

Captain Mayne Reid

"The Giraffe Hunters"

Chapter One.

Arrival at the Promised Land.

In that land of which we have so many records of early and high civilisation, and also such strong evidences of present barbarism,—the land of which we know so much and so little,—the land where Nature exhibits some of her most wonderful creations and greatest contrasts, and where she is also prolific in the great forms of animal and vegetable life,—there, my young reader, let us wander once more. Let us return to Africa, and encounter new scenes in company with old friends.

On the banks of the Limpopo brightly blazes a hunter's fire, around which the reader may behold three distinct circles of animated beings. The largest is composed of horses, the second of dogs, and the lesser or inner one, of young men, whom many of my readers will recognise as old acquaintances.

I have but to mention the names of Hans and Hendrik Von Bloom, Groot Willem and Arend Van Wyk, to make known that *The Young Yägers* are again on a hunting expedition. In the one in which we now encounter them, not all the parties are inspired by the same hopes and desires.

The quiet and learned Hans Von Bloom, like many colonial youths, is affected with the desire of visiting the home of his forefathers. He wishes to go to Europe for the purpose of making some practical use of the knowledge acquired, and the floral collections made, while a *Bush-Boy* and a *Young Yäger*. But before doing so, he wishes to enlarge his knowledge of natural history by making one more expedition to a part of Southern Africa he has not yet visited.

He knows that extensive regions of his native land, containing large rivers and immense forests, and abounding in a vast variety of rare plants, lie between the rivers Limpopo and Zambezi, and before visiting Europe he wishes to extend his botanic researches in that direction. His desire to make his new excursion amid the African wilds is no stronger than that of "Groot Willem" Van Wyk, who ever since his return from the last expedition, six months before, has been anxious to undertake another in quest of game such as he has not yet encountered.

Our readers will search in vain around the camp-fire for little Jan and Klaas. Their parents would not consent to their going so far from home, on an excursion promising so many hardships and so much danger. Besides, it was necessary that they should become something better than mere *Bush-Boys*, by spending a few years at school.

The two young cornets, Hendrik Von Bloom and Arend Van Wyk, each endeavouring to wear the appearance of old warriors, are present in the camp. Although both are passionately fond of a sportsman's life, each, for certain reasons, had refrained from urging the necessity or advantage of the present expedition.

They would have preferred remaining at home and trying to find amusement during the day with the inferior game to be found near Graaf Reinet,—not that they fear danger or were in any way entitled to the appellation of "cockney sportsmen"; but home has an attraction for them that the love of adventure cannot wholly eradicate.

Hendrik Von Bloom could have stayed very happily at home. The excitement of the chase, which on former occasions he had so much enjoyed, now no longer attracts him half so much as the smiles of Wilhelmina Van Wyk, the only sister of his friends Groot Willem and Arend.

The latter young gentleman would not have travelled far from the daily society of little Trüey Von Bloom, had he been left to his own inclinations. But Willem and Hans had determined upon seeking adventures farther to the north than any place they had yet visited; and hence the present expedition.

The promise of sport and rare adventures, added to the fear of ridicule should they remain at home, influenced Hendrik and Arend to accompany the great hunter and the naturalist to the banks of the Limpopo.

Seated near the fire are two other individuals, whom the readers of *The Young Yägers* will recognise as old acquaintances. One is the short, stout, heavy-headed Bushman, Swartboy, who could not have been coaxed to remain behind while his young masters Hans and Hendrik were out in search of adventures.

The other personage not mentioned by name is Congo, the Kaffir.

The Limpopo River was too far from Graaf Reinet for the young hunters to think of reaching it with wagons and oxen. The journey might be made, but it would take up too much time; and they were impatient to reach what Groot Willem had long called "The Promised Land."

