing that which was dear to Chicory’s own heart—eating; and as there was a good share of food beside Coffee, the tired brother made no scruple about going to join him and help him eat.

It was wonderful what that boy could eat when he was thoroughly hungry. Dinny would stare at him, rub his ears, and screw up his

face with a look of disgust, while the very dogs seemed envious of his powers. Rough'un would wait patiently for some time bearing it all apparently as he abided his own time; but when he saw Chicory keep steadily on he began to bark furiously, as if such behaviour were not to be borne.

"Shure, Masther Dick, it's my honest belafe," said Dinny, "that if you put down enough mate before them two Sooloo boys they'd kape on aiting till they got to be hungry again."

In spite of the heat of the weather, the performances of Dick and Jack upon strong venison essence and roast gazelle were enough to startle any housekeeper of small income and an anxiety about the state of the butcher's bill. But of course the outdoor life and constant exertion produced a tremendous appetite; and as Mr Rogers noted the change in Dick, whose palate had to be tempted only a short time back, he felt thankful to see the difference.

Dinny had outdone himself that day in the matter of cookery; and a hearty meal having been eaten, the boys spent half-an-hour with their pets, the leopard being so far particularly docile, and their horses whinnying with satisfaction as soon as they heard their masters' steps. Then there were the cattle to look at, all of which were sleek and well; and lastly, the various specimens to arrange before going to rest.

The sun was getting low by this time, and the stillness of the wilds was only broken by the twittering of a little flock of birds in the adjacent trees, when Dinny came running from the river-side—

"Hoi, sor! bring the roifles, an' ye plaze. Here's Pater being swallowed down by one of thim great crocodivils!"

"Quick, boys!" cried Mr Rogers; but there was no need to speak, for the rifles had been already seized, and away the little party ran, towards the river.

The water was not visible till they were close upon it, on account of the conformation of the land; but when they did come in sight,

the scene was so curious that they halted with cocked pieces, gazing down from the rocks at black Peter the driver.

Peter being a particularly cleanly man had taken a pair of his linen drawers down to the stream to wash, with Dinny sitting on the edge of the rock smoking his pipe, and looking-

PATER'S GARMENT.

on. All had gone well till Peter was beating the garment about in the water for a final rinse, when suddenly the jaws of a huge crocodile were protruded from the surface, not a yard away.

As might have been expected, Peter dropped his drawers, and darted back, while the crocodile remained staring at him, and Dinny rushed off shouting for help.

They learned afterwards that what they had now seen had been repeated several times. For just as they paused, Peter was creeping cautiously forward towards where his drawers lay upon the sand, stooping with outstretched hand to seize them, when there was the slightest disturbance possible in the water, and the head of a monstrous crocodile appeared.

Back darted Peter, and the head of the crocodile sank slowly beneath the water, when, unaware that help was at hand, Peter

waited a minute or two, and then once more stole gently and on tiptoe towards his much-coveted garb.

This time his hand was almost upon it when out came the crocodile's head, and Peter nimbly darted back, but only to come on again as quietly as possible, apparently quite ignorant of the fact that it was by the eye that the reptile distinguished his coming, and not by ear.

Twice more was this watched, when Mr Rogers, feeling alarmed lest the driver should be too venturesome, whispered to his sons to shoot.

"No, father," whispered back Dick; "we want to see you shoot this one."

Mr Rogers hesitated a moment, and then lying down upon his chest he rested the barrel of his rifle on the edge of the rock where it went perpendicularly down to the little strand, and waited for the next appearance of the dangerous monster.

He had not long to wait, for Peter seemed to be determined this time to make sure of his garment, and cautiously stealing forward he had almost touched it, when out came the crocodile's head once more, and as Peter darted back it remained stationary, its hideous eyes watching the black driver, when Mr Rogers' rifle spoke out, and Peter fell upon his back, yelling for help; while the stream, that had quietly rippled over where the crocodile lay, was suddenly beaten by the monster's struggles into a tempest of foam.

"Are ye kilt, Pater, ma black bouchal?" cried Dinny piteously, as he leaped down to the aid of his fellow-servant.

"Mind the crocodile, Dinny," shouted Dick maliciously.

"Oh! murther!" roared Dinny; and he scrambled up the rock again, and sat there panting, as the boys roared with laughter. "Ah, and it's moighty funny, I've no doubt, Masther Dick, sor, but how

would you fale yourself if one of the great crocodivils had got hold of ye?”

“Very bad, Dinny,” said Dick. “There, go and help Peter; he isn’t hurt, only frightened.”

“Thought boss shot me,” said Peter, making a rush, and then triumphantly waving his drawers over his head, before withdrawing to a place of safety, where he could watch with the others the dying struggles of the crocodile, which grew weaker and weaker, and then ceased; and the stream flowed calmly on, sweeping away the mud and sand, and revealing the body of the monster, apparently quite dead, at the bottom of the shallow water.

Generally speaking these reptiles get away into the depths of the rivers, or into some deep hole beneath the banks, but this one had apparently been hit so badly that it had not had time to get away, and the sight of the monster so excited the boys, that they begged hard to have it dragged out on to the strand.

“But it is of no use, and its musky odour will be very offensive,” said Mr Rogers.

“But we want to see it, father—to measure it, and see how long it is, and how big round.”

“Very well,” said Mr Rogers, “then you shall. Peter, get one of the oxen and a rope, and we’ll drag the brute ashore. Dinny, go and ask the General to come.”

The Zulu chief, and Peter with his ox, arrived at about the same time, when no sooner did the former hear what was wanted than he made a big loop, waded into the water, and slipped the noose over the monster’s head.

This noose was pulled tight, the rope attached to the yoke of the ox, the word given, and the crocodile drawn not only out of the water on to the strand, but through an opening in the rock and on to the firm ground above.

Here the General proceeded to unfasten the rope, Mr Rogers curiously examining the mark made by his bullet just behind the creature's eye, when, to the astonishment of all present, the reptile made a tremendous snap with its awful jaws, and as the General darted aside, the creature began to thrash the air with its tail, sweeping it from side to side, and snapping its jaws as it began to move off towards the edge of the little cliff.

Both Dick and Jack stood there paralysed for a few moments, for they had believed the reptile dead; but Dick soon recovered, and as the crocodile was slowly progressing, snapping its jaws menacingly as it went, the boy went close up and fired at its eye.

There was a terrible convulsion; then the monster levelled shrubs and herbage in all directions, after which it suddenly seemed to succumb, when getting Peter to help him, the Zulu thrust one of the reptile's legs beneath it, got hold of the other, and the crocodile was hauled over upon its back, and the keen knife of the Zulu cut its head nearly off, and ripped it open from end to end.

"He'll never get over this," said Jack. "I dare say this wretch has killed hundreds of innocent creatures in its day, and I'm glad it's done."

They were not disturbed by lions that night, but the mosquitoes and sand-flies made up for it, tormenting them so that morning was gladly hailed, and Jack and Dick went off with a measuring tape to get the length and girth of the great reptile as a trophy.

"I say eighteen feet long," said Jack decidedly, as they walked along.

"Do you remember what father said about the travellers' measurements?" said Dick drily. "No, Jack, he is not eighteen feet long, nor sixteen. I should say fifteen feet."

"But I read that they grow to twenty-five and thirty feet long," said Jack.

“Perhaps they do,” replied Dick, “but our one hadn’t time to grow so long, and—hallo!”

“Hallo!” said Jack.

“Hallo!” said Dick again.

“Father must have had it dragged back into the stream, so let’s go back. Pah! how busy the vultures have been.”

They had evidently been gorging themselves upon the crocodile’s vitals since daybreak, and a perfect flock of them flew sluggishly away as the boys made sure that the reptile was not where it had been left, and then went back to ask their father about the monster.

“No,” he said, “I have not had the creature touched. I’ll go with you. Here, General.”

The Zulu strode up, and Chicory followed; and thus strengthened they went back to the place where the crocodile had been left, and the General pointed out the exact spot where it had lain. Then bending down, he pointed with his finger to certain marks leading to the edge of the little cliff, and then showed that it was evident that the crocodile had struggled to the edge, and fallen over some six feet on to the sand and stones below.

“But he couldn’t have gone down there,” cried Dick. “Father shot him dead, and then I did.”

“Was that you speaking, my boy, or Dinny?” said Mr Rogers, smiling.

“Ah, but you know what I mean, father,” cried the boy; and then they all looked down on to the strand, but not without keeping a watchful eye upon the water.

Here the General showed the impression made by the crocodile in the sand, and also the marks of its claws and tail as it crawled into the river, and then they all stared at each other.

“Why, it must have come to life again,” said Jack.

“No kill some crocodiles,” said the Zulu solemnly; and then, after a little more examination of the spot, Mr Rogers turned back towards the camp, Dick and Jack remembering that it was breakfast-time, and feeling quite ready for another hearty meal.

“But could the crocodile come to life again, father?” asked Jack.

“Certainly not, my boy. It could not have been killed; and horrible as its injuries were, it seems to have had life enough to enable it to crawl back into the river, where probably it now lies dead at the bottom amongst the mud.”

Chapter Twenty Four.

Jack Rogers and the Runaway Herds.

The General found a shallow fording-place, when the Limpopo itself was reached; and no little excitement was displayed by Dinny at the thought of recklessly plunging into a river that was as full as a Pay shuck, he said, of crocodivils.

But the river had to be crossed; and when all was ready the order “Trek!” was given, Peter’s whip cracked, and the team went down a slope into the river at a trot, Dirk bravely walking by the side of the foremost oxen on finding Jack and Dick, on horseback, ready to lead the way.

Dinny groaned, and crept into the waggon unseen by any one; while Coffee, Chicory, and the General took over the horses side by side with Mr Rogers.

The stream ran fast, but it was very shallow, and the bottom was hard, so that the waggon was got over in safety, the oxen dragging it well up on the other side before they were allowed to halt; and so successful had the passage been that there might not have been a crocodile in the river.

The fact was of course that the trampling and disturbance of so many hoofs kept the reptiles at a distance; but as the waggon was halted, and Mr Rogers gave a glance under to see that all was right, the dogs began running and snuffing about amongst the reeds and grass at the side, when Pompey suddenly uttered a hideous yell, and bounded away, careering over the plain with his tail between his legs, having had a very narrow escape from a small and active crocodile, which had literally thrown itself out of the water in its endeavour to catch him.

The land presented an entirely different aspect now, vast plains running away towards the horizon; and in places it looked rather ominous, for it was parched and dry. Plenty of good grass and water were absolute necessities for the success of their expedition, so Mr Rogers paused to consult with the General, who pointed to the fact that there were great herds of game upon the plain, a sign which indicated that there must be pasture and water, and as he expressed his thorough conviction that plenty of grass would be found on in advance, the order was given once more to trek.

“But where’s Dinny?” cried Mr Rogers; “surely we have not left him behind.”

“No, sor,” said a whining voice; “shure I was putting things a bit sthrait in the waggon. Are we safe across the wather yet?”

“Safe?” cried Dick contemptuously; “no! not a bit. Look out, Dinny, or we shall have one of the crocodiles pursuing us on horseback on purpose to have a snap at you.”

“Shure an’ ye’s joking,” said Dinny thrusting his head out of the back of the waggon; “and maybe he’d prefer you, Masther Dick, as being tinderer to his teeth and more gintale.”

The journey during the next few days was more laborious than interesting. It was intensely hot; water was scarce, so was pasture; and but for the wise provision of the couple of goodly-sized tubs strung behind the waggon, there would have been a great deal of suffering. Nobody knew the position of those tubs

better than Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus, unless it was Rough'un, for no sooner did they become thirsty, and fail to discover water, than they took their places behind the waggon and watched the barrels, "dhrinking 'em dhry wid their eyes," so Dinny said, and barking loudly whenever a drop was drawn.

The plains they crossed seemed to be endless, so did the herds of various kinds of game; and one evening the party separated in search of something for the larder, which had become low.

The General went in one direction with Dick, Mr Rogers went in another with Chicory, and in a very independent spirit Jack shouldered his rifle, and went off by himself to see what he could bring down.

About a mile from the bank he came upon what promised to be a capital place for stalking one or other of the herds grazing on the plain, namely, the bed of a nearly dried-up river, dotted with pools of water, one which had cut its way in stormy seasons through the rocky soil, leaving on either side a steep well-marked bank of about four feet high.

The bed of the little river was dotted with tall clumps of feathery-flowered grass, which with the bank would form excellent cover, so that the hunter could go for miles either way in a natural trench, towards whose water pools the antelopes would most probably graze.

It was a great advantage, but the place had its disadvantages as well, and Jack found them out before long.

At first he started full of hope, congratulating himself on the fact that he had on his high riding-boots, and could wade dry shod through some of the pools. But before he had gone far he began wishing that he had brought the dogs, to search the different clumps of high grass, every one of which looked to be a certain lurking-place for a lion; and knowing now full well what capital stalkers they were, he kept glancing over his shoulder at the various clumps, fully expecting to see an enemy.

There were two or three rushes and rustling noises to make him start, but as they only proved to be made by water-lizards Jack grew more confident, and creeping cautiously along, he began to make for a couple of herds feeding upon the plain—one, the gnu, or wildebeeste as the Boers call them; the others, the graceful, shapely blessbok.

The appearance of the fierce shaggy gnu is not such as to give promise that he will prove good eating, so Jack naturally turned his attention to the blessboks, creeping cautiously along so as to get within shot; but though he was perfectly certain that he had not shown so much as the barrel of his gun, the blessbok suddenly took alarm, and went off like the wind.

Their very first dash alarmed the gnu, some thirty strong, and they dashed off in another direction.

"And I was so careful!" cried Jack passionately; but the next instant, just as he was about to show himself, and get out of the cramped position he had occupied close to a clump of grass, he had the satisfaction of seeing that the blessboks had not been alarmed at him, for they had suddenly wheeled round, and were coming right for him as hard as they could gallop.

"Well, I shall get one this time," cried Jack, bringing his rifle to bear, and waiting for an opportunity as the beautiful animals galloped along; when a heavy beating noise behind him caught his ear, and turning he found that the gnus had also altered their course, and were coming back, with their heads down, tails up, and their horns half pointed, as if to charge the young hunter where he crouched.

There was no mistake about it; the gnu herd was coming straight for him, and in another minute they would have leaped down into the half dry watercourse, and trampled him into the sand.

It was a time for displaying a little presence of mind, and to show the power of man—in this case, boy—over the beasts of the field. If the gnus had kept on, they would have crushed Jack on the instant, each one being in strength much more than a match for

a man; but on seeing him start up on one knee, and shout and wave his gun, they swerved off to the right, and thundered by, just as a lighter beating noise of feet was heard; and as Jack turned, there to his disgust was the last of the little herd of blessboks, almost close to him, galloping by.

Running round to the other side of the patch of grass he went down on one knee and fired; but the excitement had disarranged his nerves, and the bullet went over the last blessbok's back; while before he could get in another cartridge and climb out of the watercourse, his chance was gone.

Chapter Twenty Five.

Nearly a Waggon-Wreck.

There were no temptations to tarry much upon these plains, where there were certainly plenty of antelopes, quagga, and zebras, but little else to interest them. Lions were pretty common, but somehow they did not trouble the travellers much, being pretty well supplied from the herds of antelopes and the like; but the hyaenas proved to be a perfect pest, howling about the cattle-kraal of a night, and harrying the oxen so that they could not rest in peace. Upon two successive nights it was hard work to save the cattle from making a regular stampede, for the poor creatures were so alarmed that they broke down the thorn fence and would have galloped over the plains but for the efforts and voices of their drivers and the Zulus.

So bad did the hyaenas become, that the first moonlight night it was resolved to lie in wait and try and shoot two or three.

The boys were delighted with the idea, but the sole result was the loss of the night's rest, for though they could hear the ugly brutes uttering their dismal howl all round the camp, not one was seen; and Dick at last declared that they were ventriloquists, and lay in a hole and sent their voices all around.

The next day’s trekking was very arduous, for the ground was dry and sterile, awkward pieces of rock, each big enough to wreck the waggon, protruding from the sand in all directions. The dryness, too, was excessive, and they seemed to have got into a most terribly sterile tract, which now and then was cut by great deep crevices, which were as if the ground had cracked, each of these cracks being big enough to swallow waggon and team if they had inadvertently gone in.

The poor beasts suffered terribly from thirst; but as evening was coming on, the black clouds gathered, and it soon become evident that before long there would be a perfect deluge of rain.

It was upon them before they knew it, almost literally streaming down, and soaking everything; but in spite of the discomfort it was delightful to see the thirsty oxen stop to drink with avidity from the great pools that the rain soon formed. In fact, the storm was so cooling and refreshing that Chicory seemed to revel in it, his dark skin shining with moisture; and the boys themselves did not seem to mind getting wet; but as the night came on intensely dark, and in addition to the pitiless rain there set in a tremendous thunderstorm, with deafening peals, and vivid lightning cutting the black clouds in all directions, the position of the travellers began to get uncomfortable.

The General promised a good halting-place further on; but the darkness grew so intense that the foremost oxen had to be led, and Mr Rogers, and the General, armed with a long pole, went on in advance.

If they could have halted where they were they would gladly have done so; but it seemed madness to stop in that wretched wilderness, and so they crept slowly on, drenched, depressed, and miserable, the thunder deafening them with its peals, and the lightning seeming to crackle as it fell in jagged lines from the skies.

Even the oxen seemed to participate in the general depression, for they went on very slowly, step by step, as if helping their

leaders to find a suitable track, so as not to overturn the waggon against some piece of rock.

Suddenly the General gave a warning cry, one that was echoed by Mr Rogers, and the bullocks were pulled up short just as they touched the leaders.

ON THE BRINK.

The warning was needed, for as he felt his way onward with the pole the General had suddenly felt it go down into a rift stretching right across their road; and as it proved to be bottomless as far as he could tell, and went to right and left for some distance, there was nothing to be done but to camp just as they were, and wait through the cold wet night for morning.

It was a pitiless and a bitter night, and those who believe in Africa being a land of intense heat would have felt their preconceived ideas shaken had they sat and shivered in that waggon, through whose double tilt covering the wind seemed to pierce as though it was so much open canvas. Far worse was it beneath, where, sheltering themselves as best they could, the black servants, Dinny, and the Zulus huddled together for mutual warmth. Even the dogs refused to be excluded, and, in spite of Dinny's rather unmerciful kicks, kept crawling under the waggon, till Chicory

took pity upon them and curled up in company, forming such a knot that it was hard to make out which was Chicory and which was dog. But the Zulu boy said it was nice and warm, all but one little place where there was no Pompey, and one leg which he couldn't get under Crass.

Fortunately the roar of the elements was sufficient to keep the predatory beasts in their lairs, or they would have had an easy task to seize upon oxen or horses, for it was as impossible in the darkness to find thorns and build a kraal, as it was in the wet to get a fire to burn.

Dick said the night was "as miserable as mizzer," and that Jack got all the blanket; but, like all other things, that miserable night came to an end, and as the sun rose up warm and bright, up sprang the spirits of all with it; and as the steam reeked from the soaked waggon, they turned from it to look with a curious sense of shrinking at the narrow escape they had had.

For where the foremost oxen had been checked, consequent upon the General's warning, there was a great crack right across their path, some twenty feet wide, double that distance deep, and running for several hundred yards right and left.

But for the General's timely warning the whole team would have gone in, dragging after them the waggon, and the horses which were haltered on behind, producing such an awful wreck that the expedition must have stopped; and then there would have been the problem to solve, how should they get back to Natal.

As the sun grew warmer, and a fire had been lighted, food cooked, and a hearty breakfast made, the troubles of the past night were forgotten, and in the best of spirits they went on again, after a detour to avoid the chasm, the moistened earth smelling delicious, and the birds twittering and singing joyously in every tree.

So far they had avoided the kraals or villages of the various peoples of these parts of Africa, but now the General announced that they were at last approaching the big river, where they would

have to ask the black king's permission to hunt, and make him a present for his concession.

For in his land there were the giraffe, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and elephant—huge beasts, the names of which made the boys' pulses throb with excitement.

There were crocodiles too in plenty in the big river, so the General said; and it was there that the river fell.

The idea of seeing the wondrous falls of the Zambesi had long been nurtured in Mr Rogers' heart; and as they had in their many months' journey come so far, he determined that they would if possible reach that part of the river, and see the falls, even if they did not go farther.

There seemed to be no reason why they should not, for every one, thanks to his care and management, was in the best of health, the change in Dick being wondrous. Certainly there was poor Coffee: but he was growing stronger day by day, and vowing vengeance against every lion in the land.

That they were approaching a more inhabited tract they soon had warning in the increasing scarcity of the game. In place of the vast herds they had so often encountered, the herds were small, and so shy that it was only by lying in ambush, while the others went miles round to show themselves and make the antelopes take flight in the direction of the hidden hunters, that a sufficiency was obtained for the daily needs.

The boys, however, managed to supplement the animal food with the birds that were shot, or knocked down with kiris; and fishing became a favourite pursuit in some one or other of the rocky pools in the river-beds that they had to cross, silurus and other kinds being frequently captured with a hook and line.

They were curious fish these silurus, and, of course in happy ignorance of the meaning of angling, readily took the bait thrown to them in the deep pools; but when hooked their behaviour was almost startling, from the tremendous rushes they made in all

directions. Being very much of the same configuration as the eel, they partook of that long, lithe fellow's strength in the water; so that it was no uncommon thing for one that was hooked, and had been played for some time, to break away and carry with it half of a good line. Several were lost, but many were taken, and found famous when cooked, though Dinny avoided them as "avil-looking bastes."

Game grew scarcer still; and Mr Rogers, the boys, and Chicory were sitting in the long grass, partaking of some lunch they had brought, after a long toilsome walk in search of hartebeeste, a herd of which curiously-formed animals had been seen from a distance, when Chicory suddenly pricked up his ears, leaped to his feet, and then signed to his white companions to look.

About a mile away, but coming on at a tremendous rate, was a little herd of zebras, whose beautiful forms and clearly-marked stripes could easily be distinguished as they ran through the long grass.

Just about the size of an ordinary donkey, but with the build and sturdy shapeliness of a well-bred pony, they literally spurned the ground with their hoofs in their efforts to get away, for after them in swift chase came three Kaffirs, well-mounted upon sturdy cobs, and armed with assegais.

As they came abreast of Jack and Dick, the pursuers were close upon the tail of the herd, the speed and stride of the horses telling in a long race; and as they passed, the boys could see that the Kaffirs were nude all but a loin-cloth, and that in place of a saddle they used for their horses merely a small skin.

The pace was tremendous. And growing excited at what they saw, Dick and Jack, while longing for their own cobs, so as to join in the chase, set off at a run, followed by their father and Chicory.

As they ran on they saw one of the Kaffirs overtake the hindmost zebra, ride alongside for a few moments, and then spear it, the unfortunate beast stumbling as the assegai was driven home, and then falling headlong to the ground.

The Kaffir's companions kept on the chase, singling out two more of the zebras, one of which was directly after brought down by a well-directed spear-thrust, but the other managed to escape, the hunters being content with their success.

The approach of the party of whites was looked upon as dangerous, and getting together, spear in hand, the three hunters seemed to be preparing to meet the white strangers as men of war.

Seeing this, Mr Rogers sent Chicory on as an ambassador to assure the strangers of their friendly feelings: and on seeing the Zulu boy advance alone, they waited, heard what he had to say, and then cantered up, holding out a hand in token of friendship.

They were fine manly-looking young fellows, and said through Chicory that they had come many journeys after zebras; and they smiled with delight on being presented each with a common pocket-knife.

The coming of the General somewhat disturbed their equanimity; but on hearing his friendly words they readily accepted his help in skinning the zebras, whose hides, with some of the choicest portions of the meat, they packed in front of them upon the horses: and after a little conversation respecting the town upon the river to which they were bound, the three Kaffirs rode off; and the great flap-winged vultures swept down, one after the other, attacking the unfortunate zebras: and shortly there was nothing left but a few scattered bones.

Chapter Twenty Six.

How Dinny heard a Lion wid a Bad Cowld.

"They're avil-looking birruds thim vultures, Masther Dick," said Dinny, as he saw the great flap-winged birds sailing slowly through the air, some of them always being in attendance upon the waggon, knowing, apparently by instinct, that the companionship of the hunting-party meant food for them.

They kept at a respectful distance, though; not on account of the guns and rifles, for they seemed to know that they would not be molested, but because of the dogs, who resented their attendance as an insult, and as likely to deprive them of many a pleasant bone.

Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus would make a dash at the great birds whenever they saw them upon the plain, charging down upon them open-mouthed, while Rough'un went at them in a way full of guile, hanging his head down, and keeping his nose close to the ground, as if in search of something he had lost. He never seemed to be taking the slightest notice of the vultures, even turning his head away, but all the time he was sidling nearer and nearer, till feeling that he was within easy reach, he would make a dash at the nearest bird.

But Rough'un succeeded no better than Pompey and his brethren, for the vultures would take a few hops, spread their wings, and float up in the air, as the dog rushed under them, leaving him barking most furiously at the birds as they went.

"Ah, they're avil-looking birruds, thim vultures," said Dinny, "and we'd never suffer 'em in ould Oireland. Shure, Saint Pathrick would have dhruv out ivery mother's son of 'em before he'd set his foot in the counthry. They're avil-looking bastes. I'll be asking the masther to lind me a gun, and I'll go out shooting of 'em."

"I don't think father will let you, Dinny," replied Dick. "They're very useful in their way, and clear off all the foul decaying carcases of the animals that die on the plains."

"Shure and the flies would do all that a dale nater and claner," cried Dinny. "And, oh, murther, Masther Dick, but it's hard work to keep the flies off the mate out here. They come in shwarms, and I'm doing nothing all day but kill 'em. I say, Masther Dick, dear, whin are we going back?"

"Going back?" cried Dick. "I don't know. Not yet for months, I hope."

“Oh, murther, an’ what’ll become of us all? Sure we’re never going near any more of thim rivers, Masther Dick?”

“But we are, Dinny, we’re trekking straight for one now.”

“Not one with thim murthering crocodivils in it, Masther Dick?”

“Yes, Dinny; the Zambesi swarms with them, I believe, and they run very large.”