In order, therefore, to do their travelling in as little time as possible, they had taken no oxen; but, mounted on good horses, had hastened by the nearest route to the banks of the Limpopo, avoiding in place of seeking adventures by the way. Besides their own saddle-horses, six others were furnished with pack-saddles, and lightly laden with ammunition, clothing, and such other articles as might be required. The camp where we now encounter them is a temporary halting-place on the Limpopo. They have succeeded in crossing the river, and are now on the borders of that land so long represented to them as being a hunter's paradise. A toilsome journey is no longer before them; but only amusement, of a kind so much appreciated that they have travelled several hundred miles to enjoy it.

We have stated that, in undertaking this expedition, the youths were influenced by different motives. This was to a great extent true; and yet they had a common purpose beside that of mere amusement. The consul for the Netherlands had been instructed by his government to procure a young male and female giraffe, to be forwarded to Europe. Five hundred pounds had been offered for the pair safely delivered either at Cape Town or Port Natal; and several parties of hunters that had tried to procure these had failed. They had shot and otherwise killed camelopards by the score, but had not succeeded in capturing any young ones alive.

Our hunters had left home with the determination to take back a pair of young giraffes, and to pay all expenses of their expedition by this, as also by the sale of hippopotamus teeth. The hope was not an unreasonable one. They knew that fortunes had been made in procuring elephants' tusks, and also that the teeth of the hippopotamus were the finest of ivory, and commanded a price four times greater than any other sent to the European market.

But the capturing of the young camelopards was the principal object of their expedition. The love of glory was stronger than the desire of gain, especially in Groot Willem, who as a hunter eagerly longed to accomplish a feat which had been attempted by so many others without success. In his mind, the fame of fetching back the two young giraffes far outweighed the five hundred pound prize to be obtained, though the latter was a consideration not to be despised, and no doubt formed with him, as with the others, an additional incentive.

Chapter Two.
On the Limpopo.

During the first night spent upon the Limpopo our adventurers had good reason for believing that they were in the neighbourhood of several kinds of game they were anxious to fall in with.

Their repose was disturbed by a combination of sounds, in which they could distinguish the roar of the lion, the trumpet-like notes of the elephant, mingled with the voices of some creature they could not remember having previously heard.

Several hours of that day had been passed in searching for a place to cross the river,—one where the banks were low on each side, and the stream not too deep. This had not been found until the sun was low down upon the horizon.

By the time they had got safely over, twilight was fast thickening into darkness, and all but Congo were unwilling to proceed farther that night. The Kaffir suggested that they should go at least half a mile up or down the river and Groot Willem seconded the proposal, although he had no other reason for doing so than a blind belief in the opinions of his attendant, whether they were based upon wisdom or instinct. In the end Congo's suggestion had been adopted, and the sounds that disturbed the slumbers of the camp were heard at some distance, proceeding from the place where they had crossed the river.

"Now, can you understand why Congo advised us to come here?" asked Groot Willem, as they listened to the hideous noises that were depriving them of sleep.

"No," was the reply of his companions.

"Well, it was because the place where we crossed is the watering-place for all the animals in the neighbourhood."

"That is so, Baas Willem," said Congo, confirming the statement of his master.

"But we have not come a thousand miles for the sake of keeping out of the way of those animals, have we?" asked the hunter Hendrik.

"No," answered Willem, "we came here to seek them, not to have them seek us. Our horses want rest, whether we do or not."

Here ended further conversation for the night, for the hunters becoming accustomed to the chorus of the wild creatures, took no further notice of it, and one after another fell asleep.

Morning dawned upon a scene of surpassing beauty. They were in a broad valley, covered with magnificent trees, among which were many gigantic baobabs (*Adansonia digitata*). Wild date-trees were growing in little clumps; while the floral carpet, spread in brilliant pattern over the valley, was observed by Hans with an air of peculiar satisfaction.

He had reached a new field for the pursuit of his studies, and bright dreams were passing gently through his mind,—dreams that anticipated new discoveries in the botanical world, which might make his name known among the savants of Europe.