“Och, mother, mother! and it’s a good thing ye don’t know where yer poor boy is all among black haythens, and lines, and crocodivils, and other foreign bastes of prey. I niver thought I’d come to such a thing as this. Shure it’s a horrid counthry altogether.”

“I think it a grand country, Dinny,” cried Dick; “and I shall ask father to stop out here for long enough.”

“Ah, be aisy, Masther Dick, dear, and don’t demane yerself to stop out here among the dirty blacks. Shure ye’re meant for better things. Jist think of it, darlin’, out here in the wildherness all these long months, and never once tasted mutton or beef.”

“But you’ve been living on prime venison and other game, Dinny.”

“An’ is it living ye call it—aiting thim bucks and doe things, like a black, or a wild baste?” said Dinny in tones of contempt. “Not so much as a pitaytie even or a pay. Shure I call it shtarving,” grumbled Dinny. “Look at that now.”

“That” was poor Coffee, who was so much better that he had been out once or twice upon short hunting expeditions, and was now tramping behind the waggon with his brother, engaged in what cannot better be described than as a game of romps with the dogs.

For these welcomed the advances of the Zulu boys with delight, racing and careering round them, making fierce attacks, and allowing themselves to be seized and thumped and rolled over, in

what at times was a regular tangle of dogs and boys, after which there was a run to overtake the waggon.

Dinny, in spite of his grumbling, was a good deal pleased upon this day, for the route of the waggon took them by several salt-pools, whose waters the dogs rushed to lap, but came back shaking their heads and barking furiously, growling at Dick and Jack, who laughed at them, as if they were resenting a trick that had been played at their expense.

These salt-pools were very interesting, the salt forming in quite a crust, like ice, some inches below the surface; while to the surprise of Mr Rogers, he found beautiful palm and the queerly-shaped baobab-trees, flourishing in the salt-impregnated soil.

The long weary trek brought them in sight of the fine broad river along whose banks they had now to journey till they reached the black king’s town; and they had not gone far before they saw in the distance a couple of canoes upon the water, while directly afterwards they passed a clump of trees and came upon a fishing-party, three of the number being in a large dug-out canoe, the other upon a mass of rock surrounded by reeds.

So intent were the fishermen upon their work amongst

WITHOUT ROD OR LINE.

the great water-lilies that dotted the quiet surface of the river close in shore, that they did not see the approach of Dick and Jack, closely followed by Mr Rogers to protect them from harm. The sight was so novel that the young Englishmen stood still amongst the reeds watching the blacks, one of whom managed the canoe by means of a pole, while the others watched their opportunity, and then darted their long slender fish-spears down into the transparent water, and several times over brought up a good-sized fish.

They were strong, well-built savages, whose belief in clothing went as far as a little apron; and one of them had his hair carefully twisted, and tied up into an absurd-looking pigtail, which stood straight up from the back of his head.

The English party stood watching them for some minutes, and then advanced towards the shore, making signs. But the moment their presence was discovered the men in the canoe uttered a shout, and their companion on the shore plunged into the water to join them, the whole party paddling rapidly off as soon as their companion was hauled in to the bottom of their canoe, a feat not performed except at great risk of overturning the heavy clumsily-formed boat.

The General was beckoned up to join them by Mr Rogers, but they paid no more heed to him than to the Englishman, their sole thought being how best they could make their escape.

“They’ll go and announce our coming as that of enemies, I suppose,” said Mr Rogers, who longed for a better knowledge of the people’s tongue.

There was no help for it; and as decidedly the best plan was to journey through on to the royal city, the waggon was kept going, and that night they camped at a short distance from the river, hearing no lions. But as they sat by their watch-fire, there was a peculiar hoarse loud bellowing noise, evidently coming from the river-side.

As very often happened to be the case when there was anything unusual heard, Dinny was sitting with Jack keeping the first watch, and a good blazing fire.

“Hark at that now!” he said. “Hark at that, Masther Jack!”

And he half rose and made as if to flee to the shelter of the waggon.

“Yes, I heard it, Dinny,” said Jack quietly. “It was pretty loud wasn’t it?”

“Loud, Masther Jack? It was horrid, shure! And why don’t ye shoot?”

“Because there’s nothing to shoot at.”

“Nothing to shute at? Jist hark at him! Why, there it is again.”

As Dinny said, there it was again; and certainly the noise was terrible and awe-inspiring, heard in the stillness of the night by the crackling of the great fire, whose glow lit up waggon and trees around in a strange way, casting grotesque shadows behind.

“Well, it’s ever so far-off; and I don’t know what it is. Perhaps it’s an elephant,” said Jack.

“An illephant!” said Dinny, in tones of disgust; “jist as if an illephant ever made a noise like that! Why, it’s a lion, Masther Jack.”

“Nonsense, Dinny! Lions don’t make a noise like that.”

“Shure, an’ arn’t we close to the river, where it’s mortial damp?”

“To be sure we are; but it isn’t damp here, Dinny.”

“Shure, but it is!” cried Dinny. “There’s a hoarse roar for ye!”

The peculiar noise came again, and was repeated from a distance, and again in the other direction.

“That’s no lion, Dinny,” said Jack.

“Not a lion? Bedad, and I’d bet me head that it is, and a lion that’s hoarse wid a horrid bad cowld—jist the same as meself, and a sore throat in the bargain, after that wet night we had the other day.”

“No, that can’t be a lion,” said Jack again. “Hulloa! who’s there?”

The *click-click* of Jack’s gun was heard as a dark form was seen approaching. But the familiar voice of Mr Rogers made the boy lower his piece.

“I thought I’d come and have a look at you, my boy,” said Mr Rogers. “Do you hear the hippopotamus?”

“Shure, no, sor; but there’s a great big lion wid a terrible cowld, roaring away for his mate; and I’d thank ye kindly if ye’d shute him at once. There he goes, sor!”

“That’s not a lion, Dinny. That’s a hippopotamus,” replied Mr Rogers, smiling.

“Shure, an’ if he can roar like that, he’ll be worse than a lion, sor,” said Dinny, “so hadn’t ye betther shute at once?”

“Dinny doesn’t want you to shoot at the hippopotamus, father,” said Jack, laughing. “He wants you to shoot at shadows!”

Mr Rogers laughed, and after staying a little while by the fire, listening to the distant noises of the huge amphibious animals that abounded in the great stream, he quietly went back to the waggon.

The departure of his master was the signal for the renewal of Dinny’s fears, which he showed in a very peculiar way.

Jack had just thrown a few more pieces of wood upon the fire, which blazed up directly; and then, taking his place again, he was making himself comfortable, when there was a tremendous hollow roar, made by a hippopotamus, apparently pretty close to them.

Dinny immediately shifted his position, getting close up to Jack, who did not say anything, but feeling uncomfortably warm dodged a little farther off.

That was of no avail, for Dinny followed him, getting closer still, with the result that in the course of the next hour Jack was driven right round the fire; and he was just about to commence a second tour when the General came, with Dick, to relieve the watch, and Jack went off to bed.

Chapter Twenty Seven.

Marked down by Vultures.

They were still many miles from King Moseti’s town, and the larder being again low, consequent upon the impossibility of keeping meat, a hunting-party was instituted, and Mr Rogers was about to go off with the boys; but on second thoughts, as they had been seen by the people on the river, no doubt the news of their coming was known all through the country, and it was possible that some of the natives might come down.

This he felt would be unsatisfactory if he was away, so he decided to stop; and then feeling that it would be better to have some

trustworthy man to help guard the waggon, and not feeling that either Dinny, Peter, or Dirk, was that man, he decided to tell the General to stay.

So the hunting-party consisted of the four boys, who were warned not to go too far, but to be sure and get something in the shape of meat as soon as they could.

They went off in high glee, Coffee being delighted to be able to take his place in the party; and nothing would do but he must perform all sorts of feats, to show how strong he had grown once more.

Acting upon Mr Rogers' advice, they made straight for the high, open, park-like land, about a couple of miles south of the river; and here Coffee soon showed his talent as a tracker, by pointing out some footprints in a patch of soft earth and mud close to a clear pool of water.

"Lion!" he said, pointing to the great round impression: and he spat and stamped, and then struck the ground fiercely with his kiri.

"Elfant!" cried Chicory just then; and his discovery so far transcended his brother's, that there was a rush to see the huge round footprint, that looked as if some one had been standing portmanteaus on end all over the bog, and leaving their impressions there.

Then there were buffalo tracks, and the footprints of innumerable other beasts that had been to drink, or else gone on, making a complete roadway in the direction of the big river.

Just then Coffee pulled Jack's sleeve and pointed to quite a freshly-made series of footprints.

"Why, that's some kind of antelope," cried Jack.

"Yes, big bok—eland," cried Coffee. "Come along."

This was as good as saying that the animal had lately been there to drink: and in fact its tracks looked surprisingly fresh, so much so that the boys, after glancing at their guns, followed Coffee as he trotted on ahead with his eyes fixed upon the footprints, which were here and there so clearly-marked in the soft earth that he followed them at a run.

Knowing what he did of the habits of animals, and that the great antelope might be many miles away by this time, Dick was about to protest against such an exercise of speed, feeling that a slow and sure progress would be the safest: but Coffee proved to be right, for before they had gone half-a-mile, he slopped short and made signs to the others to close up.

They were in a wooded tract of land sprinkled with bushes and fine timber trees; and as the boys came up, there, about a hundred yards in front, was a magnificent eland, and so great was the surprise of both as they saw the size of the animal, equal in bulk as it was to an ox, only longer and more gracefully-shaped, that they forbore to fire; when the great antelope, catching sight of them, went off at full speed, and they had to renew the chase.

Quite an hour elapsed before a sign from Coffee announced that he could once more see the game.

This time both Dick and Jack were more upon the alert; and creeping cautiously up through the bushes, they caught sight of the eland grazing, just at the edge of a patch of forest about a hundred and fifty yards away.

This they felt was a long shot at so large an animal; but it was impossible to get nearer on account of the intervening open ground; so kneeling together they took careful aim at the shoulder, and fired almost simultaneously.

“Hit,” cried Jack, as he jumped up and ran forward beyond the reach of the smoke; but there was no eland lying in its tracks; and as the Zulu boys came up, they made out that it had dashed through a patch of dense growth, and there its footprints were

lost in a broad trail made by thousands of animals on their way to and from the river.

Both Coffee and Chicory exerted themselves to the utmost; but their efforts were in vain, and at last they turned to Dick shaking their heads.

“No good gun,” said Coffee. “Ought to shoot um dead.”

“It’s a bad job,” said Jack; “but it’s of no use to grumble. Come, boys, we must hunt out something else.”

“I wish we had brought the dogs, Jack,” said Dick.

“Coffee find him soon—that way.”

He pointed with an exultant look in his face at a great flap-winged vulture flying directly over his head, and for a moment both Jack and Dick were puzzled; but seeing the boys both set off at a run, they followed, recalling as they went what they had seen and heard about the vultures tracking the wounded or sickly game, and it was evident that the bird they had seen was on the track of the wounded eland.

An hour’s tramp decided the point, Coffee and Chicory coming up with the wounded beast, defending itself with its horns against the attacks of the vultures that were collecting round and making furious darts at its eyes.

A merciful bullet ended the poor creature’s miseries, and as the animal was so fine it was decided to load up with as much as they could conveniently carry, then place sticks about the carcase, and leave it to be fetched in by Peter and Dirk with a yoke of oxen.

All this was done, and they were about half-way back when, to their utter astonishment, a party of about half-a-dozen blacks, armed with assegais and clubs, rushed out from behind some bushes, and began to advance with fierce and threatening gestures.

“I say, Dick, what’s to be done?” said Jack. “Shall we throw down the meat and run away?”

“No,” said Dick, who looked very pale.

“Shall we offer them our guns and ammunition if they will let us go?”

“No,” replied Dick. “If we do that they will strip us to the skin.”

“What shall we do then?”

“Show fight,” said Dick. “I don’t want to, but we must.”

“But they are big fighting men, and we are only boys,” said Jack.

“But we are English boys, and they are only savages,” retorted Dick; “so come along.”

Meanwhile the Matabele warriors—for such it afterwards proved they were—kept on advancing, shouting savagely, while Coffee and Chicory had been watching their masters attentively, waiting to see what course they would take.

They took their dues from the behaviour of the young Englishmen, and in place of cowering behind, they ran to the front, flourishing their kiris, striking the ground with them, and shouting in their own tongue the while.

“Out of the way, black dogs!” cried Coffee. “Let my lords the big lion-killers with their wonder-guns, come by.”

Feeling that they must put on a bold front, the two boys advanced with rifles ready; and, seeing this, and hearing the words of Coffee and Chicory, which they understood, the black warriors stopped short, spoke to one another for a few moments, and then, changing their tone, began to beg for some of the meat.

“Say they’re very hungry. Want meat,” said Chicory.

Dick spoke to Jack, and then told Coffee to be the interpreter of their wishes, explaining to him what to say.

Coffee jauntily flourished his kiri, and with a bold, defiant bearing, marched close up to the warriors, and showing them the scars made by the lion's claws, told them that they were made by the biggest lion in the world, and his young masters went and killed it with their wonder-guns.

"And now the young kings say you may go and eat the big eland they shot, and fill yourselves full."

The men set up a shout, flourished their weapons, and began to dance, after which they threw themselves upon the ground, as if they wanted to make themselves into black door-mats, Dick said; and ended by taking up and turning back on the little hunting-party's trail till they found the eland.

"Yes," said Mr Rogers, as they related their experience; "you were quite right. These people seem to me more like children than men, and a good bold front will generally make them respect the white man; especially, my boys, if he is firm and, above all, perfectly just."

Chapter Twenty Eight.

The Visit to the Black King.

The good dinner of eland, and the rest the oxen and horses had had amidst abundant grass and water, made all ready for the afternoon trek. Several natives had been to the little camp; and as they would be expected at the king's town, the oxen were in-spanned, the horses mounted to make the party look imposing, and they moved off, keeping along the open ground about half a mile from the river's bank.

At the end of a few miles they came in sight of the town, a collection of thatched huts in the midst of some trees, evidently a

sort of summer residence, for they could see on the right a couple of men, busily tying together the uprights to form a fresh hut.

There were plenty of people about, but no one seemed to take notice of their approach, till suddenly the firing of guns made all start and halt, so as to be prepared for attack.

The General, however, warned Mr Rogers that it was only friendly firing, for the king was evidently coming to meet them; and directly after there was a little procession seen to be on the way.

Under these circumstances Mr Rogers drew up his little force, every one being well armed, and with the horses that were not mounted held by the head.

Then they waited.

“Don’t laugh, my boys,” said Mr Rogers, as the procession drew nearer. “He is a ruler over his people, so deserves respect. If you ridicule what will no doubt seem very absurd, we shall make an enemy instead of a friend.”

“We’ll try and behave rightly, father,” said Dick quietly; and so both he and his brother did, but it was hard work.

His Majesty King Moseti, had evidently determined to impress the white men with a sense of his greatness; so he came attended by his band and body-guard, while he himself wore his regal robes, which consisted of an ordinary English Oxford-cut blue coat and waistcoat, with white flannel cricketing trousers, and a straw hat. He had on patent leather boots, and carried a handsome ebony walking-stick; but his majesty, probably on account of the heat of the climate, wore no shirt. He had, however, a couple of rows of common glass beads round his neck, walked with his left-hand in his pocket, and stared about him as if the visitors were not of the slightest consequence, so that his appearance was sufficiently imposing.

“Jist look at ’em now,” said Dinny; “call themselves men, and to go about like that, widout a bit o’ rag to their backs, and only a

scrap of a skin apron hanging before and behind. Oh, go along now wid ye, ye ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"Hold your tongue, Dinny," cried Mr Rogers.

"Certainly, sor," said Dinny. "An' murther, hark at the music. Hadn't I better go and take the gun away from that naygur as keeps letting it off, sor? He'll be shuting some one directly."

"Well yes, Dinny," said his master, to Dinny's great astonishment; "go and take away his gun. We'll go on. Do you hear?"

"Shure, sor, he mightn't like it if I did," said Dinny.

"Then stop where you are, and don't brag," said Mr Rogers sharply.

"Hark at that now," muttered Dinny.

Meanwhile the king and his court was approaching, with one of the body-guard loading and firing an old musket in the air as fast as he could. In front came a couple of men, hugging what at first sight looked like cannons, but which proved to be drums, about four feet long, secured round their necks by a skin strap, and which drums they bestrode as they beat them with their hands.

Next came a couple more with evidently the kettle-drums, hung from their necks and beaten, like an Indian tom-tom, at both ends. Then the chief musician came with a large wooden harmonicon hung from his neck. This instrument, the marimba, he beat with a couple of round hammers, bringing forth a barbarous, modulated kind of music, not unlike that of the marrow-bones and cleavers of the London butcher-boys, as given by them on old-fashioned state occasions.

The instrument took Dick's attention a good deal, and he saw that it, and another in the band, were formed by fastening so many dry hollow gourds in a frame, over which were placed a graduated scale of pieces of hard wood, which emitted a musical metallic sound when struck.

There was another drummer, who worked hard to earn his salary, whatever it might be; and then came the body-guard, armed with axes, assegais, and kiris, one and all looking, as Dinny said, as if they were the finest fellows under the sun.

“Shure, and I’d bate the whole lot wid one stick,” he muttered; and then aloud,—

“Oh, the dirty haythen; what a noise to call music! Faix, I’d pay something if Teddy Flaherty was here to give ’em one lilt o’ the pipes. They’d know then what music was.”

The marimba players beat their instruments more loudly as they approached the waggon, the drummers drubbed the skins of their drums, the man behind fired his gun, the horses snorted and grew uneasy, and Rough’un threw up his head and uttered a most dismal howl, tucked his tail between his legs, and ran off as hard as he could go; an example followed by Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus, as far as the howling was concerned, the chains by which they were secured to the waggon preventing any running away. They, however, made up for it by barking with all their might.

The king seemed to take it as a compliment, for he came up, shook hands, and condescended to drink a glass of wine, and to eat some sweet biscuits and sugar-sticks, speaking in pretty good English, which he had picked up from the missionaries, and ending by inviting Mr Rogers and his sons to dinner.

The present of a sporting knife at the end of his visit quite won his heart, and he seemed never weary of opening and shutting the blades, pulling out the toothpick, tweezers, corkscrew, and lancet, with which it was provided. After this he took his departure in the same style as that in which he came.

“Well, we may as well pay him a barbarous compliment, boys,” said Mr Rogers. “Fire off all your barrels at once. Now, make ready! fire!”

Six shots went off in rapid succession, followed by six more from Mr Rogers’ revolver.

The result was different from what was intended, for, evidently under the impression that they were being attacked in the rear, the royal party made a rush to escape, the king heading the flight, and, like his warriors, getting on pretty well; but the marimba players fell over their instruments, and the drummers got into worse difficulties still.

All at once, as there was no more firing, the king found it was a false alarm, and came back laughing, to bang his musicians about with his cane, and call them cowards. After which he came back to the waggon and asked to see the revolver let off, flinching very little, and then strutting off before his people, as much as to say, "See what a fine brave fellow I am!"

"Look at that now," said Dinny complacently. "Why of all the cowards I ever see—"

"I say, Dinny," said Dick, "I wonder whether the king's afraid of lions?"

"Shure an' I'd go an' ask him, Masther Dick, if I was you," said Dinny sulkily; and the subject, a very sore one with Dinny, was dropped.

Chapter Twenty Nine.

The General is Overcome by Gin—a Trap.

A very quiet-looking black came up directly after, to say that the king had sent him to show the party where to camp: and he led the way to a pleasant little grove, where there was a pool of water, and ample grass for the cattle; and after the new arrivals were settled down—far too near the "naygurs" to satisfy Dinny's sensitive nature, a return visit was paid to the king, who readily gave his permission for the party to hunt when and where they pleased in his dominions.

This was satisfactory, and it was determined that no time should be lost in getting amongst the large game, but not until they had

had a shot or two at the large hippopotami, which were abundant in the marshes about the river.

Still they would be obliged to remain for a few days at their present camp out of civility to the king, who, they found, would be perfectly willing to accept a few donations of meat, the supply kept up by his own hunters being intermittent, so that his majesty had frequently to go without.

All the same, though, the king's hunters were ingenious and clever in their schemes, as Mr Rogers and his sons found out before many hours had passed.

The king presented his visitors with fried fish and Kaffir beer in a calabash, and as everything seemed very clean and satisfactory, Dick and Jack made no scruple about eating heartily. After this they had to be admired and have their heads patted by the queens, who declared that they were capital boys.

At last they returned to the waggon, where, there being no necessity to put up a fence to keep off lions, so near the town, the rest of the evening was spent in a thorough good clean up and oiling of the guns.

The General was absent, or he would have willingly helped; but Coffee and Chicory said that he had gone off to get birds, so it was concluded that he would be back before long.

The oxen were all secured to the dissel-boom and trek-tow; and the horses were haltered up to the wheels, everything being made safe and sound. Then a fire was lit, and preparations made for passing the night; but still the General did not come back.

His two boys, however, did not seem to be in the slightest degree uncomfortable about his absence, saying that he would be back before long; so, as they knew their father's ways better than he, Mr Rogers concluded that there was no cause for anxiety, for the Zulu warrior would return in his own good time.

Dick and Chicory kept the first watch, and then called Mr Rogers, who relieved them, with Peter. But there was nothing to report, only that there had been a great deal of drumming and tomtoming up in the town, and that when the music and singing had ceased, the hippopotami on the river's brink had commenced roaring, snorting, splashing, and making noises that were quite startling in the silence of the night.

Fully expecting to see the Zulu warrior return every minute, Mr Rogers replenished the fire, and sat listening to the monsters on the river's bank, and wishing that he were lying ensconced there in some sheltered position where he could get a shot at one of the huge beasts; but that was a pleasure to come, and one which he hoped to give his sons.

His watch went by, and then Jack and Coffee were roused up to relieve him, and being weary Mr Rogers was glad to find his blanket once more, lying till he was roused by Dinny for breakfast.

"Has the General come back?" asked Mr Rogers, as he joined Dick and Jack.

"No, father, and the boys are getting anxious about him. They're gone off to find him, and I am expecting them back."

So said Dick, and as he spoke the two Zulu boys came running up in a terrible state of excitement.

"Want our father," they exclaimed angrily. "Father killed. Come and find."

There was something so tragic in the words of the boys that Mr Rogers and his sons seized their guns, and telling Coffee and Chicory to lead, they went straight for the forest-land towards which Coffee said he had seen his father go.

Coffee was quite right, for the General had started off in this direction, assegai in hand, and a kiri in his skin belt, partly to see what hunting capabilities the land possessed, partly to try and obtain a few birds or a small gazelle.

He went straight off to the forest, and with all the instinct of a good hunter he examined the spoor of the animals going to and from the water, and also made himself acquainted with the drinking-spots, taking in at a glance the suitability of the places for a hunter to lie in ambush, and then he went on once more.

To his great satisfaction, he found in addition to the spoor of antelopes of all kind, those of the hippopotamus near the river, elephants, giraffes, and the rhinoceros. There, too, he found an abundance of footprints of buffalo, so that there would be ample game for his masters to exercise their skill.

But he was not satisfied yet, and regardless at last of the coming darkness, he went on with the instincts of the true hunter who has spent the greater part of his life in the woods, searching here, examining there, and he grew more and more elate and satisfied.

He had obtained nothing for the waggon larder, but that did not trouble him, as he had made so many satisfactory discoveries; and at last, just as the moon was shining brilliantly through the trees, he entered a broad drink-trail, one used by the animals on the way through the forest to the river, and prepared to make the best of his way back.

The course was pretty open, and he paused for a moment to listen whether he could hear anything coming; but all was perfectly still, and he started again, increasing his walk to a trot over the well-trodden track, and this trot to a greater speed, when all at once he felt the ground giving way beneath his feet, and instinctively making a spring forward, he tried to clear the hollow; but he had no power in his start, and he only touched the farther side, and then fell with a crash through the screening brushwood into a deep hole.

He fell so heavily that for the moment he was stunned, and lay there perfectly helpless, listening to a furious snarling howl, and feeling the scuffling and twining about of a number of reptiles which his fall had disturbed.

The Zulu knew well enough where he was, and that he had been unfortunate enough to leap into one of the many pitfalls some tribes dig in the woods to capture large game.

He knew exactly how such a pit would be dug, widening out from the top to the bottom, so that the creatures which fell in would be unable to escape; and he understood the hideous snarling of some beast, for as he cautiously rose to a standing position the moonlight showed him, impaled upon the horribly sharp stake formed by fining down a good-sized tree and planting it in the bottom, a hideously wolfish-looking hyaena, which, less fortunate than himself, had fallen upon the sharp spike, which had gone completely through the wretched animal's body, leaving it writhing, snarling, and clawing the air with its paws in its vain efforts to get free.

It was a terrible neighbour to have in such close proximity, and for the moment the General thought of thrusting it through and killing it out of its misery; but his assegais had quitted his hand in his fall, and to have found them again meant to search amidst the broken twigs and bushes at the bottom of the pit, where he could feel and hear the snakes.

A NIGHT IN A TRAP.

Even as he thought all this he could feel the cold scaly bodies of the reptiles gliding over his feet, and against his bare legs; and hence he was obliged to stand perfectly motionless, lest—though he had escaped when he fell, his sudden dash having alarmed them, no doubt—the slightest movement of his feet might be followed by a bite, for amongst so many as he could feel there were, some were certain to be of a deadly nature.

So there he stood, unarmed, with the serpents gliding about the bottom of the pit, the moonlight glinting in through the trees, and only a foot or two from his face that hideous snarling animal, which snapped at him angrily, evidently looking upon him as being the cause of its sufferings. Even if he had dared to move it would have been very doubtful whether the General could have clambered out of the cunningly contrived pitfall; but situated as he was, and surrounded by such dangerous enemies, the Zulu

made a virtue of necessity, and stoically determined to wait for daylight before making any attempt to escape.

But all the same it was a terrible position, and required all the firmness and nerve of a strong man to stand there patiently, feeling the hideous little serpents gliding about his bare feet, and listening to the hideous howlings of the hyaena.

But the longest and most painful nights have an end, and in due time the day broke, and the Zulu began to consider how he could get out. With the broad daylight he saw the wisdom he had practised in waiting, for several very dangerous serpents were amongst those which had fallen in, and their number was great enough to make even him, a thorough hunter, shudder.

But the General was not destined to suffer much longer; soon after sunrise he fancied he heard a well-known call, and then there was no doubt about it; the call was repeated, and he sent forth a stentorian reply.

These calls and answers soon brought Coffee and Chicory to the mouth of the pitfall, closely followed by Mr Rogers and the boys, and amongst them by help of their guns the unfortunate General reached the track in safety, and leaving the hyaena dead, they set off back to the waggon, the General congratulating himself on having escaped from a terrible death.

Chapter Thirty.

The King's Hunting-Party.

There was no mistaking the joy of Coffee and Chicory at finding their father safe and sound, and they showed it by performing some most ridiculous antics, making even the stern warrior smile with satisfaction.

Mr Rogers also noticed it a good deal, and from that time the two Zulu boys stood far higher in his estimation than of old.

They had a visit at the camp that morning from the king, one of the first of whose questions, as he partook of a sugar-stick with great gusto, was, had they heard the hippopotami shouting in the night, and were they frightened?

Both Dick and Jack declared that they were not in the least alarmed; and thereupon the king, who seemed to get on far better with them than with their father, proposed that they should come up the little river, and see his warriors hunt the great river-horse.

Mr Rogers consented with a nod; and taking their rifles, the boys accompanied the king back to the town, where, orders being given, his majesty's big canoe was prepared, and half-a-dozen great hunters, armed with throwing-spears, each entered a canoe of his own—a frail rickety-looking affair, that threatened to turn over at any moment, even with the weight of one man, but which its occupant sent through the water at a famous rate, by his clever management of a long paddle.

The king's boat was none too safe a structure, and the boys laughed the one at the other as they took their seats before their host.

"If we are overturned, Jack, make for the shore at once, and try and save your rifle."

"To be sure, Dick. But how about the crocodiles?"

"And the hippos, Jack?"

"Feel afraid?"

"No. Do you?"

"Not a bit!"

The king seemed a little nervous about the boys' rifles when he saw the deadly weapons in their hands, and he asked if they were safe.

"A deal safer than your boat, Mr King," said Dick, laughing.

“Yes, that they are,” said Jack, giving the boat a sway to and fro.

Then the king laughed, and the boys laughed again, and distributed some more acid-rock sticks, of which his majesty highly approved. Then he gave the word, the rowers dipped their paddles, and six men propelled the canoe pretty swiftly.

“I say, Dick,” whispered Jack, “black kings are not such bad fellows after all, are they?”

“Not at all. I like this one. But don’t whisper; it will make him think we are talking about him. How many cartridges have you got?”

“Twenty four. How many have you?”

“Two dozen.”

The boys laughed and compared their cartridges, when the king, who had felt suspicious of their whispering, also smiled, and took great interest in the breech-loading guns, exhibiting quite a childish delight in seeing the breech opened, and in being able to look right through the shining barrels. After which he had the pleasure of thrusting in the cartridges with his own fingers; but when they were closed he expressed his opinion that they were not safe.

Meanwhile, after being propelled for some distance up the great river, the canoes were turned off into a side stream of no great width, and whose sluggish waters serpentined amidst muddy beds of reeds, with a palm-tree raising its ornamental fronds here and there to relieve the monotony of the scene.

The canes and reeds seemed to swarm with ducks and other water-fowl; and here and there, riding in the calm reaches, they saw for the first time that curious water-bird, the darter, swimming with its body nearly submerged, and its long, snaky neck ready to dart its keen bill with almost lightning rapidity at the tiny fish upon which it fed.

“Oh! what a splendid place for a day’s fishing, Dick!” whispered Jack. “This place must swarm, I know. I wish I had brought the tackle.”

“There’s something more interesting than fishing to see,” replied Dick. “Look! look!”

He pointed to the side of the river, a hundred yards ahead, where a huge, clumsily-formed hippopotamus slowly waded into the water and sank out of sight.

“What a brute!” said Dick. “Why, he could upset us. I say, King Moseti, couldn’t one of those fellows upset the boat?”

“Yes,” said the king; “then all swim ashore if he no catchee.”

“That’s pleasant,” said Dick. “But look, Jack! what’s that?”

He pointed ahead to something black, seen just above the surface of the water, and several feet in front of it two prominences; then two more appeared slowly above the water. There was a sort of gasping sigh, and a couple of little puffs like those emitted by a small steam-engine, and the black knobs and the black surface disappeared.

“What a monster!” cried Jack.

“Now going to begin,” said the king.

But they paddled on another half-mile before they really began.

They were in a very winding part of the river now, the serpentine curves being so sharp that the banks seemed to be a succession of muddy points and reedy bays.

On one of these points a large, broad-nosed hippo was standing, looking as shapeless as if it had been roughly modelled in mud, and set upon four legs of the shortest and squattiest kind. Nearer to them, and in the water, several of the great amphibious creatures were playing about, raising their heads occasionally,

sometimes only their eyes and nostrils, which the boys could see opened and shut like a valve, to admit air and keep out the water.

The canoes now stopped, and it was not a very pleasant feeling, to be aware that beneath them, and all around, these monstrous beasts were walking about at the bottom of the muddy river, ready to rise up at will, and upset the canoes, or perhaps take a piece out with their teeth.

“Now going to begin,” said the king.

And in obedience to a signal made with his stick, three of the little canoes went in advance, their occupants managing the paddles with one hand, their assegais with the other, and gliding cautiously over the surface of the river, to the attack of one of the great hippopotami.

“I wish they hadn’t got such long names,” said Jack, who was getting deeply interested; “it’s quite a mouthful.”

“Never mind, they’ve got good broad backs and heads,” said Dick. “I say, Jack, look at that one! What a mouth! It’s like a great leather portmanteau being opened.”

“Or a big carpet-bag,” replied Jack; “and what teeth!”

They were indeed monstrous, and as the animal raised its ears and eyes above the water, and just displayed a portion of its prominent nostrils, it was plain to see why the ancients called them river-horses; for, seen like this, the head bore a remarkable resemblance to that of some large horse.

“Now look!” said the king, who then started, for the boys involuntarily cocked their rifles. For one of the canoes, with the hunter therein, approached the great beast just named, the hunter standing up to work his paddle, and holding his assegai poised for throwing, while the huge brute upon the point of land where he stood out as if displaying his mighty proportions, kept uttering grunts of dissatisfaction.

Just as the canoe approached the beast in the water, it allowed itself slowly to subside; but it rose again directly after, a few yards farther off, when, giving his paddle a sweep, the hunter poised and hurled his assegai with such force, and so true an aim, that it was seen sticking in the hippo, just where the neck joins the shoulder.

The moment he had thrown, the hunter stooped and picked up another spear; but even as he did so the hippopotamus made a dash at his canoe, bit at the side, shook it, and the man was precipitated into the water.

In another instant the hippopotamus would have had him in his jaws; but now was the time for the other hunters, whose canoes skimmed over the surface side by side, and before the animal could reach the man in the water, first one and then another spear was hurled, taking effect in its neck.

This took off the monster's attention for a few moments; just sufficient to enable the owner of the overturned canoe to get ashore, right his boat, pour out all the water, and once more return to the attack.

Meanwhile, the other three canoes had gone into the *mêlée*, each man sending a spear into the neck or shoulder of the huge hippopotamus whenever he pressed one of the other hunters too hard.

This went on for some time, with the monster growing weaker in his resistance, the plan adopted being to weary him out by constant assault; and all this time the great fellow on the mud point had looked on, giving a fierce grunt now and then, and at times prolonging this grunt into a deafening bellow. He evidently mightily disapproved of what was being done to his fellow; but it did not seem to enter into his brain how he was to help him.

The idea seemed to come at last; for, turning his head towards the king's canoe, he opened his mouth to its fullest extent displaying the great worn-down tusks, and uttered a tremendous roar, that can only be rendered on paper by a repetition of the

words, “Hawgnph! hawgnph!” sent through a huge waterpipe, by the blast of a steam-engine of mighty power.

This done he closed his mouth with a tremendous chop, and rushed into the water and disappeared.

“What a brute!” cried Dick.

“He’s coming right for us, I know,” cried his brother. “You see if he don’t come up close here.”

The king seemed to expect it too, and he gave orders to his men; but before the large canoe could be got under weigh the monster rose quite close to them, opened its huge jaws, its little pig-like eyes glowing with fury, and took a piece out of the canoe.

Half the paddlers leaped overboard in their dread, as the monster opened its huge jaws for a second bite, this time close to where the two boys and the king were seated, the latter seeming paralysed at the imminence of the danger.

No word was spoken, one will seeming to guide both Dick and Jack, who, without raising their rifles to their shoulders, rested them pistol-fashion upon the side of the canoe, and fired straight into the monster’s mouth.

There was a tremendous clap-to of his jaws, but not upon the side of the canoe; and then the huge head slowly sank down out of sight, as a couple of fresh cartridges were thrust into the rifles.

But now there was a fresh danger, water was coming in over the side where the piece was taken out; and it took a great deal of shouting, and no little help with the spare paddles, given by his majesty and his two visitors, to get the canoe run aground before she could sink.

Wet legs were the worst misfortune, and as they leaped ashore the men set to, hauled up the canoe, and emptied out the water, and in an hour they had sewn on a thick skin so as to temporarily

keep out the water at the side, thin canes answering for needle and thread, after which they embarked.

It was none too soon; for as the last man got on board and the canoe was pushed off, there was a loud snorting and rustling in the reeds, and a hippopotamus rushed at them, giving the lads such an opportunity that they both sent a bullet into it as it entered the water, and they saw it no more.

Meanwhile the six hunters had not only killed their hippo, but had seen the monster shot by the boys aground, quite dead, upon one of the sandy bits of land, and they had steered their own trophy to its side, where they were busy drawing out the spears with which it bristled, as the king's canoe came up.

A rope was made fast to each of the monsters then, and they were towed down stream and out into the big river, where, upon their reaching the town, an attack was made upon the great beasts, and the flesh hewed off amidst a great deal of shouting, singing, and drumming, the boys feeling no great temptation to eat hippopotamus, but being proud enough to display the head of the monster they had shot—a head that was even startling in its size and weight.

Chapter Thirty One.

A Row up Stream, and a Run down.

Naturally attracted by his sons' success, Mr Rogers agreed to go up the river with the king on an expedition to last a couple of days, during which they were to shoot hippopotamus, crocodile, and perhaps get a shot at a giraffe; and in due time a couple of large canoes were got ready, and in one was placed a tub of spirit for curiosities, and a chest to hold the skins of any choice birds that might be shot.

In the other Mr Rogers had his guns and ammunition, with necessary stores in a chest; and so as to superintend and direct the men, it was settled that the king should go in one boat, Mr

Rogers and Dinny in the other, each boat having four stout rowers to handle the long paddles they used.

All in good time they started, greatly to Dinny's disgust; for he felt certain that the canoe would sooner or later overturn, and that he should be shot right into the mouth of one or other of the crocodiles.

"They'll know fast enough, Masther Dick," he said piteously; "and you'll see if they don't come following the canoe like sharks afther a boat. Oh, murther, it was a sad day whin I took sarvice with the masther."

Dinny took care, however, that Mr Rogers should not hear any of his plaints, and in due time the canoes started, and went well for the first part of the journey, the men paddling and singing, and a halt being made for midday and evening meal, which was made savoury with the large ducks that abounded in the reed beds, close in shore. Two or three good shots sufficed to provide enough for the whole party, and the men were in high glee, laughing and chatting as they picked the birds, which Dinny roasted before a good fire.

At night they halted and drew up the canoes, proceeding afterwards to make a couple of large tents of reeds, which they cleverly cut, tied in bundles, and secured together—no mean shelter in a journey through the wilds; but Dinny found terrible fault with the arrangements, and had to be severely snubbed to bring him to a more patient state.

They started in good time the next morning, so as to be early at the ground where the king promised game; but here the character of the country had altered, and in place of the swift, smoothly-flowing river, they had entered upon a part where it was broken up with rapids, long ranges of rocks stretching across the river like weirs and keeping the waters back, but making a series of rapids, down which the river rushed at a furious rate.

"Shure, sor, my mother's name is—"

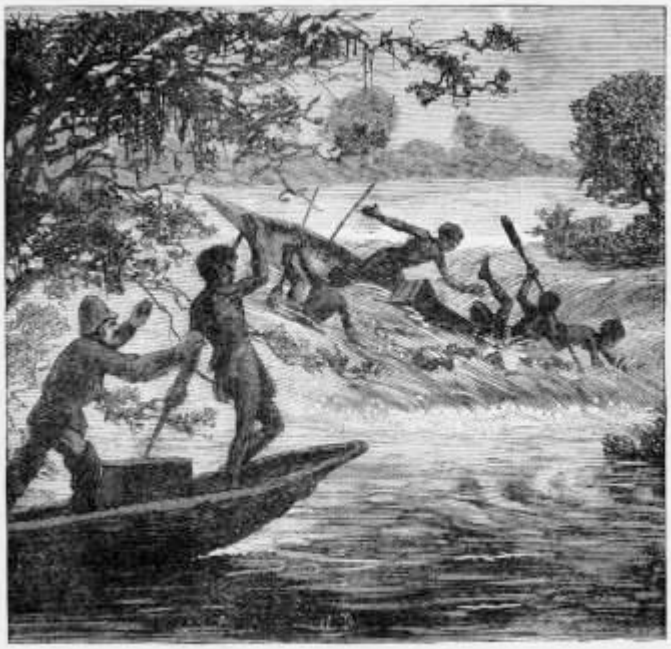
“Hold your tongue, you foolish fellow,” cried Mr Rogers, as Dinny half rose in dismay, and asked if the boats were going up there.

“Shure, sor, I only wanted ye to know my pore mother’s direction, so as ye could sind her word I was dhrowned in the big river out in Afrikky.”

“Will they be able to take us up there, king?” said Mr Rogers. “Hadn’t we better land, and let them drag the canoes round?”

The king laughed, and clapped his hands for the men to bend to their task, when they made the paddles flash in and out of the water, but it was soon evident that they would not surmount the rapids.

The boat Mr Rogers was in got half-way up, and then was carried back at a tremendous speed, being swept round by an eddy beneath some trees, to one of the branches of which Mr Rogers held on, and so steadied the canoe, while a



A TIP-UP IN THE RAPIDS.

stalwart black thrust down his paddle from the bows, and kept the great vessel steady.

Just then Dinny, who followed his master’s actions as nearly as he could, laid hold of a goodly branch from the stern; but instead

of taking the boat with him he thrust it away, and the next moment he was hanging from his branch, shouting “Masther!” and “Masther, dear!” with all his might.

“Faix and I knowed it would come to it,” he yelled, as the branch swayed up and down, and his legs went lower and lower in the water. “There’s a great crocodivil coming. Masther, darlin’, bring back the boat.”

This was done at last, but the black could scarcely paddle for laughing, and when the boat was under him poor Dinny hardly dared let go. He let himself subside in the bottom at last, and was wiping the perspiration from his face, and squeezing the water from his legs, when a shout from the big man in the bows drew Mr Rogers’ attention, and he ran forward to see that the other canoe was upset, and that the men were being pitched into the rapids.

For they had made three efforts to get up, each time being driven back; and at the fourth they were so much weakened and so weary, that when about half-way up they wavered, the stream caught the head, twisted it broadside, and, in a moment, king, subjects, box, and barrel were tilted out, and all went floating rapidly down the stream.

The stalwart black in the bows needed no telling, and the boat Mr Rogers was in was sent down and across the stream below the rapids, picking up the king first, and then man after man, till Dinny, who was emptying the water out of his boots, declared that the boat was too full, and must sink.

It did not, however, and the overturned boat being guided ashore, it was soon emptied and afloat again, with its crew looking none the worse, for, as Dinny said, it did not take their clothes long to dry.

The king was of Dinny’s opinion, for his garments of English make being very clingy and uncomfortable, he imitated the uniform of his subjects, and as everything that had floated out had been

recovered, they were once more ready for an attack upon the rapids.

But the king said no; they wanted more rowers; and Dinny uttered a loud "Hurroo!" as the canoes were allowed to float back towards the town, where they at last landed, to Dinny's great delight, safe and sound.

Chapter Thirty Two.

Warm Work in the Wilds.

"It was all through taking you, Dinny, that father had such bad sport, I know," said Dick.

"Shure the ongratitude of the human being is wonderful," said Dinny, addressing nobody. "Here, I save his parint's life by keeping him from going any farther and getting himself dhrowned."

"Ah, well, Dinny, you're not going to be drowned any more," said Dick; "father has decided to go on with the waggon to-morrow."

"Back home?" cried Dinny, slapping the shrunken leg of his trousers.

"No: farther away; after elephant and rhinoceros."

"Bad luck to the illiphant and rhinoceros!" cried Dinny. "But anyhow, we shall be on dhry land."

The king was disappointed at the party going so soon; but a present of a bottle of sweets, and some ammunition, brought smiles into his face—smiles that grew broader as he heard that they would stop if possible at the town as they came back.

They started at sunrise, so as to get a good trek over before the heat of the day should commence, and with oxen well rested and in excellent condition they got over the ground pretty swiftly for an oxen-team. The horses too were fresh, and so full of

excitement and fun that the dogs were taken, after the particular mountain to which they intended to make had been marked down; and the boys had a good canter, Coffee and Chicory thoroughly enjoying the excitement, and keeping up with the two cobs with the greatest ease.

The mountain was reached in due time, a midday halt indulged in, and after a good long rest they continued their journey, so as to get well beyond reach of Moseti's town, and away from the interruptions that might have resulted in their being too near the king. But the General had no intention of going far after the fine promise he had seen for game; and two days' march away from the town he proposed that they should halt, and make a good strong kraal for the horses in the place he selected.

It was admirably adapted for the purpose, there being an abundance of thorns, with a steep rocky escarpment to act as the back of the kraal. Besides this, there was a spring of beautifully clear water gushing from amongst the rocks, which rose right up here into mountains.

The General's advice had always proved so good that the halt was called, and quite a fortification of thorns made, large enough to protect the cattle.

The fire was started again, and as much care taken as if they had been in an enemy's country. And so they soon found that they were, though their enemies were not near.

The very first night at the new camp they were visited by lions, which were audacious enough, in spite of the fire, to pretty well frighten the oxen into a stampede; but they were ultimately calmed down; while the poor horses suffered so that they were haltered up to the side of the waggon, with their heads so near the tilt that they could hear their masters' voices; and this had the effect of calming them, when the lions were most daring.

Snakes too proved to be more plentiful here than they had been found since they left the glen at the head of the valley, where Jack had his imaginary bite. They were principally the puff-adder,

which would come out from among the stones to get within reach of the fire, where it would lie and bask, quite regardless of the presence of the people; and several of these creatures had to pay dearly for their temerity.

The day after they had settled here they found another unpleasant neighbour, in the shape of a boa, this being the third of these large serpents they had met with in their journey.

The General saw the creature up in the mountain amongst the stones, about a quarter of a mile from the camp, and came back to announce his discovery.

There was magic to the boys in the word snake, and catching up their guns, they followed the Zulu up the rocks—quite a stiff climb in the hot sunshine—and there upon a little sandy plain lay the monster, knotted together, apparently asleep.

They had been afraid to bring the dogs lest one of them should be crushed by the great boa, and now, as it lay so passive, they had to attempt some plan for rousing it so as to make it raise its head for a shot; and on being warned of what was wanted, the General offered to go up and rouse the creature with the handle of his assegai.

But this Mr Rogers would not permit, bidding the Zulu throw stones at the reptile.

This the General did, the second he pitched being so well-aimed that it struck the serpent right amongst its thickest folds, when, in an instant, the creature was all in motion, with its scales glittering in the sun, and its head raised in angry menace, though it did not seem to see who had disturbed it, and ended by striking fiercely at the offending stone.

It would have been easy enough to have shot the creature now, but every one was so much interested in watching its actions that they forebore, though their guns were presented, ready to fire at the slightest indication of danger.

The serpent writhed, and turned itself over and over, and seemed too angry to settle itself down again to rest: but at the end of a few minutes the warmth of the sun, and the sand upon which it was gliding about, were so pleasant, that it coiled itself up once more, laying its head over two or three of the coils in the centre, and then appeared to be settling down once more to sleep.

Another stone from the General threw it into violent agitation once more; the body writhed about upon the sand, the tail lashed it, the broad head rose up with a loud angry hiss, and began to undulate and menace the party; and when the General took a step or two forward, as if to strike it, the serpent made darts, as if measuring the distance before trying to throw round him a coil of its muscular body.

So menacing did the creature grow at last that Mr Rogers gave the word, and there was a rapid double shot, the reptile falling to Dick's gun, and lying shot through the head, and writhing upon the sand.

This serpent measured just over twenty feet in length, and its girth was enormous; so thick and heavy was it that the amount of muscular power in its body must have been tremendous. So rapid and graceful was every motion, and so full of strength was it even now, with its head shattered, and when it might reasonably have been looked upon as dead, that it was dangerous to approach within reach of its coils, Dick having a very narrow escape.

They worked hard now collecting the lovely birds that abounded in the forest, and the gloriously tinted beetles and butterflies, Coffee and Chicory having by this time grown invaluable as collectors.

Then there was the regular hunting to do for supplying the needs of the camps, and this generally fell to the lot of Dick and Jack, both of whom were wondrous expert on horseback, as they had grown to be with a rifle.

“But mind,” Mr Rogers had said, “no wanton slaughter. Kill as many dangerous creatures as you meet, but only shoot the innocent game as we need it for food.”

The boys kept to their word, and many a tempting shot was given up, because they felt that it was not necessary, the larder being stocked.

Game was abundant here, but though they could have shot eland, koodoo, blesbok, gemsbok, quagga, hartebeeste, zebra, and gnu, they had not seen elephant or giraffe, and these latter were in the boys’ minds continually.

“Well,” said Mr Rogers, “I’ll take the glass and have a ride out with you to-day. Perhaps we may have better luck. We must have a skin or two of the giraffe to take back.”

“And we haven’t seen a buffalo yet, father,” cried Jack. “Isn’t game scarce?”

“Go and look at the footprints by the pool, my boy, and answer that question for yourself,” said Mr Rogers, smiling.

But Jack did not go. He knew that he had asked a foolish question, so he passed it off.

The day was wonderfully hot, and quietly as they went, they felt scorched, while Pompey and Caesar, who were taken as a treat, ran with their tongues lolling out, and stopped to drink at every pool they passed.

The route chosen was a different one this day, leading over a wide undulating plain covered with an enormous thickness of rough herbage, and dotted here and there with bushes. It was just the place to expect to find a lion—offering the beast abundant chances for concealment; but after being out four hours, they had seen nothing but antelopes, at which they did not care to fire, since it would only have been to add a fresh skin to their collection, and glut some of the vultures flying slowly overhead. The glass was used again and again in vain, and at last, so as to cover a wider

view, Mr Rogers rode away about a mile to the left, bidding his sons mind the land-marks so as to be able to reach the waggon again.

Dick and Jack did not separate, and after a glance round to see if they could make out any game, they resigned themselves to their fate, and rode gently along.

“I’m hotter and more tired than I have ever been since we came out,” cried Jack.

“So am I,” said Dick. “Let’s sling our guns over our shoulders. Oh, isn’t it hot.”

“If we sling our rifles we shall come upon a lion, or something big.”

“Well, let us. I’m too hot to shoot, and he’d be too hot to attack. What does that little bird keep flying to us for, and then going away?”

“Got a nest somewhere here, and afraid we shall take its young.”

“Perhaps so,” said Dick lazily. “No, it isn’t. I know what it is,” he cried excitedly, forgetting the heat and his idle languor.

“Well, what is it?” said Jack. “I know. It’s a bird.”

“It’s the honey-guide,” cried Dick, watching the twittering little thing as it flew to him and then back, trying hard to draw their attention, and to get them to follow it.

“I don’t believe it would take us to any honey if we went after it.”

“Well, let’s try,” said Dick. “Where’s father?”

“Oh, right over there: a mile away. You can just see him.”

“Well, we’ll follow the bird,” cried Dick. “I should like some honey. It would be quite a treat.”

“Come along, then,” said Jack. “I’ll do anything if it isn’t too much trouble. Come along. What’s old Pomp found?”

They turned their horses, and were about to ride after the honey-guide, when Pompey suddenly began baying furiously at a clump of very high ferns and bushes, and Caesar went and joined him.

“Get your gun ready, Jack,” said Dick excitedly. “It’s a lion.”

“Not it,” replied Dick, “or those dogs wouldn’t face it as they do. They’ve only found a lizard. Here, here, here, Pomp, Caesar, Pomp. Hey, dogs, then! Look out, Jack! Gallop?”

Dick fired a random shot at something that charged at them from out of the high grass. The next instant their horses had swerved round and were galloping away over the rough surface as hard as they could go.

THE HUNTERS HUNTED.

They had been grumbling at not being able to find any large game. Now they had found some with a vengeance, for a monstrous rhinoceros had been disturbed by the dogs, and with all its angry passions roused it was charging down upon the young horsemen as hard as it could go.

It seemed incredible that so great and clumsy an animal could gallop so fast; but gallop it did, at a tremendous rate, paying no more heed to the bitings and yelpings of the dogs than if they had been flies. But, tossing its curious snout, armed with two horns, high in the air, it uttered a loud, angry, snorting noise as it thundered along threatening to overtake the horses at every stride. The dogs behaved very well, but they might as well have snapped at the trunk of a tree as at that horny hide, and at last in despair they contented themselves with galloping on by the animal's side.

To shoot was impossible; to avoid the creature, just as impossible; and so the boys used their whips more than once to try and get their cobs faster over the ground.

It went against the grain to use a whip to the sleek sides of the cobs, but the rhinoceros was gaining upon them, and to be overtaken meant to be trampled to death.

"Come along, Jack; use your whip again," cried Dick. "We can't shoot."

"Shall we separate?" said Jack back from his horse, as they tore over the grass.

"No, no; let's keep together."

"Very well, then; but where shall we go? Which way shall we turn? Shall we try for that wood in front?"

"No, no, no," cried Dick. "We should not be able to get through, but that beast would go past bushes as if they were paper. That's a thorn wood, too."

“Where’s father, I wonder?” cried Jack.