Before any of his companions were moving, Groot Willem, accompanied by Congo, stole forth to take a look at the surrounding country.

They directed their course down the river. On reaching the place where they had crossed it, they chanced upon a tableau that even a hunter, who is supposed to take delight in the destruction of animals, could not look upon without unpleasant emotions.

Within the space of a hundred yards were lying five dead antelopes, of a species Willem had never seen before. Feeding on the carcasses were several hyenas. On the approach of the hunters, they slowly moved away, each laughing like a madman who has just committed some horrible atrocity.

By the "spoor" seen upon the river-banks, it was evident that both elephants and lions had visited the place during the night. While

making these and other reconnoissances, Groot Willem was joined by Hans, who had already commenced his favourite study by making an examination of the floral treasures in his immediate locality. Arriving up with Groot Willem, the attention of Hans was at once directed to an examination of the antelopes, which he pronounced to be elands, but believed them to be of a new and undescribed variety of this animal. They were elands; but each was marked with small white stripes across the body, in this respect resembling "koodoos."

After a short examination of the spoor, Congo asserted that a troop of elands had first visited the watering-place, and that while they were there four bull elephants, also in search of water, had charged with great speed upon the antelopes. Three or four lions had also joined in the strife, in which the only victims had been the unfortunate elands.

"I think we are in a place where we had better make a regular enclosure, and stop for a few days," suggested Groot Willem, on his return to the camp. "There is plenty of feed for the horses, and we have proof that the 'drift' where we crossed is a great resort for all kinds of game."

"I'm of the same opinion," assented Hendrik; "but I don't wish to encamp quite so close to the crossing as this is. We had better move some distance off. Then we shall not prevent game from seeking the drift, or be ourselves hindered from getting sleep. Don't you think we'd better move little farther up the river?"

"Yes, yes," was the unanimous answer.

It was therefore decided that search should be made for a better camping-ground, where they could build themselves a proper enclosure, or "kraal."

After partaking of their first breakfast upon the Limpopo, Groot Willem, Hans, and Hendrik mounted their horses and rode off up the

river, accompanied by the full pack of dogs, leaving Arend, with Swartboy and Congo, to take care of the camp.

For nearly three miles, the young hunters rode along the bank of the river, without finding any spot where access to the water could be readily obtained. The banks were high and steep, and therefore but little visited by such animals as they wished to hunt. At this point the features of the landscape began to change, presenting an appearance more to their satisfaction. Light timber, such as would be required for the construction of a stockade, was growing near the river, which was no longer inaccessible, though its banks appeared but little frequented by game.

"I think this place will suit admirably," said Groot Willem. "We are only half an hour's ride from the drift, and probably we may find good hunting-ground farther up stream."

"Very likely," rejoined Hendrik; "but before taking too much trouble to build ourselves a big kraal, we had better be sure about what sort of game is to be got here."

"You are right about that," answered Willem; "we must take care to find out whether there are hippopotami and giraffes. We cannot go home without a pair of the latter. Our friends would be disappointed, and some I know would have a laugh at us."

"And you for one would deserve it," said Hans. "Remember how you ridiculed the other hunters who returned unsuccessful."

Having selected a place for the kraal, should they decide on staying awhile in the neighbourhood, the young hunters proceeded farther up the river, for the purpose of learning something more of the hunting-ground before finally determining to construct the enclosure.

Chapter Three.
A Twin Trap.

Not long after the departure of Groot Willem and his companions, Arend, looking towards a thicket about half a mile from the river, perceived a small herd of antelopes quietly browsing upon the plain. Mounting his horse, he rode off, with the intention of bagging one or more of them for the day's dinner.

Having ridden to the leeward of the herd, and getting near them, he saw that they were of the species known as "Duyker," or Divers (*Antelope grimmia*). Near them was a small "motte" of the *Nerium oleander*, a shrub about twelve feet high, loaded with beautiful blossoms. Under the cover of these bushes, he rode up close enough to the antelopes to insure a good shot, and, picking out one of the largest of the herd, he fired.

All the antelopes but one rushed to the edge of the thicket, made a grand leap, and dived out of sight over the tops of the bushes,—thus affording a beautiful illustration of that peculiarity to which they are indebted for their name of Divers. Riding up to the one that had remained behind, and which was that at which he had fired, the young hunter made sure that it was dead; he then trotted back to the camp, and despatched Congo and the Bushman to bring it in. They soon returned with the carcass, which they proceeded to skin and make ready for the spit.

While thus engaged, Swartboy appeared to notice some thing out upon the plain.

"Look yonner, Baas Arend," said he.

"Well, what is it, Swart?"

"You see da pack-horse dare? He gone too much off from de camp."

Arend turned and looked in the direction the Bushman was pointing. One of the horses, which had strayed from its companions, was now more than half a mile off, and was wandering onwards.

"All right, Swart. You go on with your cooking. I'll ride after it myself, and drive it in."

Arend, again mounting his horse, trotted off in the direction of the animal that had strayed.

For cooking the antelope, Congo and Swartboy saw the necessity of providing themselves with some water; and taking a vessel for that purpose, they set out for the drift,—that being the nearest place where they could obtain it.

They kept along the bank of the river, and just before reaching a place where they would descend to the water, Congo, who was in the advance, suddenly disappeared! He had walked on to a carefully concealed pit, dug for the purpose of catching hippopotami or elephants.

The hole was about nine feet deep; and after being astonished by dropping into it, the Kaffir was nearly blinded by the sand, dust, and other materials that had formed the covering of the pit.

Congo was too well acquainted with this South African device for killing large game to be anyways disconcerted by what had happened; and after becoming convinced that he was uninjured by the fall, he turned his glance upward, expecting assistance from his companion.

But Swartboy's aid could not just then be given. The Bushman, amused by the ludicrous incident that had befallen his rival, was determined to enjoy the fun for a little longer. Uttering a wild shout of laughter that was a tolerable imitation of an enraged hyena, Swartboy seemed transported into a heaven of unadulterated joy.

Earth appeared hardly able to hold him as he leaped and danced around the edge of the pit.

Never had his peculiar little mind been so intensely delighted; but the manifestations of that delight were more suddenly terminated than commenced; for in the midst of his eccentric capers he, too, suddenly disappeared into the earth as if swallowed up by an earthquake! His misfortune was similar to that which had befallen his companion. Two pitfalls had been constructed close together, and Swartboy now occupied the second.

It is a common practice among the natives of South Africa to trap the elephant in these twin pitfalls; as the animals, too hastily avoiding the one, run the risk of dropping into the other.

Swartboy and the Kaffir had unexpectedly found a place where this plan had been adopted; and, much to their discomfiture, without the success anticipated by those who had taken the trouble to contrive it.

The cavity into which Congo had fallen contained about two feet of mud on the bottom. The sides were perpendicular, and of a soapy sort of clay, so that his attempts at climbing out proved altogether unsuccessful, thus greatly increasing the chagrin of his unphilosophic mind. He had heard the Bushman's screams of delight, and the sounds had contributed nothing to reconcile him to the mischance that had befallen him. Several minutes passed and he heard nothing of Swartboy.

He was not surprised at the Bushman's having been amused as well as gratified by his misfortune. Still, he expected that in time he would lend assistance and pull him out of the pit. But as this assistance was not given, and as Swartboy, not satisfied with laughing at his misfortune appeared also to have gone off and left him to his fate, the Kaffir became frantic with rage.

Several more minutes passed, which to Congo seemed hours, and still nothing was seen or heard of his companion. Had Swartboy returned to the camp? If so, why had not Arend, on ascertaining what was wrong, hastened to the relief of his faithful servant? As some addition to the discomforts of the place, the pit contained many reptiles and insects that had in some manner obtained admittance, and, like himself, could not escape. There were toads, frogs, large ants called "soldiers," and other creatures whose company he had no relish to keep.