Dick looked over his shoulder.

“There he comes, full gallop. He sees what a mess we are in.”

“But he can’t help us,” cried Jack. “Sit close, Dick, old fellow; and look out for holes in front, whatever you do.”

Away they went in their mad gallop, longing for the rhinoceros to give up his hunt of the hunters, but the huge beast came thundering along in the most persistent way, close at their heels, but now, to the delight of the boys, not gaining upon them. The only thing they had to fear then was a slip or a stumble, or that in its pertinacious hunt the rhinoceros would tire their horses down.

“He’s gaining on us now,” cried Dick suddenly. “Jack, we must separate, and let him run after one while the other fires at him.”

“You couldn’t do it, Dick. No, no, let’s keep together, and we shall beat him yet.”

“But we mustn’t take him down to the camp. Oh, thank goodness, at last.”

“No, no, don’t say that, Dick,” cried Jack, in agony, as the rhinoceros suddenly stopped, whisked round, and went straight back upon its trail. “Let’s hunt him now, for he’s going straight for father. Don’t you see?”

“Yes,” said Dick; and turning their trembling half-blown cobs, they galloped after the rhinoceros in turn.

Chapter Thirty Three.

The Tables Turned.

The rhinoceros did not see Mr Rogers at first, but went straight back upon its own trail, lowering its head from time to time, and

literally ploughing its way through the tangled grass with its horn, which, driven by the weight behind, scattered the roots and fragments on either side.

The dogs, rejoicing in the change of position, snapped and barked at its heels; and as the boys galloped on, with their rifles ready and at full cock, they could note more at their ease the peculiarity of the animal's make. This was ponderous to a degree, and the great folds of skin at the shoulders and haunches as they worked while the beast galloped along, made it look as if the greater part of its body was covered by a huge shell like that of a tortoise.

But now all at once the monster seemed to have caught sight of Mr Rogers and the big bay, for it uttered a peculiar hoarse squeal, gave its little tail a twist, tossed its head as it leaped clumsily from the ground, and then, lowering its horn, dashed straight at the new enemy before it.

Upon seeing this change of front Dick leaped from his horse, and Jack did likewise, the cobs standing perfectly still, with the reins thrown over their heads to trail upon the ground at their feet. Then going down upon one knee as the rhinoceros, instead of being tail on, now presented its side, they took careful aim and fired.

Crack! *thud*!

Crack! *thud*!

The reports of the two rifles were followed by what seemed to be a dull echo, telling them plainly enough that their shots had told.

The rhinoceros stopped short and shook its head, and they saw it try to turn it, as if to touch a tender or ticklish place with its nose.

The next moment there was another report, as Mr Rogers fired, and the thud that followed told of a fresh hit.

The rhinoceros shook its head again, whisked round in the most absurd way, and went off at a clumsy gallop, followed by a couple more shots from the boys' rifles.

"Waste of lead! waste of lead!" cried Mr Rogers, cantering up. "Well, what do you think of the rhinoceros?"

"Oh, what a brute, father!" cried Dick, remounting. "Let's go on after it. He's badly hit."

"He's hit, certainly," said Mr Rogers; "but unless you can well choose your spot those shots of ours would do very little more than make a sore place under the creature's hide. He's like an old-fashioned man-at-arms in his buff jerkin."

"But let's go after it, father," cried Jack.

"No, I would not to-day, my boy. 'Discretion,' you know, is the better part of valour, and the horses are overdone as it is. We shall know where to go another time, so let it rest for the present."

"But that great brute will be rushing out at us at all sorts of times," said Jack.

"Then you must keep the better look out. If you fire at it again, you must aim before the shoulder, mind; take him as he's coming, if you don't feel too nervous."

Jack looked at his father, and then at Dick, and then they both laughed.

"Well father, it does make you feel queer to have that great brute thundering down upon you," said Dick.

"You would be curious beings if you did not," said Mr Rogers, laughing. "But you must take care, boys, for the rhinoceros is a very dangerous beast; and it will charge at anything, even at a tree if it is in its way."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jack.

“What are you laughing at?” said his father.

“I was just thinking that I should like to see that great brute after Dinny, and Dinny scuffling up a tree to get out of its way.”

“Yes, it would be good fun,” said Dick; “but I should like Dinny to have a good start.”

“He would need it,” said Mr Rogers gravely; and they rode on gently back to the camp.

There was fresh news here, for both the General and Coffee had to report that they had seen rhinoceros, and upon comparing notes, it was very evident that it could not be the same, unless the creature could have been in three places at once.

This was promising, for, in spite of the danger, they all wanted to number one of the great beasts in the list of the game they shot.

But during the next few days, with the exception of the daily shooting of an antelope for the larder, they saw no great game, even failing to put up the big rhinoceros when they rode over the same ground again.

They found the lair in amongst the thick bushes and dried grass, the dogs running through it from side to side, while the three hunters sat with presented pieces, ready to shoot at the first charge. They kept well apart too, so as to be ready to help the one at whom the rhinoceros came; but they saw nothing of the beast, and it was evident that it had shifted its quarters.

The weather had been intensely hot and dry, so that the long reedy grass crackled and rustled as they passed along, and in places the tramp of the horses’ hoofs sent the dust flying in clouds.

One evening towards sunset they were about ten miles from the camp, and wearied out with the heat and sultriness of the air which for days past had threatened a storm; they were riding

listlessly across a wide plain that was being rapidly turned into a regular desert for want of refreshing rain.

Nobody had spoken for some time, when suddenly Jack exclaimed,—

“Look! the plain is on fire.”

The horses were reined in, and as they gazed in the direction pointed out, it was evident that there was what seemed to be a very large fire rolling across the plain; the white smoke-clouds rising quite high.

“Is it the grass on fire?” said Dick, as Mr Rogers brought his little double glass to bear.

“It is no fire at all,” said his father, “but dust. There is a great herd of buffalo crossing the plain, and we ought to get a shot.”

Click! click! went the lock of Jack’s rifle, and he leaped down to tighten his girths.

“No!” said Mr Rogers; “they are oxen and horsemen. It is a large party crossing the plain—an emigration of Boers, I’ll be bound.”

They rode gently on towards the long line of dust-clouds, which was passing at right angles to them; and as they drew nearer they could plainly see beneath the lurid sky figures of men on horseback, blacks mounted on oxen, and waggon after waggon with its enormously long team.

As they approached, some of the sun-tanned, dejected-looking men riding in front turned their heads, and stared sullenly at the little party, but they seemed to have no desire for any friendly intercourse; and when Mr Rogers spoke to them they replied sullenly in broken English mixed with Dutch, that they were going north.

They were curious-looking men from an English point of view, and would have been greatly improved by the use of a pair of scissors

to their long, abundant, fair hair. Each man carried his rifle ready for the first enemy that might cross his path, and their numerous black servants trudged on with loads or rode the oxen.

AN EMIGRANT BAND.

These blacks, too, took the attention of the boys, one being a perfect giant in his way, a great square shouldered fellow of quite six-feet-six in height; while another, mounted upon an ox, had his hair twisted up into a couple of points, standing up from his head like the horns of an antelope.

Every one looked jaded and worn out, as if with a long journey; and the dejected aspect of the masters was traceable even in their dogs, one of which went on in front with his head, down and tongue lolling out, aiming evidently at some particular point.

So surly were the leaders of the party that Mr Rogers made no further effort to be friendly, but sat with his sons looking-on, till the whole troop, extending several hundred yards, had filed by,

under the cloud of dust shuffled up by the oxen's feet; and then, as the little hunting-party rode on, they could see as it were a cloud go rolling slowly over the plain, the emigrant party being quite hidden by its folds, till the dreary dust-covered plain was passed.

"How are we to get at these rhinoceroses?" said Mr Rogers, as they rode homeward. "We must have one, boys; but I don't want to have out the Zulus to track, for fear of their getting injured."

"Perhaps we shall come across one, father, when we don't expect it," said Dick. "Let's try to get a giraffe or two, and we may find a rhinoceros without hunting for it."

"Very wisely said," replied Mr Rogers; "perhaps we shall."

Chapter Thirty Four.

How the Waggon was put Straight.

The remark made by Dick as he rode home with his father was much nearer fulfilment than he expected.

The morning broke dark and lowering, with great thunder clouds in the north; and as it was evident that it was raining hard, as it can rain sometimes in South Africa, and they might get caught, it was decided to spend the morning at home, and devote that day to a general clean up of arms, and a repacking of the waggon, which needed doing sadly. Besides which there were cases of stores that they had not yet been able to get at; and these it was advisable to have, especially a whole barrel of fine flour, which was right at the bottom.

Arms were cleaned, then, till Dinny announced breakfast, with three hot roast quails, that had been knocked down by Chicory that morning.

These were a delicious treat, being about three times the size of the little English quail; and the hearty breakfast having come to an end, Mr Rogers climbed into the waggon, followed by the boys,

the General and his sons went off to collect wood for firing, while Peter and Dirk, with a yoke of bullocks, brought it to the camp and made a stack, upon which Dinny soon began to make inroads for culinary purposes, as he had cakes to bake, and a large joint of eland to cook for an early dinner—for if it seemed likely to hold up, an expedition was determined on in search of giraffes for the afternoon.

It was very busy and very warm work under the tilt of the waggon, but the two boys toiled away with a will, and package after package of forgotten luxuries was unearthed, and placed where it could be used.

“Hurray, father!” cried Jack, “here’s a box of cornflour.”

“And here’s another bag of rice,” cried Dick.

“Better still,” said Mr Rogers, laughing. “Here’s something that will suit you, Dick.”

“What? More sugar, father?”

“No. You were grumbling about always drinking your coffee without milk; here’s a case of Swiss condensed.”

“If the sugar ran out,” said Jack, “we could get honey.”

“Yes,” said his father. “You boys must be on the look out for the honey-guide.”

“Why, we saw one, father,” cried Jack.

“Yes, and the rhinoceros drove it out of our head,” said Dick, “and—”

“Why, what’s the matter?” cried Mr Rogers. “Rifles, boys!”

They were just engaged in moving a big chest, and had the greater part of the waggon’s contents piled up on one side, that nearest the kraal of growing and piled up thorns, when there was a loud yelping of the dogs, a peculiar grunting snort, a

tremendous crash, and the dissel-boom was driven on one side, and the fore part of the waggon itself actually lifted and nearly overturned.

There was a tremendous crash, and splinters flew as it was struck; and another crash as it came down upon the earth again, one wheel having been lifted quite a couple of feet.

Then, as Jack held on by the great laths of the waggon cover, and looked over the chests, he saw the shoulders of a great rhinoceros, as it wrenched its horn out of the woodwork that it had driven it through; then it whisked round, and charged straight at the fire, rushing through it, trampling the embers, and tossing the burning sticks in all directions.

“Murther! master, help! Here’s a big thief of a— Murth—”

A HEAVY CHARGER.

Dinny did not finish his sentence, for, seeing him standing there shouting as his cooking-place was “torn all to smithereens,” as he afterwards expressed it, the rhinoceros dashed at him, and with one lift of his horn sent poor Dinny flying into the thorny hedge of the cattle-kraal.

The rhinoceros now stood snorting and squeaking, in search of some other object upon which to vent its rage; and seeing this in some newly-washed clothes laid out to dry upon a bush, it charged at them, dashing through the bush, and carrying off a white garment upon its horn, with which it tore right away, never stopping once while it was in sight.

“Well, when you have done laughing, young gentlemen,” said Mr Rogers, “perhaps you will let me pass and see what damages we have suffered.”

“Laugh!” cried Jack. “Oh, father, I ache with laughing. Did you ever see such a comical beast?”

“It certainly has its comical side,” said Mr Rogers; “but it is terribly mischievous and dangerous.”

“But you should have seen it toss Dinny, father,” said Dick, wiping his eyes. “I hope he wasn’t hurt.”

They leaped out of the waggon rifle in hand, just as a piteous groan came from the top of the kraal fence.

“Ah, masther, and that was the only dacent shirt I had left. Oh, masther, dear, help me down. I’m kilt and murthered here wid the great thorns in my back.”

The boys could hardly help for laughing, poor Dinny’s aspect was so ludicrous; but by dint of placing the broken dissel-boom up to where he was sitting, and crawling up to him, Dinny was aided to drag himself out.

“Aisy then, Masther Jack, aisy,” he cried; “don’t ye see the nasty crukked thorns have got howlt of me? Ye’d be pulling me out of

my clothes, instead of my clothes out of the thorns. Arrah, sor, d'ye think that great pig baste wid a horn on his nose will ever bring me clane shirt back?"

"Very doubtful, Dinny; but are you much hurt?" said Mr Rogers.

"An' am I much hurt?" cried Dinny, "whin there isn't a bit of me as big as saxpence that hasn't got a thorn shtuck in it?"

"Oh, never mind the thorns," said Mr Rogers, laughing.

"Shure, I don't, sor; they moight all be burnt for the bit I'd care. But shure, sor, it isn't at all funny when you've got the thorns in ye."

"No, no, of course not, Dinny," said his master, "and it is unfeeling to laugh. But are you hurt anywhere?"

"Shure, sor, I'm telling ye that I'm hurt all over me, ivery-where."

"But the rhinoceros—"

"The which, sor? Sure, I didn't know that any part of me was called a rhinoceros."

"No, no, I mean the animal that charged you."

"An' that's a rhinoceros is it, sor? Shure, I thought it was a big African pig wid a horn in his nose."

"Yes, that's a rhinoceros, Dinny. Come, did it hurt you when it charged you?"

"Shure, I'd like to charge it the price of me best shirt, I would," grumbled Dinny, rubbing himself softly. "No, he didn't hurt me much; he lifted me up too tinderly wid his shnout; but that was his artfulness, the baste; he knew what the crukked thorns would do."

"Then you have no bones broken, Dinny?" said Dick.

“An is it a pig I’d let break me bones?” cried Dinny, indignantly. “A great ugly baste! I’d like to have the killing of him any day in the week. Just look at me fire flying all over the place. Shure, I’ll be very glad when we get home again;” and he went grumbling away.

The damage to the waggon was not serious. The horn of the great beast had gone right through the plank of the forepart, where the chest generally stood on which the driver sat, and that could easily be repaired; while they were carpenters enough to splice the broken dissel-boom, or if needs be, cut down a suitable tree and make another; so that altogether there was nothing much to bemoan. A good deal of laughter followed, Dick and Jack being unable to contain their mirth, as they thought of Dinny’s discomfiture.

“Oh, yis; it’s all very foine, Masther Jack; but if you’d been sent flying like I was then, it isn’t much ye’d have laughed.”

“No, I suppose not, Dinny,” said the lad frankly; “but never mind about the thorns.”

“Shure, it isn’t the holes in me shkin,” said Dinny; “they’ll grow again. I was thinking about me shirt.”

“I’ll ask father to give you one of his, Dinny,” said Dick.

“One o’ thim flannel ones wid blue sthripes?” said Dinny eagerly.

“Yes, one of those if you like, Dinny.”

“Whoop! good luck to the big pig and his horn on his nose,” cried Dinny. “He’s welkim to me owld shirt; for it was that tindher that I had to put on me kid gloves to wash it, for fear it should come to pieces, Masther Dick. But, Masther Dick, asthore, d’ye think the big baste will come back and thread on me fire again?”

“I think we shall have to be on the look out for him to stop him,” said Dick. “But his skin’s so thick there’s no getting a bullet through.”

“An’ is it a pig wid a shkin as thick as that!” said Dinny, contemptuously. “Arrah, I’ll be after shooting the baste meself. I wouldn’t go afther the lines, but a big pig! Shure, if the masther will let me have a gun and powther, I’ll go and shute the baste before he knows where he is.”

Chapter Thirty Five.

How Dinny handled his Gun.

In expectation of another visit from the rhinoceros, the greatest precautions were taken; but the days went by, and hunting and collecting took up plenty of attention, and no more visits from the rhinoceros were received.

The boys were certain that this was not the animal that had charged them out upon the grass plain, and proof of this was found one day when, in company with their father, the boys were following a honey-guide. Coffee and Chicory were with them, and eagerly joined in the pursuit, till the bird which had been flitting from bush to bush, and from tree to tree, suddenly perched itself upon one at the edge of a patch of forest.

Then Chicory ran right to a particular tree, and pointed to a spot where, about twenty feet from the ground, the bees could be seen flying in and out.

To the great disappointment of the bird, the wild hive was left for that occasion, it being a pity to waste any of the honey, so they returned by another route towards the camp, the bird twittering and showing no little excitement at what it evidently looked upon as the folly of men at neglecting the sweet treasure.

The place was, however, marked, and with the intention of returning next day, armed with hatchet, fire, and a couple of zinc buckets to hold the spoil, they rode round the other side of the forest-patch, looking out for brightly-plumaged birds, whose skins could be added to the collection already made.

“Yes,” said Mr Rogers, “it is a curious natural history fact, but there it is, plainly enough. The bird knows that man can get at the honey when it cannot, so it leads him to the place hoping to get its share of the spoil.”

“Then you don’t think it is done out of love for man, father?” said Jack.

“What do you think, Dick?” said Mr Rogers.

“I think it’s done out of kindness to the bird,” said Dick, smiling.

“So do I,” replied his father, “and that bird its own self.”

“Look at the vultures,” cried Jack, just then, as quite a cloud of the great birds rose from a clump of trees on their left; and upon riding up there lay a great rhinoceros, or rather its remains, for, in spite of its tough hide, the carrion birds had been busy at it; but not so busy but that the marks of a couple of bullets were seen in its neck and fore-shoulder, from the effects of which it had evidently died.

“That’s our rhinoceros,” cried Jack eagerly.

“You shall have your claim, boys,” said Mr Rogers drily; “my shot shall not count.”

“I said ‘our,’ father; so let’s share it amongst us.”

The boys would have liked to have the horn hacked off, but the animal was in such a terrible state that their father thought it unfair to set either of the Zulus to execute the task; so they had to be content with the trophy in expectation; the boys promising to have off the horn from the next that was shot.

While they were enjoying a hearty meal after their return to the camp, Dinny suddenly began to make advances to Chicory, giving him pieces of cake, and choice bits of meat, which he had roasted, and all to the boy’s great surprise, for heretofore Dinny had been anything but civil to him. But Chicory took it all in good part, and

smiled and nodded; and when at last Dinny signed to him to come away from the camp, the boy followed without a word.

“Look ye here, my little naygur,” said Dinny confidentially, as soon as they were in the shelter of the trees; “d’ye undherstand what I’m saying to ye?”

Chicory nodded eagerly.

“Yes, yes; understand,” he said.

“Then look here, ye dark-looking little image; I want ye to help me.”

“Yes; help,” said Chicory wonderingly.

“Iv ye’ll help me, I’ll help you, little naygur; and ye shall always have plenty of what’s good out of the pot, and roast mate, and cake. D’ye understand that?”

“Yes; Chicory know. Give him plenty meat.”

“That’s right, my young son of a dark night,” cried Dinny. “Well, now then, look here. Ye know that grate big pig wid the horn on his nose came and upset me fire, and run away wid me wardrobe?”

Chicory shook his head.

“Well then, wid me clane shirt. D’ye undherstand now?”

“Yes, yes,” said Chicory, laughing. “Don’t know big pig.”

“Yes, yes, you do, my young piece of black velvet; the big rise nosserus.”

“Yes, rhinoceros, big beast, big horn. Oorrr! houk! houk! houk!”

This was supposed to resemble the noise made by the great animal; and Chicory illustrated his cry by going down on hands

and knees in a clumsy gallop, which ended with a toss of the head in the air.

“Yes; that’s him,” said Dinny. “Well, I want ye to find the way to where he lives by his futmarks, and then come and tell me, and I’ll go and shute him.”

Chicory nodded his head, and they went back to the waggon, where Dinny presented himself to his master all at once with a request for a gun.

“A gun, Dinny? And what do you want with a gun?”

“Shure, sor, everybody else learns how to shute, and I thought I’d like to be able to shute a line or a hippo—what’s his name, or any other of the savage bastes if they came near the waggon while ye were away.”

“Well, Dinny, I have no objection, if you promise to be careful.”

“But I want one o’ them that shutes big bullets, sor, and not the little pishtol things that only shutes small shot, sor.”

“You shall have a good rifle, Dinny,” said his master. “Dick, get the Snider—the short Snider—out of the waggon, and give him twenty cartridges.”

This was done, and the rifle placed in Dinny’s hands.

“You must be very careful how you shoot with it, Dinny,” said Mr Rogers.

“Shure and I will, sor.”

“But be particularly careful not to fire in the direction where any one is coming. Remember a Snider is dangerous at a mile.”

“Is it now?” said Dinny. “But shure, sor, I want a gun, and I don’t care for your Sniders at all. What’s a Snider to do wid me? It’s a gun I want.”

“To kill wild beasts, Dinny?”

“That same, sor.”

“Well, then, take that Snider-rifle; it will kill at a tremendous distance.”

“What, that little bid of a thing, sor?”

“To be sure, man. Now take care, and you’ll have to keep it clean and free from rust as well.”

“Thanky, sor, and I will, and it will have too much to do for it to get rusty.”

“Well, Dinny, I trust you, mind, so be careful with your weapon.”

“Shure, sor, and I will,” said Dinny; and taking the Snider very carefully in his hands, he asked Jack to give him “a bit of showing how to trim thim,” and this Jack did till he was perfect, when Dinny went off with the rifle, muttering to himself.

“Think o’ that now!” he kept on saying, “that bit of a thing shooting a baste at a mile!”

Nothing more was said by Dinny, who had made his plans, and he kept his own secret of what he intended to do. On the following afternoon Chicory came to him in high glee, to claim the roast meat and cake promised, and he announced that he had found where the rhinoceros lived.

“How did you find him out?” said Dinny doubtingly.

“Track. Follow spoor,” said Chicory proudly.

“Oh, ye followed his spoor, did ye?” said Dinny. “Very well thin, it’s going to be a bright moonlight night, so ye can follow his spoor, and tak’ me wid ye.”

Chicory nodded eagerly, and in the course of the evening he came and beckoned to Dinny, who took the Snider, and put the cartridges in his pocket.

“Where are you going, Dinny?” said his master.

“Shure, jist for a bit o’ pleasure, sor,” he replied.

“Well, look out for the lions,” said Dick maliciously.

“Shure I niver thought o’ the lines,” muttered Dinny, “and they goo out a-walking av a night. I’d better shtay at home. Bother!” he cried angrily. “Shure the young masther did it to frecken me, and it’ll take a braver boy than him to do it anyhow.”

So Dinny marched off, and following Chicory, the boy led him at once over a rugged mountainous hill, and then into a part of the forest that was particularly dark, save where the moon, pretty well at its full, threw long paths of light between the trees.

Enjoining silence, the boy went cautiously forward, threading his way through the dark forest, till he halted beside a fallen monarch of the woods, a huge tree of such enormous proportions, that its gnarled trunk and branches completely stopped further progress; for it formed a stout barrier breast high, over which a man could fire at anything crossing the moonlit glade beyond.

The shape of the tree was such that a branch like a second trunk ran almost parallel to the main trunk, arching over the head of whoever used the old tree for a breastwork, and forming an additional protection should the occupant of the breastwork be attacked by any large animal.

“Stop there, you see noseros,” whispered Chicory.

“But shure ye wouldn’t have a man shtand there by himself, and all in the dark? Faix, there’s some wild baste or another shlaying me now.”

“See noseros then shoot,” whispered Chicory. “I stay here.”

The boy caught hold of a branch and swung himself up into a tree, where he perched himself and waited.

“Faix, he’s just like a little monkey, and not fit for the shociety of Christians,” muttered Dinny as he took his place by the great barrier, and, resting his rifle upon the trunk, waited.

Dinny felt in anything but a courageous mood, but as he had come so far upon his mission, he strung himself up to go on with it, and watched the open space before him, lit up by the moon which shone full upon his face.

“Maybe he’s only playing wid me, the black little haythen,” thought Dinny, “and there’s no big pig to be seen here at all. But he shan’t see that I’m a bit freckened annyhow, for I’ll shtand my ground till he comes down and says we’d better go.”

So Dinny stood watching there till he began to feel drowsy, and this made him lean against the great trunk, his head began to nod, and twice over he was pretty well asleep.

“Shure, an’ I’ll catch cowld if I do that,” he said to himself, as he gave himself a bit of a shake. “I don’t see what’s the good o’ waiting here, and—murther! look at that now.”

Dinny felt as if cold water was being poured over him as, all at once, he saw the great proportions of a rhinoceros standing out quite black against the bright moonlight, the animal being as motionless as if carved from the rock that lay in great masses around.

“Shure an’ it’s a big shtone, and nothing else, and—murther, it’s moving, and coming here.”

Dinny hardly knew himself how he did it, but in a kind of desperation he took aim at the rhinoceros, and drew trigger.

The result was a sharp crack, that seemed to echo into distance far away, and mingled with the echoes there was a furious grunting roar.

For Dinny had hit the rhinoceros. In fact, aiming at it as he did, with the barrel of his piece upon the large trunk, it would have been almost impossible to miss. But as he heard the roar Dinny turned and ran, stumbled, saved himself, and hid behind a tree.

“Murther, but it’s awful work,” he muttered, as his trembling fingers placed a second cartridge in the rifle.

Then, all being silent, Dinny stole out, and peering cautiously before him, crept towards the prostrate tree.

“Shure, I belave I’ve shot him dead,” he muttered, as he peered out into the open glade; but as he showed his face in the moonlight there was a furious snort, and Dinny turned and fled; for the rhinoceros charged right at the white face behind the prostrate tree, thrusting its monstrous head between the two huge limbs; and then, in spite of its prodigious strength being unable to get any further, it drew back, charged again, placed one hoof on the tree—but its efforts were in vain. Then it wrenched its head back, and retiring a short distance charged once more, Dinny watching it from behind a tree with blanched face and hands, trembling with excitement.

A practised hunter would have sent bullet after bullet crashing into the monster’s brain; but Dinny was not practised, and it was not until he had thoroughly convinced himself that the animal could not get through, that he stole out, and bending down, cautiously advanced nearer and nearer to the

BICORNIS HAS AN INTERVIEW WID DINNY.

huge beast, which snorted, and grunted, and squealed in its futile efforts to get at its assailant.