In vain he called, "Swartboy!" and "Baas Arend!" No one came to his call. The strong, vindictive spirit of his race was soon roused to the pitch of fury, and liberty became only desired for one object. That was revenge,—revenge on the man who, instead of releasing him from his imprisonment, only exulted in its continuance.

The Bushman had not been injured in falling into the pit, as may be supposed. After fully comprehending the manner in which his amusement had been so suddenly brought to a termination, his first thought was to extricate himself, without asking assistance from the man who had furnished him with the fun. His pride would be greatly mortified should the Kaffir get out of his pit, and find him in the other. That would be a humiliating rencontre.

In silence, therefore, he listened to Congo's cries for assistance, while at the same time doing all in his power to extricate himself. He tried to pull up a sharp-pointed stake that stood in the bottom of the pit. This piece of timber had been placed there for the purpose of impaling and killing the hippopotamus or elephant that should drop down upon it; and had the Bushman succeeded in taking it from the place where it had been planted, he might have used it in working his own way to the surface of the earth. This object, however, he was unable to accomplish, and his mind became diverted to another idea.

Swartboy had a system of logic, not wholly peculiar to himself, by which he was enabled to discover that there must be some first cause for his being in a place from which he could not escape. That cause

was no other than Congo. Had the Kaffir not fallen into a pit, Swartboy was quite certain that he would have escaped the similar calamity.

He would have liberated Congo from his confinement, and perhaps sympathised with his misfortune, after the first ebullitions of his mirth had been exhausted; but now, on being entrapped himself, he was only conscious that some one was to blame for the disagreeable incident, and was unable to admit that this some one was himself. The mishap had befallen him in company with the Kaffir. It was that individual's misfortune that had conducted to his own, and this was another reason why he now submitted to his captivity in profound silence.

Unlike Congo, he did not experience the soul-harrowing thought of being neglected, and could therefore endure his confinement with some degree of patience not possible to his companion. Moreover, he had the hope of speedy deliverance, which to Congo was denied.

He knew that Arend would soon return to the camp with the stray horse, and miss them. The water-vessel would also be missed, and a search would be made for it in the right direction. No doubt Arend, seeing that the bucket was taken away from the camp, and finding that they did not return, would come toward the drift,—the only place where water could be dipped up. In doing so he must pass within sight of the pits. With this calculation, therefore, Swartboy could reconcile himself to patience and silence, whereas the Kaffir had no such consolatory data to reflect upon.

Chapter Four.

In the Pits.

As time passed on, however, and Swartboy saw that the sun was descending, and that the shades of night would soon be gathering over the river, his hopes began to sink within him. He could not understand why the young hunter had not long ago come to release them. Groot Willem, Hendrik, and Hans should have returned by that

time; and the four should have made an effectual search for their missing servants. He had remained silent for a long time, under very peculiar circumstances. But silence now became unbearable, and he was seized with a sudden desire to express his dissatisfaction at the manner Fate had been dealing out events,—a desire no longer to be resisted. The silence was at last broken by his calling out—

“Congo, you ole fool, where are you? What for don’t you go home?”

On the Kaffir’s ear the voice fell dull and distant; and yet he immediately understood whence it came. Like himself, the Bushman was in a living grave! That explained his neglect to render the long-desired assistance.

“Lor’, Swart! why I waiting for you,” answered Congo, for the first time since his imprisonment attempting a smile; “I don’t want to go to the camp and leave you behind me.”

“You think a big sight too much of yourself,” rejoined the Bushman. “Who wants to be near such a black ole fool as you? You may go back to the camp, and when you get there jus’ tell Baas Hendrik that Swartboy wants to see him. I’ve got something particular to tell him.”

“Very well,” answered the Kaffir, becoming more reconciled to his position; “what for you want see Baas Hendrik? I’ll tell him what you want without making him come here. What shall I say?”

In answer to this question, Swartboy made a long speech, in which the Kaffir was requested to report himself as a fool for having fallen into a pit,—that he had shown himself more stupid than the sea-cows, that had apparently shunned the trap for years.

On being requested to explain how one was more stupid than the other,—both having met with the same mischance,—Swartboy went

on to prove that his misfortune was wholly owing to the fault of Congo, by the Kaffir having committed the first folly of allowing himself to be entrapped.

Nothing, to the Bushman's mind, could be more clear than that Congo's stupidity in falling into the first pit had led to his own downfall into the second.

This was now a source of much consolation to him, and the verbal expression of his wrongs enabled him for a while to feel rather happy at the fine opportunity afforded for reviling his rival. The amusement, however, could not prevent his thoughts from returning to the positive facts that he was imprisoned; that in place of passing the day in cooking and eating *duyker*, he had been fasting and fretting in a dark, dirty pit, in the companionship of loathsome reptiles.

His mind now expanding under the exercise of a startled imagination, he became apprehensive. What if some accident should have occurred to Arend, and prevented his return to the camp? What if Groot Willem and the others should have strayed, and not find their way back to the place for two or three days? He had heard of such events happening to other stupid white men, and why not to them? What if they had met a tribe of the savage inhabitants of the country, and been killed or taken prisoners?

These conjectures, and a thousand others, flitted through the brain of the Bushman, all guiding to the conclusion that, should either of them prove correct, he would first have to eat the reptiles in the pit, and then starve.

It was no consolation to him to think that his rival in the other pit would have to submit to a similar fate.

His unpleasant reveries were interrupted by a short, angry bark; and, looking up to the opening through which he had descended, he beheld the countenance of a wild dog,—the “*wilde honden*” of the Dutch Boers.

Uttering another and a different cry, the animal started back; and from the sounds now heard overhead, the Bushman was certain that it was accompanied by many others of its kind.

An instinctive fear of man led them to retreat for a short distance; but they soon found out that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth," and they returned.

They were hungry, and had the sense to know that the enemy they had discovered was, for some reason, unable to molest them.

Approaching nearer, and more near, they again gathered around the pits, and saw that food was waiting for them at the bottom of both. They could contemplate their victims unharmed, and this made them courageous enough to think of an attack. The human voice and the gaze of human eyes had lost their power, and the pack of wild hounds, counting several score, began to think of taking some steps towards satisfying their hunger.

They commenced scratching and tearing away the covering of the pits, sending down a shower of dust, sand, and grass that nearly suffocated the two men imprisoned beneath.

The poles supporting the screen of earth were rotten with age, and the whole scaffolding threatened to come down as the wild dogs scampered over it.

"If there should be a shower of dogs," thought Swartboy, "I hope that fool Congo will have his share of it."

This hope was immediately realised, for the next instant he heard the howling of one of the animals evidently down in the adjoining pit. It had fallen through, but, fortunately for Congo, not without injuring itself in a way that he had but narrowly escaped. The dog had got transfixed on the sharp-pointed stake, planted firmly in the centre of

the pit, and was now hanging on it in horrible agony, unable to get clear.

Without lying down in the mud, the Kaffir was unable to keep his face more than twelve inches from the open jaws of the dog, that in its struggles spun round as on a pivot; and Congo had to press close against the side of the pit, to keep out of the reach of the creature yelping in his ears.

Swartboy could distinguish the utterances of this dog from those of its companions above, and the interpretation he gave to them was, that a fierce combat was taking place between it and the Kaffir.

The jealousy and petty ill-will so often exhibited by the Bushman was not so strong as he had himself believed. His intense anxiety to know which was getting the best of the fight, added to the fear that Congo was being torn to pieces, told him that his friendship for the Kaffir far outweighed the animosity he fancied himself to have felt.