If it had gone twenty yards to its left, it could easily have passed the obstacle; but it was pig-like enough in its nature to keep on trying to force itself through the obstacle it had tried to pass, and seeing this, Dinny went on, gaining a little courage the while.

“Shure I’ll go close enough to make quite sartain,” he muttered; “but it’s like having a bad dhrame, that it is. Now where had I better shute him—in the mouth or the eye?”

He decided for the eye, and raising the rifle at last he took a long aim at not six feet distance, when the great beast uttered so furious a roar that Dinny turned once more, and fled behind the tree.

“Shure and what’d I be freckened of?” he said angrily. “Not of a baste like that.” And walking out once more he repeated his manoeuvres, approaching cautiously; and as the rhinoceros began straining, and sprang to force its way through, Dinny took careful aim at the monstrous beast, and fired.

“Shure it’s aisy enough,” he said, as the beast started back; and placing a fresh cartridge in his piece, he fired again at where the animal stood in the full moonlight swaying its head to and fro.

It was impossible to miss; and Dinny fired again and again, nine shots in all, growing encouraged by his success; and the result was that the monster fell over upon its side at last with a heavy thud, just as Chicory dropped to the ground, and made the hero jump by touching him on the back.

“Ah, be aisy; what are ye thrying to frecken a man for like that?” said Dinny. “But look at that, ye little haythen; that’s the way to shute. Now let’s go back and tell them they needn’t be alarmed about the big pig, for its Dinny himself that has done the thrick.”

Chapter Thirty Six.

Dinny relates his Adventure.

Dinny’s story was hardly believed when he walked into camp, but Chicory was there to corroborate his words, and the astonishment felt was intense.

“You—you shoot a rhinoceros, Dinny!” said his master.

“Shure and why not, yer hanner?” said Dinny. “Didn’t I borry the gun a’ purpose for that same? and didn’t the big baste stale my gyarments in the most ondacent way?”

“But how? Where? Where?” was asked by father and sons, in a breath.

“Shure an’ I’m the laste bit weary wid my exertions,” said Dinny, “and I’ll jist light me pipe and sit down and rest, and tell ye the while.”

All in the most deliberate way, Dinny proceeded to light his pipe and rest; and then, with Chicory sitting in front with his arms tightly embracing his knees, and his eyes and mouth open, Dinny related his adventure with the rhinoceros.

The late Sir Walter Scott in speaking of embellishing and exaggerating a story called it adding a cocked-hat and walking-stick.

Dinny put not merely a cocked-hat and walking-stick to his story, but embellished it with a crown, sceptre, and royal robes of the most gorgeous colours. It was wonderful what he had done; the furious conduct of the rhinoceros, the daring he had displayed, the precision with which he had sought out vital parts to aim at. A more thrilling narrative had never been told, and Chicory’s eyes grew rounder and his mouth wider open in his astonishment and admiration, the hero going up wonderfully in the boy’s esteem, especially as he read in Dinny’s looks the promise of endless snacks and tastes when he was hungry.

But all the same, Dinny’s flights of fancy grew a little too lofty for his other hearers.

“Oh, I say, Dinny, come now,” said Dick, as his father sat back listening with a good-humoured smile upon his lip. “I’m not going to believe that a rhinoceros rose up on its hind legs and fought at you with its fore paws, while you stood still and aimed at it.”

“Shure, Masther Dick, dear, did you ever know me say anything that wasn’t thrue? If ye doubt me word, there’s Masther Chicory there, as brave a boy as ever stepped in—I mane out of shoe leather, and spread his little black toes about in the sand. He was there all the toime, and ye can ax him if he didn’t see it.”

“Yes,” said Chicory, “nosros try to get through big tree, and Dinny shoot um.”

“There,” said Dinny triumphantly, “what did I tell you? Why, if ye don’t believe me, there’s the baste itself lying as dead as a hammer where I shot him.”

“Then it’s only a little pig or a young rhinoceros, Dinny,” said Jack.

“Little pig!” cried Dinny. “By this an’ by that, he’s as big as the waggon there, tub an’ all. Sure a bigger and more rampaging baste niver fought wid a human man, and tried hard to ate him.”

“Why that shows what stuff you are telling us, Dinny. A rhinoceros wouldn’t eat a man; he’d trample him to death,” cried Dick, who had been a studious boy for years. “A rhinoceros is an herbivorous beast, and has a prehensile upper lip.”

“A what sort o’ baste?” said Dinny, staring.

“Herbivorous.”

“Shure an’ what’s that got to do wid it? I tell you it tried to ate me at one mouthful, in spite of his what sort o’ upper lip. Shure the poor baste couldn’t help having that the matter wid his lip. Why as soon as I set eyes on him, ‘Ah, Dinny,’ I says, ‘yer work’s cut out, me boy,’ I says, ‘for if ever there was a baste wid a stiff upper lip that’s the one.’”

“But I said a prehensile upper lip, Dinny,” cried Dick.

“Shure I heard what ye said, Master Dick. I know. And a pretty rampaging baste he was. Wirra! If ye’d seen him foight. If ye’d heard him roar, and saw how I battled wid him till I’d laid him low wid tin bullets in his jacket. Ah, it was wonderful. But ye shall see the baste.”

“Yes, I want to see him, Dinny,” said Jack.

“Shure an’ I’ll be glad to take ye, Masther Jack, as soon as it’s light. But he was a brave baste, and fought well; and I felt sorry-like when I seen him go down.”

“Did you though, Dinny?”

“Shure an’ I did, Masther Dick, for I says to myself, ‘Ye’re a brave boy, an’ I dessay ye’ve got a mother somewhere as is very proud of ye, just as I’ve got wan meself. But I must shute ye,’ I says, ‘for the sake of the gintlemen wid the waggon, and the mischief ye’ve done,’ and so I did; an’ there he lies, Masther Dick, stretched out on his side; and pace to his ashes. I’ve done.”

“Well, boys,” said Mr Rogers, speaking for the first time for some minutes, “I think we ought to congratulate ourselves upon the great accession we have discovered in Dinny. In future he shall accompany us in our attacks upon the lions and other furious beasts. I should not think of going after elephant now without Dinny.”

That gentleman’s face was a study, as he listened to his master’s words. His nostrils twitched, his brows grew full of wrinkles, and his jaw dropped, letting his pipe fall from his lips; and though he picked it up directly after, the tobacco had gone out, and Dinny looked as if all the enjoyment had gone out of his life.

Beyond the roaring of a lion or two, the night passed off very quietly, and as soon as it was broad day Chicory stood ready to lead the party to see the rhinoceros.

“Come, Dinny, aren’t you ready?” cried Dick.

“Shure an’ I don’t want to go, Masther Dick. I seen enough of the baste last night.”

“Yes, but you must come and show us.”

“Shure an’ Masther Chicory there will lade you to the very spot, and I couldn’t do any more. He lies did bechuckst two big lumps of sthone, an’, as I said, he’s as big as a waggin.”

“Oh, but Dinny must come,” said Mr Rogers.

“Shure an’ how will I get the breakfast riddy if I come, sor?” persisted Dinny. “I did my duty last night. You gintlemen must go and fetch him home.”

But Dinny’s protestations passed unheeded, and he had to go with the party, shouldering his rifle like a raw recruit, but glancing uneasily to right and left as they went along.

Dick observed this, and said quietly,—

“What a lot of poisonous snakes there are amongst these stones!”

Dinny gave a spasmodic jump, and lifting his feet gingerly, deposited them in the barest places he could find; and for the rest of the journey he did not once take his eyes off the ground.

As it happened they had not gone fifty yards farther before they came upon a great swollen puff-adder, lying right in their path.

Chicory saw it first, and shouted a word of warning, which made Dinny wheel round, and run away as hard as he could go, till the shouts of the others brought him back, looking terribly ashamed.

“Oh, it’s wan o’ thim things, is it?” he said, looking at the writhing decapitated viper. “Shure I thought it was the jumping sort that springs up at yer ois, and stings ye before yer know where ye are. There was a cousin, of me mother’s went to live in Hampshire, and she got bit by wan o’ thim bastes in the fut, and it nearly killed her. Ye can’t be too careful.”

Dinny felt as if he was being laughed at for the rest of the way, and looked quite sulky; but the sight of the great fallen tree, and the huge rhinoceros surrounded by vultures busily working a way through the tough hide, revived him, and he marched forward to examine his bullet holes with the look of pride worn by a conqueror.

It was quite refreshing to see him walk up the hind leg of the rhinoceros, and then along its huge horny-hided body to the shoulder, where, lowering the rifle he carried, Dinny placed the stock upon the creature’s neck, and rested his arm upon the barrel, regarding his fallen foe in quite a contemplative manner.

“Mind that rifle don’t go off, Dinny,” cried Jack.

Dinny leaped off the rhinoceros and stared.

“It’s a very dangerous thing to rest your arms on the muzzle of a gun,” said Dick, who enjoyed poor Dinny’s discomfiture.

“Well, Dinny,” said his master, “I congratulate you upon having slain a monster. Where did you stand?”

“Oh, over yonder somewhere,” said Dinny cavalierly. “Anywhere to get a good soight ov him.”

“Stood here behind tree where nosros no get at um,” said Chicory, innocently, in his eagerness to explain all he could.

“Ah, ye avil little baste,” muttered Dinny. “See if I give ye the laste taste of anything I’ve got. Ah, yes,” he said aloud, “I did get one shot at him from behind that big tree; but I cud see him best out in the open yander. Shure an’ how big is the baste, sor?” he added, as Mr Rogers ran a measuring tape along the animal from nose to tail.

“Just over eleven feet, Dinny,” said Mr Rogers; and leaving the General to hew off the great blunt horn, they returned to breakfast.

Chapter Thirty Seven.

Dick tries the Vegetable Fish-Hooks.

Directly breakfast was over they started—this time without Dinny, who seemed to be very nervous for fear he should be asked to go—to get some of the honey, Coffee and Chicory each carrying a zinc pail, and the General a small tub.

Long before they reached the patch of forest-trees the little bird came fluttering and twittering about them, having apparently forgiven their past neglect, and then went on, and flew from bush to bush, leading them straight to the big trees, perching as before upon one close by, and then silently watching the manoeuvres of the party.

The General was about to take the lead, but Coffee and Chicory uttered such a strong protest in their native tongue, that he smilingly handed his hatchet to Coffee; while Chicory collected some tolerably dry peaty growth, struck a light and set it on fire, causing a dense cloud of smoke to rise up round the tree that contained the wild honey, and stupefying and suffocating the bees that flew to and fro.

The boys grinned with delight at their task, and danced about, heaping up the smoke-producing leaves and stalks, till feeling satisfied that they might ascend, there was a bit of an altercation as to who should go, ending in Chicory giving way to his brother as he had been ill.

Coffee then took the axe and stuck it in his loin-cloth, and a patch of burning turf in his hand. Then nimbly climbed up to the hole, where he held the smoking turf before him, to keep off the bees from his naked body, and clinging tightly with his legs, he proceeded to ply the axe so vigorously, and with such skill, that the rotten bark soon gave way, the tree being little more than a shell, and he laid bare range upon range of the beautiful comb.

A little more tearing away of the bark was necessary, and then Coffee descended for a pail and a knife, dispensing now with his burning turf, and going up to return with the pail full of delicious comb.

This was turned into the General's tub, and the boy ascended again, filled his pail and descended, and once more going up filled the other.

The General then solemnly took a piece of the comb and placed it in the fork of a tree for the honey-guide, assuring those who looked on, that it was necessary to propitiate the bird and pay it for its services—a plan of which the little thing seemed highly to approve, for it flew to the comb at once, and began to feed.

Enough having been procured to fill the pails and tub, Chicory, evidently approving of his brother's sticky state, went up the tree in turn, and cut out three combs for present use, offering some to

each of his masters, and then dividing the remainder between his father, brother, and self.

In fact, after removing to a little distance from the hive-tree, all sat down and had a good feast of the delicious honey, Coffee and Chicory grinning with delight as they munched up the wax and sweet together.

“Well, of all the sticky objects I ever saw, they beat everything,” said Dick, laughing. “Why, Coffee’s all over honey.”

“Yes, tick all over,” said the boy, rubbing his finger down his chest, and then sucking it, for he had got to be pretty thickly smeared in carrying the honey down.

“Didn’t the bees sting?” said Jack.

“Only tiddlum’s back;” said Coffee, giving himself a writhe.

“Yes, tiddlum’s back,” said Chicory, applying honey to three or four places upon his arms. “Don’t mind.”

“No, don’t mind,” assented Coffee; and they filled their mouths full of honey and wax and cried, “Good, good, good.”

They had spent so long over the journey for the honey that evening was coming on fast as they began to ride slowly back, Dick and Jack making excursions here and there in search of something fresh as they crossed a bushy plain strewn with great masses of stone, which rendered their progress very slow, any attempt at a trot or canter being absolutely madness, unless they wished to lame their steeds.

“I wish we had got father’s glasses,” said Jack, “we might have seen something from this high ground.”

“I have got them,” said Dick, gazing through the binocular at the prospect of undulating plain, across which his father and the Zulu were making their way now, quite a mile in advance. “I’ve got them, but I can only see some quagga right over yonder.”

“I can see something close by,” cried Jack, pointing at a tall, dimly seen object that slowly passed out of a clump of bushes, and then went slowly forward into another.

“What can you see?” said Dick.

“Giraffe!” cried Jack.

“Nonsense! Where?”

“It just went into that clump of bushes there. Come on.”

“No,” said Dick, “father’s making signals for us to go to him.”

“But it’s such a pity to miss a chance,” cried Jack, unslinging his rifle.

“Yes,” said Dick, “so it is, but I shouldn’t like father to think we did not attend to his signals. Mark the clump. There, we shall know it by these stones on this high ground; and—yes, Jack, you’re right. That must be a giraffe.”

They stood watching the tall neck passing amongst the bushes, but it was getting very dark now, and they hurried on, so as to overtake the honey-bearers, reaching camp

SEEN AT SUNSET.

afterwards quite safely, where, over their late dinner, the coming of the giraffes was discussed.

"I'd have breakfast at daybreak, boys, if I were you," said Mr Rogers, "and be off directly after."

"But you'll come too, father?" said Jack.

"No, my boys, I thought you would like to have a hunt by yourselves," said Mr Rogers; when, seeing how disappointed the lads looked, he consented to come.

The General stopped to keep the camp, and Coffee and Chicory seemed terribly disappointed at not being of the party; but upon receiving permission to take the dogs for a run, and a hunt all to themselves, they brightened up, and saw their masters go off without a murmur.

It was a ride of some hours' duration to get to the high ground where the giraffe had been seen, the fact of there being one, Mr Rogers said, showing that there was a little herd somewhere close by, and so it proved, for after cautiously approaching the place, riding with the greatest care, so as to avoid the great masses of stone hidden amongst the grass, three tall heads were seen peering about in a patch of trees quite half a mile away.

A quiet approach was contrived, the hunters making, their way round to the far side of the clump of bushes, where some higher trees sheltered their approach—very barely though, for the giraffe's long necks enabled them to peer over bushes and saplings of no mean height.

But for this shelter the little herd would have been off at once, and they could have followed them at little better than a walk, on account of the rough stones and masses of rock.

Practice had made them skilful at stalking, and keeping pretty close together, they gradually approached the patch of tall growth, when, in obedience to a signal from Mr Rogers, they separated, Dick and Jack going in opposite directions, and Mr Rogers waiting for a few moments to let the boys get a start, and then entering the bush himself.

So well had the arrangement been timed, that father and sons met together just upon the other side, staring the one at the other.

"Why, where are the giraffes?" cried Jack.

"Yes, where are they?" said Dick, looking at his father, as if he thought he had taken them away. "Haven't you seen them?"

"Not I," said Mr Rogers, laughing. "Why, boys, we must be sharper than this another time."

"But when did they go?" cried Dick.

“I cannot tell,” replied his father, “unless it was when we were out of sight. They must have suspected danger, and gone off at full speed.”

“What’s to be done now then?” said Jack.

“Get up to the top of the nearest hill, and look round with the glass,” suggested Dick; and this was so evidently the best plan, that they started for an eminence about a mile away.

Here they had not been a moment, and Mr Rogers had not had time to get out the glass, before Jack cried,—

“There they go: I see them: scudding along through those bushes in the hollow there.”

Stalking having proved unsuccessful the last time, they almost gave it up on this occasion, save that they trotted down the side of the hill away from the giraffes, and then cantered on so as to reach the same point as that for which the giraffes seemed to be making a long sweep of open plain, where they could put their horses to full speed.

This time the giraffes were in sight as they rounded the corner of the hill, and shouting to the boys to each pick out one, Mr Rogers pushed his horse forward, and selecting the tallest of the herd, galloped on to cut it off from the rest of the herd.

This needed little care, for the tall ungainly beast realised directly that it was being pursued, and separating from the herd, went off at a clumsy gallop, its neck outstretched, and its tail whisking about as it kept looking back at its pursuer.

Jack picked out another, which made for the denser part, where the trees were thick, and in his excitement he gave his cob the rein, and away they went at racing pace.

But Jack did not gain much upon the giraffe he had chosen, for almost before he had seen the colour of its spots at all closely, his horse, participating in its master’s eagerness, went at full speed

under a long, low branch, and came out on the other side of the wood, but without Jack, who was swept violently out of his saddle by the low bough, which swung violently to and fro for a few moments, and then deposited Jack softly in a sitting posture upon the ground. The boy rose to rub his chest very softly, and then feeling to see whether he was all right, he went on in chase of his horse, which he overtook standing very patiently just outside the patch of forest, looking wonderingly at him, as if asking why he had left its back.

“What a nuisance!” grumbled Jack; “and I daresay they’ve both shot giraffes by this time. How unlucky, to be sure!”

He lifted the reins from his horse’s feet, and thrusting them over its head, mounted again, but not comfortably, for Jack felt very sore across the chest where the bough had struck him.

From this post of vantage he could see his father in the distance still in chase of the giraffe; but though he looked in various directions, there was no Dick.

“Whoo-hoo-hoo-hoop!”

Jack started to look in the direction from whence the sound had come, but he could see nothing. He, however, responded to the call, and it was repeated, evidently from a patch of wood half a mile distant.

As he cantered towards it, the signal rang out again.

“Dick’s brought down his giraffe very quickly,” said Jack. “Whoo-hoo-hoo-hoop!”

“Here! Hoi! Jack!” came now from pretty close to him—but in a dense part of the patch of trees; and riding up, there was Dick, with his horse standing perfectly still and looking at him.

“Come along,” cried Jack. “Where’s your giraffe?”

“I don’t know. Where’s yours?”

“Miles away. I galloped under a tree, and was pulled off my horse, such a bang.”

“We came right into these thorns,” said Dick, “and have been here ever since.”

“What! can’t you get out?”

“Get out? No. It’s horrible. I’m caught all over, and poor old Shoes just the same. Directly I try to make him stir, he begins to kick, and when he kicks it’s awful. They’re like fish-hooks, and I’m torn to pieces.”

Jack began to laugh.

“Ah, yes, you may laugh,” said his brother; “but you wouldn’t like it.”

“No,” laughed Jack, “but you do look such a jolly old guy stuck up there, I can’t help laughing.”

“But do try and help me out.”

“How?” said Jack.

“Oh, I don’t know. Stand still, Shoes, do! Oh, I say, don’t kick again, pray don’t! Good old horse then.”

Shoes whinnied as his master patted and talked to him, but the thorns pricked him so at even this light movement, that the poor animal stamped angrily, and snorted as he pawed the ground.

In spite of his intense desire to laugh, Jack saw that matters were really serious for his brother; and leaping off, he threw down his reins at his horse’s feet, whipped out his great hunting-knife, and proceeded to cut and hack away the thorns by which his brother and his horse were surrounded.

They were indeed like fish-hooks, and so sharp and strong, that once in amongst them no one could have escaped without having clothes and skin ploughed and torn in a terrible way.

Shoes stood perfectly still now. He snorted at times and twitched the skin of his withers, turning his great eyes appealingly to Jack, who plied his heavy sheath-knife so effectively that at last the mass of thorns was sufficiently hacked away to allow horse and rider to move.

Fortunately for Dick, he was a clever horseman. Had he ridden like some people, who hang a leg on each side of a horse and call that riding, he must have been thrown. For at the first touch to start him, Shoes was so eager to get out of the thorny torture to which he had been subjected, that he made a tremendous bound, and alighted clear, trembling and sweating profusely.

"Oh, I say, Jack, I am scratched," grumbled Dick, giving himself soft rubs all over. "Don't laugh. It does hurt so."

"But I feel as if I can't help it," cried Jack, who burst into a fresh roar.

"I don't think I should have laughed at poor old Dinny, if I had known how it hurts. Those thorns are nearly as sharp as needles."

"Well, there, I won't laugh any more; but you weren't tossed up on the thorns by a rhinoceros. Come along. Let's go after father;" and they set off, but very gently, for Dick's face was screwed into a fresh grimace at every motion of the horse, while the poor beast itself was marked with little tiny beads of blood all over its satin skin.

Chapter Thirty Eight.

Father shoots a Giraffe.

Meanwhile, believing that the boys were in full chase of a giraffe a-piece, Mr Rogers had galloped on after the great creature he had cut off from the herd, though for a time he could not gain upon it at all. The beast's mode of progression was very ungainly, and its great stilted legs moved in an awkward manner, but it got over the ground very fast.

Still the plain was open and offered good galloping ground, and after a very long stern-chase Mr Rogers saw tokens of the great beast beginning to give way, and thereupon pushed forward, the bay responding to the calls he made upon it, so that he was soon alongside.

His rifle was ready, but he hesitated to use it, preferring to gallop on and watch the great creature which towered up to double the height he sat upon his horse. It kept panting on, whisking its tail, and once or twice it made an awkward side-wise kick at the horse, but it was ill-directed and of none effect; while at last feeling that he was torturing the great beast, he levelled his gun, but his sight was disarranged by another fierce kick, which made the horse bound aside.

Again they thundered on for some distance, when, steadying his horse so as to get a good aim, Mr Rogers levelled, fired, and the monster came down with a crash, shot through the head.

As the great giraffe lay motionless, Mr Rogers leaped down, after looking to see if his boys were coming; and then loosening his horse’s girths he let it graze amongst the rich grass

A SHOT AT A GALLOP.

that grew in patches here and there, while, after refreshing himself a little, he drew his hunting-knife and proceeded dexterously to skin the great animal, which must have stood about nineteen feet from horn to hoof.

For the skin of the giraffe—if a fine one—is worth three or four pounds, and this was in magnificent condition.

It was a hard task that skinning, but the long legs acted as levers when he wanted to turn the creature over, and the busily employed time skipped away, quite three hours having elapsed before Dick and Jack rode up.

“Why, what a magnificent skin, father,” cried Dick, as he stood admiring the creamy drab, splashed and spotted with great patches of a rich yellowish brown. “What a monster, and what a height!”

“Yes,” said Mr Rogers. “But I’ve had enough of this, boys. The great gentle beast looked so piteous and appealing at me that I feel ashamed of having killed it. You must shoot one a-piece I suppose, but after that let’s get to the savage animals again. One feels to have done a good deed in ridding the country of one of those brutes. Did you both kill yours?”

“No, father,” they cried in chorus; and after helping to cut off the marrow-bones of the great beast to carry home, for a roast, the marrow being esteemed a delicacy; the heavy skin was mounted before Mr Rogers, and a couple of marrow-bones a-piece proving a load, they rode slowly for the camp, Mr Rogers listening to the account of his boys’ mishaps, both showing traces of having been in the wars.

Evening was coming on fast, and their progress was necessarily slow; but it was not until it had turned quite dark, that the fact became evident that they had lost their way out there on that great wild.

They drew rein and looked around, but not a single familiar landmark was in sight. On the contrary, all loomed up strange and peculiar.

To have gone on meant only wearying themselves in vain, and perhaps an unpleasant encounter with lions; so they made straight for the nearest patch of wood, secured their horses, and rapidly hacked off and collected enough wood for a fire, to do duty in a threefold way—giving them warmth, safety from prowling beasts, and cooking the huge marrow-bones, which were soon set down to roast, and formed, with the biscuits they carried, no despicable meal.

Such nights passed by a blazing fire on the edge of a wood sound very romantic, but they lose their attraction when tried. Hot as Africa is by day, icy winds often blow by night, and they will freeze the hunter inside the shelter of a tent; the coolness then of a night without shelter can be understood. The fire burnt one side, but, as Jack said, without you made the fire all round you, it was no good, and that they could not do.

No one felt disposed to sleep, so they sat and warmed themselves as best they could, drawing the great giraffe skin round them for warmth. Then they talked till they were weary, and afterwards got up to pat and comfort their horses.

It was very wearisome that night, but free from adventure; and the moment it was light they mounted and rode to the nearest eminence, from which they made out land-marks which enabled them to find their way back to camp, where the General and his two boys were missing, having gone out, as they said in their trouble, because Mr Rogers and the boys had not returned—"to look for Boss;" their joy knowing no bounds when they came back in a couple of hours, without finding those they had sought, and seeing them waiting there.

Chapter Thirty Nine.

How Dick captured four Yards of Animal.

Mr Rogers' description of the death of the gentle, harmless beast—its piteous looks, the great tears rolling from its expressive eyes, and its many struggles to get away, somewhat damped the ardour of Dick and Jack, who settled in council that it was too bad to shoot giraffe, and as they had a skin of the great creature, which was stretched out to dry, they would shoot no more.

As for that magnificent skin, Rough'un seemed to consider that it was placed there for his especial benefit; and to the great disgust of Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus, who were tied up and could not join, but had to be content at straining at their chains and looking-on, Rough'un amused himself by licking the skin, especially where there were little bits of fat, till he was tired, and then creeping under the hairy side to sleep.

This he kept up for a whole day. The second day he gave it up, for the skin was rapidly assuming the character of a hard board; but the triumvirate were as impatient as ever, and barked incessantly.

This annoyed Dinny, who borrowed Peter's great whip to administer punishment; but at the first crack and howl, Rough'un, who was loyalty itself to his kind, left the hard skin that he had been smelling and scratching with his forepaw, and flew at Dinny, exclaiming in dog language,—

"Let them alone, you coward; you wouldn't dare to hurt them if they were free."

"Ah, get out, ye ugly murthering baste," roared Dinny, cracking the whip, but in no way intimidating Rough'un, who seemed to know that he was perfectly safe, the whip being only available for use at long distances, and Rough'un keeping close to, and baying and charging at Dinny's legs.

"Be off, or I'll be the death of you," said Dinny, cracking the whip again; but in nowise dismayed, Rough'un kept up the attack, till Dinny literally turned, and fled to obtain his rifle; when Rough'un gave a final bark, and growled at the triumvirate, and the triumvirate were so much obliged that they growled at Rough'un, who coiled himself up in the sun on the malodorous skin and went to sleep.

Dick and Jack were busy saddling their horses while this took place, and stood laughing and enjoying the scene. They were joined directly after by their father, who with the help of Dick had been doing a little amateur farriery work, and freshly nailing a couple of loose shoes on his horse's hoofs. Then, after providing themselves with some dried meat and biscuit, they rode off through the forest on to the plain, leaving the General, Coffee, and Chicory, to provide something for the larder.

This was to be their last day here, for Mr Rogers was anxious that they should get on, for the twofold object of seeing the great falls of the big river, and also getting amongst the elephant.

He could not help smiling with satisfaction, as he saw Dick raise one foot to the stirrup, and spring into the saddle; the boy seeming to have grown lithe and strong as the young leopard with his healthy life in the open air.

There was no need to coax his appetite now with luxuries, for his father used to banter him laughingly about its wolfishness, and compare his food-assimilating powers to those of Coffee and Chicory—boys who could literally graze upon meat by the hour together, and then grin, and show their teeth with satisfaction.

With his returning health, Dick had grown daring to a degree that was almost rash, so that Jack felt at times quite thrown into the shade.

Dick winced a little upon this occasion, for the tremendous scratching he had had from the thorns had left him rather sore; but he soon forgot all this, and away the party rode, to have a sort of naturalists' equestrian ramble, to see if they could pick up anything fresh before they went away.

They rode right off to the plain, noting the various birds among the bushes, and snakes and lizards wherever there was a dry sandy patch amongst rocks and stones. As they reached the part where the trees were scattered in park-like patches they encountered one of the bees'-honey-guides too; but as they had an ample supply at the waggon, and all the buckets being, to Dinny's great annoyance, still in use, the bees were left in peace.

Game seemed to be scarce upon the plain that morning; but after a time as they rode round the edge of a clump of trees, so beautiful in their disposition that they seemed to have been planted there for ornament, Mr Rogers saw, a couple of miles away upon the open plain, a herd of something different to any of the animals they had before encountered.

He took out his glass and carefully inspected them, but declared himself no wiser.

"Well, boys," he said, "whether we shoot one or no, we'll have a canter after them. Let's keep down in that hollow, and round the little hill there, so as to approach unseen. Look out for ant-bear holes. And now, one—two—three—forward!"

A touch from the heel made the beautiful animals they rode bound away, but with a cry of pain Dick reined in.

“My dear boy, what’s the matter?” said Mr Rogers, pulling up, while Jack returned with a blank look of dismay upon his face.

“Thorns!” cried Dick viciously, as he gave a writhe in his saddle.

“Stop and pick ’em out with a pin,” cried Jack. “Come along, father. Haw! haw! haw! I thought he was hurt!” Then sticking his knees into his nag’s side, he bounded off.

“Poor old fellow!” cried Mr Rogers, laughing. “You’ll soon forget them.” And he too galloped off, to try and circumvent the herd.

“Go on! ugly old Jack,” shouted Dick, as he sat fast, checking his horse, which wanted to follow. “You’ll get a thorn or two in yourself some day.”

He might have shouted this through a speaking trumpet, and his brother would not have heard, as, sitting well down in his saddle, he led the way into the hollow, his father close behind, and both thoroughly enjoying their gallop.

“I don’t care!” cried Dick sulkily, as he sat and watched them. “Pick out the thorns with a pin, indeed! See if I don’t stick a pin in old Jack when he’s asleep to-night—and how will he like it?”

Dick gave another writhe as he watched the two riders out of sight, and then muttering in an ill-used way, “Pick ’em out with a pin indeed!” he half turned in his seat, lolling in his saddle, and patting and playing with his horse, when lazily turning his eyes round amongst the clumps of trees, he saw something moving amongst the leaves.

“Boa-constrictors!” he cried in his astonishment. “Monsters! Ugh! No, they’re those great long-necked giraffes. They looked just like huge snakes raising themselves amongst the trees.”

Dick forgot all about the thorns as he nipped his nag's sides with his knees, turned its head, and went off at a canter for the place where the giraffes, seven or eight in number, were browsing upon the lower branches of the trees, their long necks seeming to writhe in and out amongst the branches in a way that quite justified Dick's idea of their being serpents, for their bodies were invisible among the undergrowth.

For a few minutes the great animals did not see the approach of the young hunter; but the moment they caught sight of the fleet cob bounding over the sunburnt grass, they went off at a clumsy, waddling gallop, scattering as they went, their necks outstretched and eyes rolling; while the cob seemed to single out a beautifully marked calf, about two-thirds grown, whose creamy skin was regularly spotted with rich light brown.

Dick's rifle was slung over his back, but he never once thought of using it. In fact, he hardly knew in the excitement of the chase what he intended, and so he raced on past patch after patch of scattered trees, and past clumps of thorns, which both he and the cob carefully avoided.

Now they gained a little; but directly after the giraffe whisked its tail straight up over its back and put on more power, leaving the hunter some distance behind; and so the race went on for a couple of miles, Dick never once remembering his thorns, as he knew that it was only a question of time to run the great animal to a stand.

"Why, I could catch it then," cried Dick excitedly; and sticking his heels into his horse, away they went over the grassy plain, gaining rapidly now; and though the giraffe kept on making an effort to increase the distance, it was of no avail, for the cob raced on closer and closer, and then avoiding the vicious kicks of the creature, delivered with tremendous force by its bony legs, the cob raced on alongside.

There was a wonderful difference in the progress of the two animals—the one awkward, and seeming as if running on stilts; the other compact, muscular, and self-contained, evidently

possessing double the endurance with an equal speed to the giraffe.

On still and on, with the cob's sides flecked with foam, and the giraffe blundering now as it progressed. Once it turned sharp off to the left, but without a touch the cob wheeled as well, and kept alongside, watchfully keeping clear whenever he saw the giraffe about to kick, which it tried to do if there was a chance.

Dick was excited with the chase, so was the cob, which stretched out more and more greyhound fashion as it raced along.

Fortunately, the grassy prairie-like stretch of land was clear of obstacles, no ant-bear or other burrow coming in their path, or horse and rider would have fallen headlong; the eyes of both being fixed upon the beautiful spotted coat of the giraffe, which, after rolling heavily in its gait for a while, made one more effort to wheel round and

AN AWKWARD CUSTOMER.

distance its pursuers, but stumbled in the act, and fell heavily upon its flank.

The cob stopped as if by instinct; and hardly knowing what he was about, Dick leaped down, avoided a kick by a quick jump, threw himself on to the giraffe, kneeling upon its neck, and treating it as people do a fallen horse, holding down its head upon the ground.

“Ah, you may kick and plunge,” muttered Dick, panting and hot with his exertions; “if a horse can’t get up with his head held down, you can’t.”

And so it proved, for though the unfortunate giraffe kicked and plunged as it lay upon its flank, going through the motions of galloping, it was completely mastered without much call for effort. Certainly Dick’s gun was in his way, but he managed to unsling it with one hand, and threw it and his hat upon the grass, while the cob stood by, snuffing, snorting, and excited for a few moments at the giraffe’s plunges, but settled down directly after to graze.

The grass was torn up by the giraffe’s hoofs, but finding its efforts vain, it soon lay perfectly still, uttering a piteous sigh, as much as to say, “There, kill me out of my misery!” to which Dick responded by patting its neck and stroking its nose, as he gazed in the great prominent appealing eye, and noted the gentle mien of the tall animal.

Just as he had made the giraffe be perfectly still, he heard a distant hail, and looking up, there was Jack coming up at full gallop, waving his gun over his head, and with his father close behind; for, unknowingly, the race had led Dick somewhat in the direction taken by his father and brother, who, after an unsuccessful gallop after a very wild herd, had drawn rein and witnessed the end of the giraffe chase through the glass.

“Why, Dick, where are the thorns?” cried his father, as they cantered up.

“Forgot all about ’em, father. Isn’t he a beauty?”

“Where is he shot?” said Mr Rogers.

“Shot? He isn’t shot. I ran him down,” cried Dick.

“Don’t kill him, then,” cried Jack.

“Not I. Shall I let him go?”

“No, no,” cried Jack. “Let’s take him back, and tame him.”

“I think the taming is already done,” said Mr Rogers. “Here, halter him round the neck, and muzzle him with this, and you can tie another thong on at the other side.”

As he spoke he took a tethering halter from his saddle-bow; it was slipped over the giraffe’s head, another cord attached so that it could be held on either side; and when this was done, Mr Rogers held one rope, Jack the other, and Dick got off the giraffe on the side farthest from its legs.

But there was no more kick left in the tall creature, which raised its head, looking humbly at its captors, and then slowly rose, shivering, and as gentle as a lamb.

“There, Dick, sling your gun and mount,” cried his father; “unless you would rather ride the giraffe.”

“Oh, no, thank you,” said Dick, slinging his gun and picking up his hat, prior to mounting his docile cob, after which his father handed him the end of the rope.

After a sniff or two at their tall companion, the two cobs walked gently on forward, with the giraffe towering up between. The poor beast made no objection to its captivity, beyond sighing a little, but gazed dolefully at its leaders in turn; the only difficulty experienced in getting it to the waggon, being how to accommodate the horses’ stride to that of the captive, which stalked contentedly along, with Mr Rogers bringing up the rear.

Chapter Forty.

Onward to Wonderland.

"Bedad, an' his mother must have wathered him well whin he was a babby, to make him grow like that," cried Dinny, as he saw the tall captive haltered to a tree by the waggon, and contentedly beginning to browse upon the tender shoots within its reach. "Is thim legs rale, Masther Dick?"

"Real? Of course, Dinny," said Dick, laughing.

"Shure, an' I didn't know there was any av coorse in the matther," said Dinny sententiously. "I thought the injanious baste might have been brought up in a wet place, and made himshelf shtilts."

"What nonsense, Dinny!" cried Jack.

"Ah, an' I dunno about nonsense, Masther Jack; for I've seen some wondherful things since I've been in these parts. An' so we're going to pack up and go home to-morrow, ain't we?"

"We're going to pack up and go farther into the wilds," said Dick.

"Oh, murther!"

"There's the great fall to see yet, and we've got elephants to shoot."

"Shure an' I don't want any great falls, or for anny one to see it."

"Nonsense, Dinny. I mean to see the cataract," said Dick.

"Shure, an' it's you as is talking the nonsense now, Masther Dick; for how could ye see if ye'd got a catharact?"

"What do you mean, Dinny?"

"What do I mane? Shure it was my own cousin by me mother's side that had a couple o' bad catharacts in his eyes, and couldn't see a bit till they took him to the hoshpittle and had 'em out. Ah, they're mortial bad things, Masther Dick."

“No, no; I mean a cataract or fall of the river, where it tumbles over rocks.”

“An’ what would a river go tumbling off rocks for, Masther Dick? Why don’t it go along quietly?”

“Ah, you’ll see when we get there,” said Dick. “It’s a fall like that where you nearly got drowned, only hundreds of times as big.”

“An d’ye expect me to get in a boat at a place like that, Masther Dick? Now, by this and by that, ye don’t if I know it.”

“Never mind then, Dinny. You shall take your gun and shoot elephants. You know what they’re like?”

“Shure, I sin a picture o’ one wance,” said Dinny. “It was a little thing wid two tails, one at aych ind; and the boy as showed me telled me as they’re made of ingy-rubber.”

“Ah, yes, they’re very little things,” said Dick, laughing; and then they went to their dinner under the tree.

That evening the new pet was well attended to; and the leopard, now growing a fine sleek beast that loved to roll and gambol with the dogs, given his evening meat; and the remains of the daylight were spent in packing.

Next morning early, with the skin secure on the waggon-tilt, the sleek oxen were once more in-spanned, and the waggon rolled merrily on towards the falls of the Zambesi.

Four days trekking through a beautiful country brought them to where a continuous vibrating roar was always in the air, and in the distance what seemed to be one continuously changing cloud, which was lit up by the sun in a wondrous succession of hues.

The boys grew excited with expectation; and Dinny’s face became very blank as he whispered to Dick,—

“Shure, the river don’t always go on tumbling like that, Masther Jack, do it?”

“Always, Dinny,” said Jack, as he too listened, with a feeling of awe, to the falling water.

“Thin it must be giving itself a moighty hard whack upon the shtones it falls on, to make it roar like that,” said Dinny in a serio-comic fashion, and he went off to attend to the fire as, the General having pointed out a capital place for a halt, Mr Rogers gave the word, and the camp was rapidly formed.

They had come through plenty of beautiful scenery, but the rich verdure and beauty of the palms, ferns, and other foliage-growths, watered as they were by the soft hazy spray that came from the mighty falls, was beyond anything they had yet seen, and fully justified Mr Rogers’ remark, half made aloud,—

“What a glorious place this world is after all!”

A strong thorn kraal was formed, and after a good feed the horses and oxen were secured, and resisting the temptation to go that night to inspect the falls—a very dangerous experiment in the dark—the fire blazed up, watch was set, and the sight deferred to the following day.

All that night Dick and Jack, when they they were not on watch, dreamed of roaring lions, and falls of water, and then of thunderstorms; but towards morning the heavy dull hum lulled them to sleep, a sleep so sound that Coffee and Chicory amused themselves for ten minutes tickling their noses with strands of grass, before they could get them awake.

Then they both jumped up in an ill-temper, each seizing a dark-complexioned tormentor to punch and bang; but the sight of the Zulu boys’ merry laughing faces, lit up by their bright eyes and white teeth, disarmed all anger, and Dick and Jack rubbed the last relic of the night’s sleep out of their eyes, and went to breakfast.

The General had been at the falls before, and as soon as the camp was considered straight, Dinny, Peter, and Dirk were left behind, and the three bosses, as Chicory called them, went off, with the father to guide, the Zulu boys carrying a basket of food.

The brilliancy of the greens of the various trees around gave an additional charm to what was always a very beautiful landscape, for here it was never dry, and the consequence was that every tree, plant, and tender herb was in the highest state of luxuriance.

They kept a sharp look out for enemies in the shape of large animals, but nothing was seen; and following the General in single file, they went on and on, with the awful thunder in the air growing deeper and louder at every step.

No water was in sight as they went carefully through the trees and huge fronded ferns; nothing but verdure of the richest hues, the sun shining through it, and making the dewy leaves glisten with a sheen like that of many precious stones.

So loud though was the roar of the water that they knew that they must now be near, when all at once they reached an opening in the forest, and Mr Rogers and his sons involuntarily paused, to gaze at a rainbow of such beauty, and apparently so near that it was hard to believe that by stretching out the hand it could not be touched.

Even as they gazed it disappeared, but only to appear again a little farther off, and in a slightly different position. Then it was gone again, and so on and on, a dozen times or so; but always beautiful beyond the power of description.

When they were weary of gazing the General smiled, and went on again towards a soft pearly-looking mist, almost like the thinnest smoke; and for this the boys took it, till Mr Rogers whispered that it was the fine spray rising in clouds from the falls.

On they went, slowly, down amongst fern-hung rocks, and narrow ravines full of rich foliage, while tall palms stood up every here and there like columns; and then all at once the General stood aside, and the party, with the earth trembling beneath their feet, passed through a screen of trees, and stood gazing at one of the wonders of the world.

Right and left, as far as they could see for the trees, and comparatively close to them, the waters of the great river were passing over and between a vast barrier of rocks, forming numberless cataracts, some small, some of large volume. In places these fell in a smooth glassy body of water towards them, in a glistening curve, down far below and out of their sight, while others fell from rocky shelf to shelf, to be broken up into foam and spray as, glistening and white, they hurried down to join more broken water, as far down as they could see.

Where they stood was thirty or forty feet below the level of the river before it made its spring; but how far down it fell into the awful gulf at their feet they could not tell, but the depth seemed to be immense. Mr Rogers afterwards said it was 400 feet.

The first instinct of the boys was to go nearer, but, with a look of alarm, the General grasped Jack by the arm, and showed him that the ground sloped so and was so slippery, that to get near enough to see the bottom of the fall would have been to run the greatest risk of falling headlong into the awful abyss.

In mute amazement then they stood, watching the long line of cataracts, endless as it were in the beauty and variety of their forms.

Wonder upon wonder seemed to greet the eye in the colour of the waters as they flashed in the sun, some descending in huge solid glassy masses of water, others in tiny spirts that seemed to make a leap on their own account into the vast chasm, falling at last like a shower of fine rain.

“I could stand and look at it for ever, father,” said Dick, in a low, awe-inspired voice. “Look at the foam there! look at that spray! The water is quite white there! And that great fall there, see how it glistens! Oh, how I should like to be below, and see where the water strikes, and churns up together. Could a boat get there?”

Mr Rogers smiled, and shook his head.

“Then I should like to be a bird,” said Dick quietly, “and fly softly through that great gulf.”

“Till the water made your wings wet, and you fell in and were drowned,” said matter-of-fact Jack. “I shouldn’t; but I should like to get close to the edge, and see the falls from the bottom to the top.”

But the General shook his head, and said that it could not be done.

As they grew more used to the scene, they made out that the range of cataracts was much farther away than they had at first thought, being quite a couple of hundred yards; but the awful thunderous roar, the trembling of the earth beneath their feet, and the strange vibration in the air, seemed to confuse them, so that everything seemed unreal and strange, and the whole vision like some dream.

They gazed on, never weary of the beauty of the great falls; and then, following their guide, he led them from place to place, so that they could see the huge serpentine gorge in which the river ran after its fall, rushing wildly between two grand walls of rock, its rage becoming the more furious from its being a mighty broad river above the falls, and then having to compress itself into a gorge not a thirteenth part of its original width.

The speed of the river as it foamed along in this terrible ravine, seemed absolutely frightful, and in places where the rocks had to bear the brunt of the current as it made some sudden turn, the din was terrific.

Hours were spent in gazing at the verdure-carpeted rocks, the brilliant rapids, the wondrous twining creepers, and, above all, at the beauties of this wonder of the world; and then at last they tore themselves unwillingly away, to attend to such ladly matter-of-fact affairs as eating and drinking. After this, as sunset was growing near, they stopped to see the gorgeous tints upon the clouds of vapour, and the fresh rainbows that kept coming and going as if by magic.

At last they tore themselves away, silent and awe-inspired at the wonders upon which they had gazed, the deep thunder of the falling waters rolling in their ears as they journeyed on, and keeping up its solemn boom night and day.

Now as the wind wafted it towards them it came in a deep roar, but only to soften and become distant, swelling, and rising, and falling, filling their dreams again, as they lay beneath the shelter of the canvas tilts, and seeming to wake them at the break of day.

Chapter Forty One.

Onward from Wonderland.

They lingered about the falls for days, to revel in the beauties of the mighty cataract and the great gorge through which the waters afterwards ran. Then unwillingly the oxen were in-spanned, and their course was directed up the river, beyond the beautiful islands, and on mile after mile, till the bright transparent river flowed smoothly downward, and from its reedy banks plenty of game was obtained, the birds being plentiful, and very welcome as a change.

It was rather a dangerous haunt here on account of the crocodiles, but Jack was so passionately fond of fishing that he was humoured at times, and some transparent nook was chosen where the others could keep a look out for crocodiles; and as Jack fished, Dick would lie down upon the bank, with his face at times close to the water, and gazing through its limpid depths he tried to trace the long stalks of the water-lilies which rose from the depths to expand their broad leaves and cap-like flowers on the surface. The great reeds, too, rising joint by joint till their arrowy heads and green streamer-like leaves were in the broad sunshine, seemed to be moving and to quiver in the clear water.

This sub-fluvial growth was so beautiful that Dick never grew weary of watching it; while the coming and going of the many brightly-tinted fish, darting about among the water-plants or hanging poised in the sunlit depths, with their burnished scales

flashing silvery and steel-blue rays, added greatly to the interest of the scene.

“Let us know when you see one coming,” Jack would say; and now and then Dick would whisper that a large perch-like fish, or perhaps one of the huge eely siluri, was approaching; though just as often Coffee or Chicory would utter a word of warning, when a rifle-bullet would be sent to startle some great crocodile, floating in fancied security down the calm waters, its hideous eyes turned from side to side in search of prey.

Once only did they succeed in getting the monster ashore, the others, when hit, sinking sullenly to the bottom, or descending with a rush that made the water foam.

The want of a boat prevented them from having far more sport upon the river; but, as Mr Rogers said, they had come upon a land expedition, and their horses were getting fresh for want of work. So Jack had to bring his fishing to an end; though, truth to tell, it was not much of a loss, for his additions to the larder in the way of fish were not particularly large, nor so toothsome as they might have been.

The good old round-hand copy slip, “Familiarity breeds contempt,” is thoroughly exemplified in South Africa; and it is fortunate that this is the case, or it would be hard work travelling across a country where every stone may conceal a poisonous serpent, every clump of rocks hold the lurking-place of a boa-constrictor, and every patch of grass its prowling lion or fierce rhinoceros—where a walk along a river’s bank may invite a charge from the fierce hippopotamus, and no man can bathe without running the risk of being pulled under water and devoured by that loathsome saurian lizard the crocodile.

But familiarity breeds contempt, and after the first nervousness has worn off people go about in South Africa in a calm matter-of-fact way, without troubling themselves about their hidden enemies, otherwise than by taking ordinary precautions, and keeping what a sailor would call a sharp look out for squalls.

If this were not so life would be almost intolerable, and every one would exist in a state of nervous trepidation as hard as that of the classical gentleman who passed his time with a keen sword suspended over his head by a single hair—no doubt of a kind such as would make an admirable roach-line for a fisherman.

The members of Mr Rogers' hunting expedition thus passed their time happily enough in the continuous round of excitement, taking the pleasure and the pain turn and turn as they came; not grumbling at thorns, or weariness, or mosquito bites; resting when they grew weary, and putting up with hard couches, hunger, and thirst, as they came, without a murmur. They looked out for danger in a sharp matter-of-fact way, and by consequence rarely had a mishap; while Dinny, who was a perfect slave to his fears, and never stirred without taking the most wonderful precautions, generally managed to come in for the worst of the misfortunes that affected the camp.

It was he who would manage to run his head in the dark amidst the prickly euphorbias. If there was a cloud of vicious gnats, Dinny generally got bitten. If there was a poisonous snake anywhere near the camp, Dinny tried to put his foot upon it; and over and over again when near the crocodile-haunted streams he sauntered regularly into the ferocious creature's way.

The General and his boys saved him from several perils, over and over again. But Dinny never seemed to realise that his own want of care got him into trouble, always declaring that it was "a baste of a place," and no more to be compared to Ould Oireland than a beggar was to a king.

Dinny's grumblings would soon have proved to be a nuisance, but for a certain quaintness of humour in the man, which supplied matter for mirth when he was most disagreeable; and in spite of his defects, he was very useful in his way.

While camp was kept up near the great falls, Jack and Chicory had some splendid nesting expeditions, the pendulous weaver, birds' nests coming in largely for their attention. They disturbed very few though, for, as Jack said, it was hard upon the poor birds,

seeing what a lot of enemies they had—artful monkeys slipping down the long thin branches, till they could hang by one hand, and thrust the other little thin brown extremity up the bottle-neck shaped opening, to forage for eggs or young birds, as the case might be.

Then there were the snakes—long, thin, twining creatures, a yard or a yard and a half long, but no thicker than the finger. These showed no little cleverness in ascending trees, and proceeding along the branches till they found their way to a nest, where, in spite of the frantic cries and flutterings of the birds, the little serpent would glide in, and the parents might go and start afresh, for their labours would prove to have been only to find the little snake a pleasant larder, where it could coil up and glut itself with food.

Many of these twining little creatures fell victims to Jack's shot-gun, as well as to that of his brother, the guns being constantly in use as well to bring down the brilliantly plumaged birds that abounded in the rich forest growth of this well-watered land.

The glorious scenery of wood, rock, and water had to be left, though, at last; and at the General's suggestion, and by way of change, the more rugged part of the country was now sought; though even here there was plenty of wood, and they passed along the banks of a pleasant stream that had its rise somewhere in the mountainous region ahead.

And now Mr Rogers began to look out anxiously for a danger that, though small, was terribly insidious, and one which, if not avoided, would bring a misfortune upon them that they would have given anything to avoid.

This danger was the notorious tsetse fly, whose bite was generally fatal to horses, the poisonous nature of the little creature so infusing itself in the blood of the unfortunate horses bitten that they gradually died off without their owners being able to do anything to save them.

Fortunately the limits of the land occupied by these

THE WATER-BOK'S FLIGHT.

dangerous little creatures is pretty well-known, and those who venture upon it with horses do so at their own risk.

Game had been rather scarce for some days, when, mounting their horses, Dick and Jack left their father with the waggon, and went in search of something suitable for present use.

Partly for the sake of their help, but more particularly to give them a change, Pompey and Caesar were let loose, the latter following Dick down to the low land at the side of the stream.

It was a tolerably open place, dotted with willow-like trees rising from amongst the thick grass; and they had not gone far before, after a good deal of rustling about among the reeds and grass, Caesar started something, which, however, refused to come into sight, but kept running from cover to cover, till at last, as Caesar was diligently hunting it by scent, Dick caught sight of a dark

back, and a head bearing a pair of stout, fully-ringed horns, curved back in a remarkable way, and ending in very sharp points.

It was but a moment's glance, and he had no time to fire before the creature was out of sight again; and he rode on right to the very edge of the stream, where he arrived just in time to see the antelope leaving the water, across which it had swum, and Caesar puffing and panting as he swam on in the creature's wake.

The antelope looked so playful and full of life as it shook its head to get rid of the water that streamed from it, with the drops flashing in the sun, that Dick sat like a statue upon his cob; and though he held his rifle ready, he forgot to fire, but let the buck bound out of the shallow water on to the bank and disappear amongst the trees, where it went off at a tremendous rate, while Caesar, as he reached the bank in turn, paused to get rid of some water by a good shake, and then stood and gazed at his master, and howled with disappointment that he should not have attempted to shoot.

The consequence was that Dick, after a long ride returned empty to camp, where Jack, however, had preceded him, having been less scrupulous, and bearing before him a good-sized springbok, which he had brought down with the longest shot he had ever made.

Chapter Forty Two.

A Quarrel between two Enemies.

They struck off next day into a wilder portion of the country still, the oxen trekking up close to the foot of the mountains, the intention being to leave the plains for the present, their attractions beginning to fail, especially as the party had no desire to keep on slaughtering the many varieties of antelope that offered themselves as easy victims to their rifles.

"Let's have something more exciting and manly, father," exclaimed Dick. "Of course we must keep on shooting for the pot,

just as a sheep has to be killed now and then at home. But we don't want to turn butchers."

The General nodded approval, and said that they would now be amongst the lions again, while on the other side of the stretch of rocky country in which they were, he was sure that they would find elephant and buffalo.

The elephants had kept so long out of their sight that the boys began to despair of ever coming in sight of one of the monsters; but when they said so to the old Zulu warrior, he only laughed, and said, "Wait."

"It seems to me as if they have all been shot," said Jack.

But the General shook his head.

"Plenty of elephants," he said; "only wait."

Pieces of stone had to be used in addition to thorns to make the cattle-kraal where they now halted, for the land was comparatively sterile after the lush vegetation of the plains; but a little valley supplied ample pasturage for the cattle, and abundant water, and the rocky defiles around promised sport of a different kind to any they had before enjoyed.

Hardly had they pulled up at the spot chosen for the temporary camp, before Dick called his brother's attention to a couple of huge birds, sailing round and round upon extended motionless wings over and about the rocky crags and points far above their resting-place.

"Eagles!" cried Jack excitedly.

And as he spoke the boys saw one of the great birds swoop down behind a peak and disappear, rising almost directly after with something dark in its talons, and flying straight off to a shelf of rock far away.

This was new game indeed, and the boys were eager to go off after the great birds; but they had to help settle camp-matters first, the rule being that at every halt the first thing attempted was to put the place in a state of defence.

When this was done there were the pets to see to—the leopard and giraffe, both of which had grown perfectly tame, the leopard being as playful as a kitten, and the giraffe calmly bringing its head down low enough to have its nose rubbed, while it munched at the handful of fresh tender shoots offered as a token of good will.

Then there were the horses to watch and tend, wood to cut, and fire to make; so that there was plenty of work for all. But "willing hands make light work," as the saying goes, and they were just congratulating themselves upon the successful nature of their arrangements, the little camp presenting all they required as a centre from which to start upon hunting expeditions—to wit, good pasturage, abundant water, and security against the attack of lions who might mistake their cattle for the wild creatures of the plains.

"This place ought to do for a week, boys," said Mr Rogers; "and now we'll take our rifles and have a look round to see what game we are likely to find, and also keep a sharp look out for danger."

"Danger?" said Jack. "What sort?"

"Well, I should say there would be plenty of serpents in amongst those sun-baked crags up above, probably a lion or two, plenty of eagles, and—ah, it is impossible to say what we may meet with in a place like this."

"I shall tell Dinny that crocodiles very likely swarm up here, that they come up out of the river at this season of the year, and lie in wait amongst the rocks."

"I think I would confine myself to the truth, Jack," said his father drily. "Now, are you both loaded? Then come along."

It was a steep climb upwards, far more so than it looked from below, and they were toiling up over the sunburnt grass towards where the rocks rose up precipitously on either side of the narrow gully, when a word of warning from the General arrested them, and the rifles of all were held ready.

For all at once, from behind a mass of rock a couple of hundred yards in front and above them, a large black rhinoceros trotted into view, holding up its head, and displaying its two horns against the grey rock behind him; and then seeing the hunting-party, it snorted and squealed in a most peculiar pig-like fashion, and began to trot towards them.

“Don’t fire unless you have a good chance,” cried Mr Rogers; “and mind, everybody must make for the rocks, and climb up for safety.”

But there was no need for flight. Hardly had the clumsy-looking monster commenced its headlong charge, when the precipitous rocks echoed to a hollow roar, and a patch of dry grass seemed to have been suddenly endowed with life, and to fling itself upon the shoulders of the charging beast.

No one thought of firing; but the whole party stood there watching the novel sight, as a huge lion, which might have made one of them its victim, fixed its teeth and claws in the neck and shoulders of the rhinoceros; and as the furious frightened beast tore on down the defile, dragging the lion with it, the

AN OUTSIDE PASSENGER.

latter seemed to give a spring, and fixed its hind quarters firmly upon the tough pachyderm's back.

"Big lion much hungry," said Coffee quietly. "Nosros' skin very hard."

As he spoke Jack had gone down upon one knee, and sent a bullet after the fast-receding pair, the echoes of the rifle report mingling with the hoarse snorting bellow of the rhinoceros.

Dick, roused by his brother's example, also took aim and fired, his father following last.

Then the two animals disappeared from view, evidently passing pretty near the waggon, but fortunately missing the little valley where the cattle were grazing.

“Coffee is right,” said Mr Rogers; “that lion must have been ravenous, or it would not have attacked such a beast as that. Well, boys, you must keep a bright look out, for we, shall have to meet the enemy here.”

“Hadn’t we better go after the rhinoceros?” said Dick.

“What would be the use?” said his father; “the monster is going at a tremendous rate. No: let’s go higher up amongst the rocks.”

They passed several snakes, and found one boa-constrictor, a comparatively small one though, which Coffee and Chicory attacked as it lay basking in the sunshine, its bright brown and yellow markings glistening in the bright light.

The boys made their arrangements very quickly, and without the slightest hesitation Coffee walked up to the reptile, and as it raised its head menacingly he struck it down with a blow of his kiri, and a dexterous chop from Chicory’s long-bladed assegai took off its head.

What had before seemed a sluggish inert body, now, as in a former case, became instantly endowed with spasmodic life, leaping from the stones, twisting, twining, knotting itself, and then unfolding and reknotting itself in the most extraordinary manner, the grey rocks around being spattered with the blood from the bleeding neck, while the severed head lay slowly gasping, and biting impotently at a few dry blades of grass.

Dick and Jack seemed as if they would have never tired of watching the reptile, but their father suggested a move onward.

“How long do you think that was, father?” said Dick, as they climbed on, each step bringing them to a more toilsome way.

“Probably a dozen feet, and a good deal thicker than my arm,” replied Mr Rogers. “I should like to see one seize its prey, though, and watch the whole course of its constricting and swallowing the animal it has caught. And now, boys, I think we will go up as far

as the end of this narrow pass, and then turn back and close the camp for the evening."

They went to the end, always rising, with the scenery growing wilder and more grand at every step; and at last Mr Rogers paused.

"Oh, let's go up to the top now," cried Dick eagerly.

"You can, boys; but make haste," said their father.

"The top" was the edge of a ridge some four hundred feet above their heads, and as Mr Rogers sat down to rest, the boys climbed on, finding the difficulties of the ascent greater than they had expected; but they kept on, manfully helped by Coffee and Chicory, who were always ready to push, to pull, or hold a rifle, and in this way they reached what proved to be quite a narrow edge, with some jagged pinnacles on their right, and a steep slope in front. But what took their attention most was an eagle in full pursuit of a lovely little slender-legged gazelle, which was straining every effort as it came up a long narrow defile to escape from its terrible enemy.

The gazelle was quite a hundred yards below them to their left as they saw it first, and they watched its progress with a fascinated interest as it came nearer as if to pass them, with the eagle gliding along over it as it bounded along, and then making dart after dart at it with its tremendous claws.

The eagle looked as huge as the gazelle looked graceful and tiny; and each moment the boys made sure that it was struck, but the baffled eagle rose again and again for another

LEGS VERSUS WINGS.

swoop, till, unable to bear it longer, Dick threw himself upon his face, rested his rifle upon the ridge in front, took a careful aim, fired; and Jack shouted "Hurray!" for as the smoke rose, and the echoes died away in the distance, the eagle could be seen lying flapping its wings upon the ground, raising a cloud of dust about it, and the gazelle disappeared round some rocks; while Coffee and Chicory, kiri in hand, were sliding down the rocky face of the precipice, to cross a narrow chasm below, bent upon finishing the monstrous bird's struggles with the kiris they grasped in their hands.

The place they descended was almost dangerous at times, but the two Zulu boys made nothing of it, and were soon approaching the spot where the bird had fallen.

As it saw them approach, it left off flapping its wings, turned itself upon its back, and struck at them savagely with its powerful talons.

The boys were not daunted though, and making a dash in, Coffee struck at the bird and missed it, receiving, in return for his intended blow, an ugly scratch from the eagle, which was about to bury its beak in his leg when Chicory's kiri struck it heavily upon the neck, and the fight was over; the bird's head dropping upon one side, and its powers of doing mischief for ever gone.

Then each seized a wing, and they bore it in triumph to their young leaders, who in turn helped to carry the majestic bird down to where Mr Rogers was waiting, ready to take great interest in their prize, but also eager to hurry them back to the waggon, where they arrived to find all right, and the cattle carefully secured in their kraal.

Chapter Forty Three.

Dinny in "Throuble" again.

"An' if there was one there was over a thousand of thim, sor," cried Dinny, a day or two later, when he had been out with Peter to bring back a strayed ox. "Ye niver see such savage little men in yer loife, sor. They came at us shouting bad language, and calling us all the blayguards they could lay their tongues to; and then one avil-looking owld reprobate ups wid a shtone and throws it at me. That was jist what the others wanted—a bad patthern, sor—and they began shying shtones as hard as they could, till Pater and me was obliged to re-threat."

"And you ran away, Dinny?" said Dick; "you let the baboons drive you back?"

"The which, sor?"

"The baboons, Dinny; the apes."

"Ah, ye can call 'em by that name, Masther Dick, if ye loike; I calls 'em little stumpy men, and as ugly as anything I iver see."

"Well, we shall have to go and pepper them," said Jack. "Let's go and tell father, Dick."

“Shure, ye may pepper and salt ’em too, Masther Jack,” said Dinny, grinning, “but ye’ll niver make anything of ’em but the toughest mate ye iver saw in yer loives.”

“Ah, well, Dinny, we’ll see,” said Jack; and the two boys went and told Mr Rogers of Dinny and Peter having been attacked by a troop of baboons, that were close up to the camp amongst the rocks.

“How much of it is exaggeration?” said Mr Rogers, who was busy filling out some choice bird-skins, the bright plumed coverings of some of the natural history treasures he had secured.

“Some of it, of course, father,” replied Dick. “But they are both cut about the faces with stones.”

This being the case, it was decided to try and scare off the little vicious animals with a few charges of duck-shot, reserving the bullets in their rifles in cases of extremity.

Dinny said he was too much hurt to go to the attack; but the rest of the forces were collected, and, led by Peter, they made their way up over the ridge into the next valley; but no baboons were in sight, and though they went on their trail for some little distance, it seemed to be a useless task; so, sending part of their little company back, Mr Rogers went in one direction, the boys in another, to pass round a rocky hill and meet upon the other side.

Everything was very silent in the stillness of the hot midday, and what with the sun’s torrid beams, and the reflection from the rocks, progress was very slow, till a faint bleating noise, that seemed to come from behind a patch of rocks, made the boys cock their pieces, and approach cautiously.

They were so accustomed to hunting now, that they had no difficulty in stalking up to the clump of rocks, and there, sheltered behind some bushes, they stood with presented pieces, ready to fire, but hesitating for a time before the novelty of the scene.

Just in a depression amongst the rocks, where there was an open patch of fine grass, crouched an antelope, with a glossy black skin,

and a pair of the longest and most beautifully curved horns they had ever seen.

Dick knew it in a moment as the swart vitpense, or lion-killer, as it was called by the Boers; and sure enough it was there at bay before a large tawny lion, crouched ready to spring, but hesitating to bound and impale itself upon those two finely pointed horns, which the antelope's lowered head pointed straight for the charge.

Twice over the monster seemed about to spring, but each time it hesitated, shuffling its feet beneath it, and altering its position more to the right; but the antelope had no intention of being taken in flank, and kept changing front so as to meet the attack.

Then for the first time, they saw that the antelope had its little one beneath it, and with all a mother's instinct she was protecting it with her horns.

This roused the boys on the instant. They had no sooner seen the head of that antelope and its wondrously beautiful horns, than they made up their minds to add it and its skin to their collection. But the brave mother's defence of her offspring won the young hunters to her side, and they had just levelled their rifles for a deadly shot at the lion, when it took them unawares, making a sudden spring, meaning to seize the antelope on the shoulder; but she had twisted a little round, so that the great cat threw itself right upon the two keen points, which passed completely through its body.

At the same moment the little antelope dashed away, and there was a horrible struggle going on upon the patch of grass, the lion growling and snarling hideously as it struck at the antelope, and then strove to get free from the horns which the swart vitpense dragged out, and then stood up shivering by its assailant, which, far from thinking of attacking again, lay upon its side, biting the grass and tearing at the ground in its impotent fury.

Dick would have fired, but the monster had evidently received its death wound; and it was well he and his brother reserved their charges, for, as the injured lion lay wallowing in its blood, making

the rocks echo to its agonised roar, and as the poor torn antelope stood shivering and bleeding there, another fierce roar was heard, and a second lion bounded into the depression, crouched, and sprang.

But quick as he was, the wounded antelope was quicker. Dropping upon her knees, her head was lowered, and the second lion leaped right upon her horns, dragging itself back, spitting and snarling with rage and pain, and then rolling over with a couple of bullets through its shoulder.

The boys loaded, and fired again at the second lion, which, though half paralysed, strove furiously to get at its aggressors; but in vain, for a third bullet made it roll over dead.

The first lion was already at its last gasp, and there was no longer any need for caution; so, running forward, Dick made for the black antelope that was lying upon its side, horribly torn, and with its eyes fast glazing; for the weight of the second lion in its bound upon her horns had dislocated her neck.

"Poor creature!" cried Dick. "Oh, Jack, I'd give something to be able to bring the poor thing back to life."

"Why, Dick?" asked his father, who had heard the firing and ran with the General to join them. "Yes," he said, when he had heard his sons' narrative; "poor brave creature! I would gladly see it bounding over the plains again. Why, boys, you are growing quite mighty hunters in the land. Only," he added, smiling, "the antelope would have killed the lions without your help. But what a head—what horns! That skin must be taken off carefully, boys, and the head preserved as our greatest trophy. Yes," he said, measuring, "the horns are quite—no—three inches short of five feet long, and as sharp as needles at the points. You know what it is, of course?"

"Yes," said Dick, admiring the jetty black skin and white underneath parts, "the swart vitpense."

“Yes, or sable antelope,” said Mr Rogers. And then all set to work skinning, and a hard, hot, weary task they had before the two lions’ and the sable antelope’s skins, were lying upon the ground, when the vultures, patiently waiting at a distance, were allowed to come on to their banquet.

By this time Coffee and Chicory had come up on their trail, and helped to carry back the spoil.

Chapter Forty Four.

Elephants in Sight.

In spite of their searching, the baboons were not seen till camp was being moved again to cross the ridge and descend into the plain, when the vicious little animals made so desperate an attack upon the party, throwing stones with such accuracy, that they had to be treated to a volley, and then to a second, before the troop, quite a hundred strong, took to flight; and the dogs killed the wounded left upon the ground, but only at the expense of some vicious bites from the dying apes.

They were fired at with no little compunction, for mingled with their dog-like aspect there was a great deal that was terribly human, and after shooting one of the largest and fiercest, Dick said he felt as if he had committed a murder.

It was, however, a work of necessity, and nothing but a vigorous attack sufficed to drive the malicious little monsters away.

“Anywhere near the Boer settlements these creatures do infinite mischief,” Mr Rogers said, “watching for, and destroying the lambs to a terrible extent.”

Days of weary trekking across plains before they came into pool-strewn land, where the footprints of buffalo were here and there obliterated by the monstrous round track left by the elephant.

And now for the last time before beginning the return journey they formed camp, and prepared for some of the most serious part of their hunt.

The General said that the elephants must be plentiful, and promised to show them the next day; but the boys seemed hardly to have sunk into a profound slumber, when they were roused by Chicory to tell them that there were elephants in the open forest close at hand.

The news was electrical, and in a very few minutes they were standing ready with their father; and strict silence being enjoined, they followed the Zulu warrior through the thin forest by the light of the moon, till, advancing very cautiously, the General made an observation or two, and then came back and led the little party to where they could peer from amidst the trees and dimly see, looming up from the edge of a great pool, the bodies of twenty or thirty elephants of all sizes, busily drawing up water in their trunks and squirting it into their mouths.

This they continued for some time, grunting, snorting, and uttering a peculiar sigh now and then, when, to Dick's surprise, he suddenly seemed to see the huge bodies of the elephants more plainly, and knew that the day was breaking.

There was one great beast standing not forty yards from him, swinging its trunk to and fro, and flapping its enormous leather-like ears against its neck; when, unable to resist the temptation, and without pausing to consider whether it was wise or no, he took a quick aim at the back of the huge creature's head; there was a flash, and as the report of Dick's piece rang out, a tremendous rush, and the elephant herd had gone thundering over the plain.

But not all. The large tusker had fallen over upon its side by the pool, and on making a circuit so as to get at it from the side of the plain, Dick advanced to find that he had made a most fortunate shot, and as he drew near felt struck with wonderment at the huge proportions of his first elephant.

After feasting their eyes, the party returned to camp for something substantial in the way of breakfast, made toothsome with guinea-fowl, of which they shot several; and directly after the General went off to chop out the splendid pair of tusks, Dinny accompanying him to have a look at the "ingy-rubber."

DICK'S LUCKY SHOT.

This done, they started to follow up the trail of the elephants, for it was Jack's turn now, and his father wished to add a few tusks to the load of treasures in skins they were to take back.

A long and wearisome following of the trail had no result, for it was evident that they had been so scared by the loss of their companion that they had gone straight off without pausing to feed, in search of safer ground.

The heat was terrible, and at last they were compelled to halt beneath the shade of a clump of trees to rest and refresh.

This was followed by a nap, and afterwards, they felt so disheartened and footsore that they decided to return.

“Let’s go back, father,” Dick had said, “and come on to-morrow morning with the horses.”

“To be sure,” said Jack. “We could canter straight here without loss of time.”

“What do you say, General?” asked Mr Rogers.

“I say it would be wise,” replied the Zulu. “The elephants leave their path behind them, and you can come up rested and ready to fire.”

Even without these remarks Mr Rogers would have returned, for the dread of over-fatiguing Dick, would have been quite sufficient to make him pause. The boy had altered wonderfully; but still there were limits to the fatigue he could bear.

They went quietly back, then, as the sun was getting low, and contented themselves with a few shots at the guinea-fowl which came over by hundreds, on their way to particular spots to roost.

Before daylight, though, the next morning, they were in the saddle, carrying with them provisions and water; and they were miles along the track before the sun showed, by a robe of orange and a crown of ruddy rays, that he was about to flood the earth once more with light.

The consequence was that they reached the spot where they had left off tracking quite early in the morning, the General, Coffee, and Chicory, although they had run all the way, seeming to be as fresh as when they had started, and laughing at the idea of their feeling fatigue.

Mr Rogers, however, decided that it would be better to proceed with judgment, so a second breakfast was eaten under the shade of the trees where they had rested on the previous day, there being a limpid pool of water close at hand.

“That’s the best way to carry food, Dick,” said Jack, laughing. “I like to have mine in my inside pocket, where it isn’t in the way;” and he laughed, as he took a great bite out of a piece of cake baked on an iron plate.

“Ready, boys?” said Mr Rogers, just then.

“Yes, father.”

“Mount then, and off.”

They were in their saddles on the instant, and made a fresh start, with the two Zulu boys following the track at a run, till, the sun, growing exceeding hot, a fresh halt was made, but not until the General had declared from sundry signs he saw that the elephants had been going leisurely now, and that he did not think that they were many miles ahead.

The boys were for immediate pursuit, but common sense suggested a wait, for a pleasant grove was found close to where the forest seemed to commence in a very dense thicket, and here a good halt was made.

The sun poured down here with greater violence than they had felt before, and after lightening their load once more by reducing their stock of provisions, in spite of their efforts such a drowsiness set in that in a very short time the whole party were asleep.

Dick was awakened by Coffee laying his hand upon his mouth and shaking him, whispering the word “Elephant!” in his ear, as he opened his eyes; while at the same time, Chicory and the General were performing the like duty for Jack and his father.

Obeying the advice of the General, they all stole off cautiously towards the dense thicket close at hand, from which came the noise of breaking branches, and strange snorts and sighs mingled with the squirting and splashing of water.

In a few words the General explained that the elephants had returned upon their track to the forest in front, and upon

cautiously creeping from bush to bush to stalk them, each of the party under the guidance of a Zulu, they found that the dense thicket was a mere band, and that all beyond it was open park-like land, with several pools scattered about, in which the elephants were standing, splashing the water, sucking it up and squirting it over their dark skins, uttering a low sigh of satisfaction from time to time.

Dick was in an unlucky position, for, while both his father and Jack were so placed as to get an easy shot at an elephant, he could only fire at long range. This, however, he decided to do as soon as his father and brother had had a shot.

Meanwhile Mr Rogers had marked out for himself a fine young elephant with moderate tusks. There was one with bigger tusks behind, but not being armed with an elephant gun he felt that it would be better to make sure of the smaller one than risk the loss of all; so approaching cautiously he did not perceive that the ground before him was swampy, and fell headlong in the mud and water.

He lay perfectly still, though, and fortunately—unfortunately for him—the herd did not take flight, but attributing the noise to one of their fellows, they went on splashing and cooling their sides, breaking off boughs to tuck into their capacious mouths, writhing and twisting their probosces about the while.

After a few moments Dick saw his father rise, walk forward to the side of some bushes, take aim at the elephant he had marked down, and just as it was passing along towards one of the pools he fired.

The piece made such a strange noise that it alarmed Jack and the General. As for Dick, to his horror he saw the rifle fly to pieces, and his father fall backwards upon the grass.

Dick took no notice of the elephants, which went crashing amongst the trees, Jack getting a bullet home as they broke towards Dick, nearly trampling him down in their course as he ran to his father’s side.

To his horror Mr Rogers was insensible, surrounded by the fragments of his shattered gun, his face bleeding profusely, and for the moment Dick was ready to stand there wringing his hands.

But common sense prevailed.

There was no running into the next street to fetch a doctor, so he hastily knelt down, and began to pour the contents of his bottle upon his handkerchief, washing away the blood, and bandaging up the cuts upon his father's forehead.

This cooling application of water had the effect of making the injured man open his eyes, and reply to the eager inquiries of his sons.

"Only a bit stunned, my boys, and a few cuts," he said. "It is a mercy I was not killed."

"What a bad rifle!" exclaimed Jack indignantly, as he helped his father to rise.

"What a bad sportsman, you should say, my boy," replied his father, whose face now looked less pallid. "I ought to have known better. My rifle must have been plugged with mud from my fall, and I did not examine it first. That would burst the best gun ever made."

He found he could walk without assistance, and after kneeling down by a pool that had been left unsullied by the elephants, and having a good drink and bathe at his wounds, he rose up refreshed, and turned with the boys to see what was the result of their shots.

Better than they had expected. Two elephants were badly wounded, and Chicory had marked them down in a clump of trees half a mile away.

It required caution now to approach them, for the beasts would probably be furious; but by skilful management they were staked, and the boys, after two or three shots a-piece, succeeded in laying

the monsters low, each falling over upon its side with a terrible crash.

The General soon hacked out the good-sized tusks, and these were borne to the grove where the horses had been left to graze.

“It never rains but it pours,” said Mr Rogers quietly, as he slapped the flanks and neck of his horse rapidly. “Quick, boys, look at your own, and if they have nothing on them—no little flies something like house flies—take a tusk each, and ride back along the track as quick as you can go.”

The boys eagerly obeyed, and seeing no trace of flies, mounted, each with a tusk before him, and cantered away, Mr Rogers following more slowly with the bay and the Zulus—for the mischief was done; the terrible tsetse fly had attacked the fine old horse, and it was only a question of days or weeks before the poison would have finished its work.

As it proved the two cobs had escaped almost by a miracle; but the adventure was a warning to the party not to venture further, for they had evidently made their way into a part of the country where this terrible enemy to horses abounds.

Chapter Forty Five.

A Flight from a Fly.

There was no time to lose, for, to the dismay of all, Peter announced that he had found tsetse fly that afternoon upon the two horses that had been grazing near the waggon.

“Three horses gone, boys,” said Mr Rogers. “It is a bad job; but it would have been worse if it had happened to your pets. We must be well on the way back into a more wholesome country before day, so lie down and have a rest at once. The General or the boys shall go on with you, so that you may try to save your nags. I’ll come on with the rest.”

“But your horses don’t seem any the worse for it, father,” said Dick.

“No, my boy, and it may not show for days; but the poison will work, and they will gradually grow weaker and weaker. They are all doomed.”

“But is there no cure for it, father?”

“None that I know of, my boys; and it must act as a preventative to the opening out of this grand country to civilisation, unless man can improve these poisonous little pests off the face of the earth.”

“It is wonderful,” cried Dick; “such a little fly to do so much mischief.”

Coffee and Chicory aroused them hours before it was day, and with the understanding that they were to keep on till night straight back upon their old track, the boys started, enjoying to a certain extent the journey without the waggon, but feeling the awful loneliness of the country now more and more.

They made the best of their way on, however, getting over all the ground possible, not halting till it was almost dark, and hardly leaving themselves time to collect enough wood for a roaring fire, which they kept blazing turn and turn, for they were in a place where from the sounds they heard lions seemed to be plentiful once more.

The next morning they were able to add some guinea-fowl and a little gazelle to their scanty store of dried meat, and as they had nothing now to do but wait for the coming of the waggon, they amused themselves by exploring a little here and there as their horses grazed, their ramble resulting in the discovery of many beautiful flowers and insects, such as they had not seen before.

That day went by, but still no waggon arrived; and as they again made up their roaring fire, the boys felt no little uneasiness, till they began to recall what a slow leisurely crawl was that of the ox-team, and that they had come over the greater part of their

journey at a brisk canter, with which, by holding on to the cob's mane, the two Zulu boys seemed to have no difficulty in keeping up.

But all doubts were solved the next morning by the arrival of the waggon, those who accompanied it being only too ready to join in the roast ready for breakfast.

There had been no delay; the length of time was only due to the slow progress of the oxen; and this slow progress continued, as, avoiding the back track, they made their way by another route to where King Moseti was ready to receive them with open arms, and was made happy by the presentation of some of the surplus store of beads and other trifles, Mr Rogers retaining merely enough for their wants on the way back.

The king was eager enough to be generous in turn, presenting his guests with several tusks aid some beautiful skins and ostrich feathers, which added in no little decree to the travellers' store.

Here Mr Rogers shot a couple of hippopotami, and the boys made some good practice amongst the hideous crocodiles that were every day killing some one or other of the king's subjects. Now it was a girl gone down to draw water; at another time a boy venturing to bathe. And the travellers could not help admiring the love of cleanliness amongst these people, for too often they had to risk their lives for the sake of a bathe.

The horses had now begun to show signs of having been bitten by the tsetse fly, the chestnut and grey displaying roughened skins and a general uneasiness; while the bay, though slightly roughened about the coat, still held out.

They lost no time then in getting on with their journey southwards, meeting with plenty of vicissitudes in the shape of hunger, heat, and thirst, but taking these calmly, along with the good things; and at last the Limpopo was once more reached.

The reader of this, who knows how easily a person may have his tea in London and his breakfast the next morning in Scotland—

400 miles—may be surprised to hear that to get over such a distance in South Africa with a heavy waggon and an ox-team takes over a month; and a driver and foreloper would consider that they had done well if they had achieved so much.

For hurrying means losing ground. The oxen must be kept well-fed with good pasture, and not overworked, or in a few hours sores will be produced by the harsh yokes that will take a month to cure, if they ever heal at all.

But the country was grand, and the weather exceptionally lovely, as they made their way southward, crossing the Limpopo without accident, in spite of the crocodiles, Dinny managing to get a place on the top of the waggon-tilt just before they started to ford the stream.

"Why, what are you doing there, Dinny?" cried Dick, who was the first to see him.

"Shure, Masther Dick, dear, I was feared for these valuable skins that lie stretched out here, for I says to meself, 'Dinny,' I says, 'if the masther was to have thim skins slip off into the dirthy river, he'd never forgive himself.'"

So amidst a good deal of laughter Dinny crossed over the crocodile river on the top of the tilt; while, as much alarmed as he, the dogs, taught by experience, kept close behind the aftermost oxen's heels, swimming with the protection of the waggon-wheels on either side.

Mr Rogers proposed that they should go back by way of the district where there were some curious caves, saying that it would be a pity to be within reach and not to see them. So with the intent of making a halt near them, the General announcing his intention of finding the place, though he had never been there before, the return journey was continued.

This return journey was, as maybe supposed, one of months, but it was not uneventful. The constant demands of the larder rendered hunting necessary almost every day; and in these

hunting expeditions beautiful skins, and horns of great size and peculiarity, were obtained. Every day, too, added to the collection of gorgeously-plumaged birds and bright beetles; several times over, too, they were able to add a goodly bundle of ostrich plumes to the store.

It may sound strange, but over this even Dinny felt aggrieved, coming to Dick coolly enough one night, just before sleeping time, with,—

“Would ye mind handing me out two or three of thim bundles o’ feathers, Masther Dick, dear?”

“What for, Dinny?” he asked in astonishment.

“An’ is it what for?” said Dinny indignantly; “shure, an’ ye wouldn’t have a boy slape on the bare flure, when ye’ve got hapes of feather to make beds with inside?”

Poor Dinny was sent to the right about, and the feathers had a very narrow escape the very next day from being burned to blackened ashes.

Chapter Forty Six.

The Bay runs his Last Race.

During the long backward journey, poor Smiler the chestnut and Toothpick the grey succumbed to the poison of the tsetse fly, gradually waning away so, poor beasts, that Mr Rogers felt glad when on one occasion a lion leaped upon the half-dead chestnut and dragged it down—dying in the act though, for Dick’s rifle sent a bullet crashing through the monster’s head.

There was the same feeling about poor Toothpick the grey, which lay down to rest one night, and was found stretched out dead the next morning.

The bay, however, held out; and it was wonderful what vitality he possessed. Poor beast! he was faithful to the end, his last act being the saving of his master's life.

They had out-spanned one night at the edge of avast plain, meaning to start again early the next morning; but as they rose and gazed at the vast expanse of sun-dried grass and bushes, dotted all over with great herds of pallah, koodoo, hartebeeste, and springbok, with zebras and quaggas, more than they had before seen, both Mr Rogers and the boys felt that they must have one more day's hunting amongst them; and, each with his faithful Zulu, they set off to try and stalk one of the herds.

The horses were brought into requisition, and the miles of space intervening was got over before, by means of his glass, Mr Rogers saw that they were not alone in the field.

He could just discern horsemen and a waggon on the far side of the plain, miles away, but their shapes distinctly visible with the glass in that pure atmosphere, as they lay on a distant ridge, the waggon standing out against the sky.

They had excellent sport, consequent upon the party on the other side driving the game in their direction, and, lured on by the fascination of the pursuit, Mr Rogers had gone farther and farther, till suddenly he heard a shout from the General.

He needed no telling why the Zulu had been guilty of so unsportsmanlike a proceeding, for on his right, travelling before the wind at a tremendous rate, was a perfect hurricane of fire. By some means the Boers on the other side had set light to the thick dry grass and bushes, and to his horror Mr Rogers saw that unless he could get back to where he had left his horse and gallop off, he would be overtaken by the flames.

What was worse, he found that the fiery tempest might overtake his sons unawares, for the probabilities were that the horses would not stand.

Signing to the Zulu to run to the horse, he set off himself, with the air becoming thick and murky with smoke, so that he feared that he had lost his way. But, to his intense delight, upon turning the corner of a clump of bushes there stood the faithful bay where he had left it, and with the Zulu at its head holding the reins.

Mr Rogers leaped into the saddle, the General caught hold of the mane, and away they went at a rapid trot in the direction in which the boys were believed to be. But the fire gained upon them so fast that the rider insisted upon the Zulu mounting behind him, in spite of his remonstrances.

“Quick!” he cried angrily.

On this the General leaped up behind, and they went at full gallop, tearing over the ground, the bay straining its sinews to the utmost, while, as he saw the fire gaining upon him fast, Mr Rogers’ heart sank within him, for he could see no sign of either Dick or Jack, and yet he was obliged to dash on, for the fire was wrapping round from his left as if to cut him off.

A RACE FOR DEAR LIFE.

"Where are the boys?" he groaned as he reached the top of a small eminence, and drew rein to look around.

"There!" cried the Zulu, pointing.

To his great relief Mr Rogers saw the boys galloping towards him, evidently coming to his aid.

Waving his hand to them to go back, he galloped down, and before long had overtaken them, and they rode on side by side, each with a Zulu behind his saddle, for the fire seemed to come on now with lightning speed.

"The waggon stands just in the way of the fire, boys," groaned Mr Rogers, "and we shall never save it unless the oxen are already in-spanned."

It seemed to be only too true, and they urged on the horses to their fullest speed.

It was a race for life, and they could hear the flames roaring hungrily behind them as they tore along, the horses needing neither whip nor spur to send them at their best pace over the crackling grass.

“Hurrah!” cried Jack. “I see the waggon.”

“And the oxen?” cried Mr Rogers.

“Yes, father—in-spanned. And they are flying from the fire!”

Mr Rogers uttered a prayer of thankfulness as he rode on, till at the end of a quarter of an hour they were close up with the waggon, while the oxen, with Dirk the foreloper at the head and Peter on the box, were going along in a clumsy gallop, urged by the shouts of their drivers and their natural dread of the fire, coming after them with the fury of a whirlwind.

The smoke was now blinding, the heat increasing, and it was hard work to check the horses, who strove to gallop madly away as soon as they were lightened of half their loads; for Coffee and Chicory followed the example of their father in leaping down and running to the side of the team to help urge on the frightened oxen, till they plunged along in their clumsy race.

Faster and faster in the wild race for life! the flames roaring as they came nearer! the waggon thundering over the ground, swaying from side to side, and threatening each moment to overturn!

Twice it ran upon two wheels for some distance, and the boys knew that if a stone of any size was met the waggon must be irretrievably wrecked, and they saw in anticipation the flames overtaking it, scorching up the valuables it contained, and ending by reaching the ammunition, when everything must be blown to atoms.

Mr Rogers felt that the case was hopeless. The flames were close upon them, and he was about to shout to the people to cut loose the oxen and leave the waggon to its fate, when he saw Dick spring forward to the side of the Zulu, who was with Dirk the foreloper, by the leading oxen.

Mr Rogers could not hear what his son said in the deafening roar, but he saw him point, and the foreloper and the General urged the leading oxen out of the course they were taking before the flames to one nearly at right angles, turning them so sharply that the waggon again nearly overset. It rose upon two wheels, but sank back on the others with a crash; the oxen lumbered along in their awkward gallop, and the whole business seemed madness.

Five minutes later, though, the leader saw that his son's act had been guided by sound reasoning, for he had directed the team into a broad open space where there was nothing to feed the flames. The consequence was that as the wall of fire reached the edge of the opening it gradually flickered out there, but rushed along on either side in two volumes of flame, which joined hands, as it were, below them, and the fire went roaring along as swiftly as before.

Where they were grouped, in the midst of the open space, they felt the scorching, were blinded by the smoke, and had a hard matter to keep the beasts quiet, the leopard howling dismally, and the giraffe thrusting its head beneath the back of the waggon-tilt, while the horses snorted and plunged, and the oxen shook their heads, elevated their tails, and behaved unpleasantly to each other with their horns.

But the danger was past, and at the end of an hour they were able to trek on over the blackened plain, till they reached the first pool, where, unpromising as everything was, they were glad to outspan and rest for a few hours before once more resuming their journey.

But there was no renewal of the journey for the bay. Poor beast, it had used up its remaining strength in that, last gallop, and when

the time had come for the renewal of the journey the bay was lying down.

Mr Rogers spoke to it, and the poor animal made an effort to rise, but merely laid its head quietly down again, uttering a low sigh—and the faithful beast was dead.

Chapter Forty Seven.

How Dinny was lost Underground.

"I shall be glad to get back home, boys," said Mr Rogers the next morning, "for the pleasure seems to have gone out of the trip now my horses are all gone. Still there is one good thing, boys, yours are safe."

This was as they were at last getting out of the course of the fire and on to a tract of grass, so little scorched by the sun and so fertilised by the stream that ran through that the oxen were out-spanned for a good feed, as it was doubtful when they might obtain another.

Then followed days and weeks of trekking before they reached the part of the country where the caverns were, and out-spanned one night at Wonderfontein, where, for a promise of payment, the son of a Boer living hard by undertook to provide lights and to show them the wonders of the underground region.

The Boer lad said that they would require a light-bearer besides himself, so Dinny was told to come, and after a little opposition he followed his master and their guide to the extent of about a mile, when the lad began to creep and slide down a well-wooded place in the plain that looked like the crater of an old volcano.

Here Dinny began to hesitate again.

"An' is it go down there, sor?" he asked. "Shure and suppose the place has no bottom to it at all."

“Go on. Dinny, and don’t be stupid,” cried Dick; and

THROUGH THE GREAT RIFT.

poor Dinny found himself pretty well hustled down to the bottom of the funnel-like place, which seemed to bend round at the bottom and to lead into a little brook.

Here the guide lit a couple of roughly-made torches: he handed one to Dinny and retained the other, advising all the party to tuck up their trousers; and the reason for this was soon evident, for the floor of the grotto they were about to explore formed the bed of the transparent little river that had found its way into this strange crack in the rock, and gradually enlarged it to give itself more room.

“Ah, bedad, and the wather’s cowld,” cried Dinny. “Shure, Masther Dick, we’re niver going on along there?”

“Indeed we are, Dinny, with you to light us, like the brave, man you are,” said Dick.

Then Dinny growled out something about its being a shame to make such a naygur of a white man, and seeing no alternative, went on behind the guide, being followed by Mr Rogers, the boys bringing up the rear.

The first part of their journey was for some distance through narrow passages, where they often had to bend double, with only an opportunity now and then for straightening themselves upright; but by degrees, as they went on splash, splash, through the water, the roof rose higher and higher, till its summit seemed to be lost in gloom, while the grey walls looked wild and romantic in the extreme.

A glance to right and left of the narrow way showed that in some great convulsion of nature, the rock had been split and separated to a small extent, and the result was the formation of this cavern; for so similar were the sides that had the natural action been reversed, the two sides would have fitted together, save where the water had worn the rock away.

It was a weird journey, made the more mysterious by the guide, who pointed out side passages where the water grew deeper, which passages, he said, had never been explored; and at last, after they had been travelling slowly along the solemn echoing place, Dinny appealed to his master to go back.

“Shure I’m not a bit freckened,” he said; “but, sor, there’s danger to us all if we go on there.”

“Absurd, Dinny,” cried his master. “Go on. What is there to be afraid of?”

“Oh, nothing at all, sor. It isn’t that I mind, but we shall be coming upon some great big water-baste or a wather-shnake or something, and then what’ll we do at all?”

“Let it eat us, Dinny,” shouted Dick; and his voice sounded echoing and strange.

“Oh, an’ is it ate us, Masther Dick? Shure ye’ll have—murther! murther! murther!” shrieked Dinny. “I towld ye so. Oh! Help, here! Help!”

Down went Dinny’s torch into the water, to be extinguished upon the instant, and the scared fellow kept on yelling with all his might.

“What is the matter?” cried his master angrily.

“Shure I towld ye so. A great big thing, wid awful black wings, flew at me and bit at me face, sor, and I belave he’d ha’ killed me if I hadn’t put me light out so as he shouldn’t see where I was.”

“Oh, Dinny, Dinny. If I were you I wouldn’t be frightened of a bat,” cried Dick.

“An’ is it freckened of a bat I’d be, Masther Dick? I tell ye it was a great big thing as large as a man, wid long black wings, an’ it sent a shudder all through me, sor, to see the great baste come at me.”

“Which did you see, Dinny, the bat or the shadow?” asked Dick.

“Ah, ye’re laughing at me,” said Dinny; “but wait a bit and ye’ll see.”

Dinny’s torch was fished out of the water, and after a good deal of beating and shaking to get rid of the moisture they managed to get it to burn once more, when Jack volunteered to carry it, and Dinny grumblingly took his place in the rear.

“Ah,” he muttered, in Dick’s hearing, “it’s a dirthy counthry this Afrikky. Wild bastes, and shnakes, and holes under the airth. Faix, it isn’t fit for a dacent boy to live in at all.”

Dinny and his mutterings were little heeded, and they went on and on through the interminable place, following its windings and zigzag turns, where the rock had split, till they were tired, and Dick said that they had seen no more during the last hour than

during the first five minutes, for the place was almost all alike—one great jagged rift with the little stream flowing over the floor. Now the roof looked far above them in the gloom, and now again it was close enough to crush their heads, while by the same rule there were times when they could touch the walls on either side by stretching out their hands, while at others the sides receded so that the space was quite a chamber.

“Well, then,” said Mr Rogers, “suppose we turn back. Dinny, as you are last now you’ll be first going back, and ought to make a good leader; so take the light.”

Dinny did not reply.

“Do you hear what my father said, Dinny?” cried Dick.

Still there was no answer.

“Why, father,” cried Dick; “he is not here!”

“Nonsense! absurd!” cried Mr Rogers. “Here, Dinny!” he shouted.

“Ny-ny-ny-ny!” came softly repeated like a mockery of his cry.

“Dinny!” cried Mr Rogers again; and once again the echo was the only answer.

“Dinny!” shouted Dick and Jack together, with all their might; but the echo was the only response; and a cold chill of horror began to run through the little party as they stood there.

“Poor fellow!” exclaimed Mr Rogers; “surely he has not sunk down fainting from fright. Oh, surely not; the idea is too horrible! Dinny!”

He shouted with all his might, and the boys took up the cry, but there was nothing but the echo to reply.

“Has anybody ever been lost here?” said Mr Rogers, turning sharply on the Boer guide.

“Dot one dat I know,” said the Boer lad. “Dere was leedle mans lost one days, bud dey found der leedle mans again fasd ashleep on der rock.”

“He has grown tired, boys; quick!” said Mr Rogers. “Let’s make haste back, and we shall find him sitting down somewhere.”

Though he said this, he did not feel at all hopeful; but still there was the chance of finding that Dinny, taking advantage of being behind, had climbed on to one of the big shelves of rock to await their return, though Mr Rogers felt that it was very doubtful, and that the poor fellow would be too great a coward to sit there alone in the dark.

It was then with sinking hearts, and a horrible sense of finding that their expedition had a terrible ending, that they hurried along the dark passages of the weird grotto, pausing every now and then to shout, as they searched the side-turnings with their light, and shouted down them in case the poor fellow had strayed away by mistake, though the chances were very small, for it seemed impossible that Dinny could have followed any route but the one indicated by the light in front.

No, think of the matter how they would, there seemed no other explanation of Dinny’s disappearance than that he had sunk down in the water where it was deeper than usual, and been drowned from sheer fright.

“It seems so shocking,” said Dick, in a whisper, that, low as it was, seemed to run on before them; “that after going through all that journey, and escaping from lions and crocodiles, and all sorts of dangerous beasts, we should lose one of our party in such a miserable way.”

Dick had unconsciously spoken his father’s thoughts as they went on redoubling their exertions till, to their horror, they reached the bottom of the funnel-shaped entrance without finding a vestige of him they sought.

“Back again!” cried Mr Rogers; and returning, they again searched the gloomy passages for hours, till they were obliged to return to the mouth of the cavern for fresh lights.

The Boer lad looked horrified, and he anxiously ran off for fresh torches, feeling himself to blame as guide, for having lost one of the party.

“Jack,” said Mr Rogers hoarsely, “run to the waggon, and fetch some biscuits, a little brandy, and the two large lamps, with a few extra candles. Be quick!”

“I’ll go too, father,” cried Dick eagerly. And the boys were about to start, when Dick added, “Shall I bring over the General, father?”

“Yes, and his boys. We must find Dinny.”

Dick and Jack, weary and wet as they were, ran off to the little camp, the smoke of whose fire they could see, and on reaching it, panting and exhausted, the first object they saw was Dinny, lying under a tree with his mouth open, fast asleep.

“Oh, I am glad,” cried Jack.

“So am I,” cried Dick; “and sorry—and cross,” he added, running up to Dinny, and giving him a kick in the ribs.

“Aisy there,” said Dinny, yawning and opening his eyes. “Shure, I’m coming. Ah, Masther Dick, and have ye got back out of the black hole?”

“How came you here?” cried Dick angrily.

“How kim I here, Masther Dick? Shure it was on me own handsome pair o’ legs.”

“But we thought you were lost.”

“Lost! bedad, not I. Shure, I sez, they’re going to carry the light themselves, an’ they don’t want me anny longer; so I just sat

down on a big shtone, while I took out me matchbox, and lit me morsel of candle I had in me pocket, and I kim back, and afther getting me dinner ready, I laid down for a rest."

"Oh!" cried Dick wrathfully.

He could say no more; but his brother spoke for him in a way that made Dinny uncomfortable, as the boys turned sharply and ran back, reaching the mouth of the cavern just as the Boer lad came up with his torches.

Mr Rogers started up.

"Where are the lanterns?" he cried. Then, seeing that the boys had something to say he eagerly listened; and the next moment, with his brow knotted with anger, he strode off to the waggon.

"Jack," whispered Dick, "I never saw father look so cross as that."

He was angry indeed, and they saw him seize Dinny by the throat, force him upon his knees, and raise his clenched fist to strike; but the next moment education and manliness prevailed, his hand dropped to his side, and he stood there talking to Dinny for some time in a way that made that gentleman slink away and go about his work with a very hangdog expression of countenance.

Chapter Forty Eight.

The Last Adventure.

Days of slow, steady trekking homeward, and then, to the consternation of all, they learned from a Boer, fleeing with his waggon and belongings to another part of the country, that it would not be safe to go farther, for a war had broken out between a powerful Zulu tribe and the Amaswazis, both sides taking advantage of the disturbed state of the country to rob and plunder in every way they could.

"Dey dake away all dose caddles," said the Boer, "and kill you all. I go away."

He went away, and the General was called into consultation.

“What shall we do?” said Mr Rogers, who, without fearing for their lives, had a horror of losing the fruits of their long journey into the interior.

“Go straight on home like brave men,” said the Zulu, sturdily. “The boss may not see enemies in the way. If he does, we shall see the boss, who can fight lions, will not be afraid of men. Man sees boss not afraid, he will not fight.”

“I shall take your advice, General,” said Mr Rogers; and to the horror of Dinny, who from that moment began to contrive a hiding-place in the biggest chest, the order was given, “Forward!”

They came upon danger sooner than they expected, for, steadily trekking on, they had halted for the day in an open plain, when, to Mr Rogers’ horror, he found that he had inadvertently halted in what was about to be the battle-ground of the contending tribes.

It was almost like magic. One hour the valley was empty, the next it was swarming with contending men.

Escape was impossible, and in a very short time the waggon was put in as good a state of defence as could be, and they were surrounded by the enemy; but before hostilities between them could commence, the Zulu tribe came swarming down from the hills behind them, advancing with a regular dancing tramp, forming themselves into a crescent, and dashing on to the attack.

The Amaswazis who had first surrounded the waggon were largely armed with rifles; but in spite of the superiority this gave them, they gave way before the determination of the assegai-armed Zulu warriors, who came trooping by the waggon, the greater portion of them thorough counterparts of the General, till some fifty remained about the waggon in company with three fierce-looking chiefs.

“What are we to do, General?” said Dick stoutly, as he stood there with his rifle— “fight?”

"Wait and see," said the General calmly; and followed by Coffee and Chicory, he walked out from the waggon to meet the Zulu chiefs.

A short conference ensued, and then the three chiefs came back with the General, to hold out their hands to Mr Rogers and his sons.

"They say I am to tell you that they thank you in the name of our people for making us your brothers in the hunt," said the General quietly, "and that they will all fight for you and see you safe."

Then, in obedience to the General's directions, the oxen were in-spanned, ready to go forward if necessary, or to retreat with the Zulu tribe should it be beaten.

This latter misfortune, however, did not occur, for before a quarter of an hour had elapsed the Amaswazis tribe was being

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

chased by the Zulus,

and seeking safety in flight; while after making presents to the chiefs, to the General's great pride and gratification in spite of his calm demeanour, they parted with mutual feelings of goodwill.

"Saved from wreck," said Dick, who had made the principal chief happy, by taking off his belt with the stout, keen hunting-knife and sheath, and himself buckling it on, the others receiving similar gifts from Mr Rogers, and Jack.

Three weeks' long journey was yet before them, during which the oxen suffered much from the prevailing drought, but there was little of adventure upon the rest of their road; and it was with no little relief that the familiar land-marks in the neighbourhood of their home were at last made out, the oxen trekking well during the last few miles, as if they scented plenty of water and fresh green pasture at the farm.

The full moon was shining brightly as the waggon trekked up to the house, several friends having ridden out to welcome them, as soon as it was known that the hunters were in sight; and then once more, as soon as the dumb creatures were seen to, they sat down at a table to an old-fashioned English meat tea with their friends, glad to be able to recount that they had returned without a single loss, save that of the horses from the dreaded tsetse, while the prime object of their journey had been attained—Dick sat amongst them completely restored, and glowing with vigorous health.

"I should think, boys, you will be glad to sleep once more in a soft bed," said Mr Rogers, smiling; but before either Dick or Jack could answer, Dinny presented himself at the door.

"Av ye plaze, sor—"

"Well, Dinny?"

"I'd thank ye to come and shpake to the naygurs. We've put up a bed and blankets for them in the best barn, and they won't go there, but are making up a camp again, wid a fire, under the waggon."

“Well, Dinny, if it pleases them, let them alone,” said Mr Rogers quietly.

“Shure, sor, I don’t mind,” said Dinny; “but it’s the naybours, sor, and what they’ll think.”

“Never mind what the neighbours think,” said his master. “Dick, go and see that the General and his boys have everything they want.”

“Av ye plaze, sor,” said Dinny, “I want to ax ye a favour.”

“What is it, Dinny?”

“Shure, sor, we’ve had a long journey, and I’m moighty toired.”

“Then go to bed and have a good sleep.”

“That’s just what I’m axing of yer honour. I want a holiday.”

“What for, Dinny?”

“To go to shlape for a week.”

Dinny had as much sleep as he liked, but he contented himself with twenty-four hours, and then helped to unpack the treasures from the waggon, the store of feathers, skins, and curiosities far more than paying the cost of the expedition, even counting the loss of the horses. The boys’ pets too, the leopard and giraffe, had to be sold, for they could not keep them; but they fetched handsome sums for exportation to Europe.

At last there was nothing to do but to recompense the General and his sons; not that they were going away, for they preferred staying about the farm.

Mr Rogers took his sons into his confidence, and the result was the presentation to the three Zulus of gifts which they esteemed most highly of anything they could receive, and these were the three double rifles of the father and sons, whose accuracy the Zulus had so often seen proved.

Dick was right when he said the present was better than diamonds, for the stern old warrior's face lit up with joy, and when Coffee and Chicory could be made to understand that they were to have the rifles to keep, their excitement was something wonderful to see.

"Shure an' the master must be aff his head to give them boys such things," grumbled Dinny to Peter and Dirk, who were quite content with the presents they had received in clothes additional to their pay.

Right or wrong, he gave great satisfaction on all sides; and health being restored, and the sorrows of the past somewhat assuaged, the regular duties of civilised life were resumed, and many a long evening was spent in arranging the various natural history objects brought home. Now and then, so pleasant were the recollections of the exciting trip, the boys have brought the blood flushing into the dusky cheeks of Coffee and Chicory, and a flash into their father's eyes, on saying that they wonder whether their father will ever organise another such trip, while Dinny has been heard to say spitefully that they may drive in that waggon to Novy Sembley, New Zealand, or the big islands of the say, he don't care a sthraw, so long as they'll only lave him at home.

The End.

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