The fiendish yells of the dogs, the unpleasant situation in which he was placed, and the uncertainty of the time he was to endure it, were well-nigh driving him distracted; when just then the wild honden appeared to be beating a retreat,—the only one remaining being that in the pit with Congo. What was driving them away? Could assistance be at hand?

Breathlessly the Bushman stood listening.

Chapter Five.
Arend Lost.

In the afternoon, when Groot Willem, Hans, and Hendrik returned to the camp, they found it deserted.

Several jackals reluctantly skulked off as they drew near and on riding up to the spot from which those creatures had retired, they saw the clean-picked bones of an antelope. The camp must have been deserted for several hours.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Groot Willem. "What has become of Arend?"

"I don't know," answered Hendrik. "It is strange Swart and Cong are not here to tell us."

Something unusual had certainly happened; yet, as each glanced anxiously around the place, there appeared nothing to explain the mystery.

"What shall we do?" asked Willem, in a tone that expressed much concern.

"Wait," answered Hans; "we can do nothing more."

Two or three objects were at this moment observed which fixed their attention. They were out on the plain, nearly a mile off. They appeared to be horses,—their own pack animals,—and Hendrik and Groot Willem started off towards them to drive them back to the camp.

They were absent nearly an hour before they succeeded in turning the horses and driving them towards the camp. As they passed near the drift on their return, they rode towards the river to water the animals they were riding.

On approaching the bank, several native dogs, that had been yelling in a clump, were seen to scatter and retreat across the plain. The horsemen thought little of this, but rode on into the river, and permitted their horses to drink.

While quietly seated in their saddles, Hendrik fancied he heard some strange sounds. "Listen!" said he. "I hear something queer. What is it?"

"One of the honden," answered Willem.

"Where?"

This question neither for a moment could answer, until Groot Willem observed one of the pits from the edge of which the dogs appeared to have retreated.

"Yonder's a pit-trap!" he exclaimed, "and I believe there's a dog has got into it. Well, I shall give it a shot, and put the creature out of its misery."

"Do so," replied Hendrik. "I hate the creatures as much as any other noxious vermin, but it would be cruel to let one starve to death in that way. Kill it."

Willem rode up to the pit and dismounted. Neither of them, as yet, spoke loud enough to be heard in the pits, and the two men down below were at this time silent, the dog alone continuing its cries of agony.

The only thing Willem saw on gazing down the hole was the wild hound still hanging on the stake; and taking aim at one of its eyes he fired.

The last spark of life was knocked out of the suffering animal; but the report of the great gun was instantly followed by two yells more hideous than were ever uttered by "wild honden."

They were the screams of two frightened Africans,—each frightened to think that the next bullet would be for him.

"Arend!" exclaimed Willem, anxious about his brother, and thinking only of him. "Arend! is it you?"

"No, Baas Willem," answered the Kaffir. "It is Congo."

Through the opening, Willem reached down the butt-end of his long roer, while firmly clasping it by the barrel.

The Kaffir took hold with both hands, and, by the strong arms of Groot Willem, was instantly extricated from his subterranean prison.

Swartboy was next hauled out, and the two mud-bedaubed individuals stood gazing at one another, each highly delighted at the rueful appearance presented by his rival.

Slowly the fire of anger, that seemed to have all the while been burning in the Kaffir's eyes, became extinguished, and broad smile broke like the light of day over his stoical countenance.

He had been released at length, and was now convinced that no one was to blame for his protracted imprisonment.

Swartboy had been punished for his ill-timed mirth, and Congo was willing to forget and forgive.

"But where is Arend?" asked Willem, who could not forget, even while amused by the ludicrous aspect of the two Africans, that his brother was missing.

"Don't know, Baas Willem," answered Congo. "I been long time here."

"But when did you see him last?" inquired Hendrik.

Congo was unable to tell, for he seemed under the impression that he had been several days in the bosom of the earth.

From Swartboy they learnt that soon after their own departure Arend had started in pursuit of one of the horses seen straying over the plain. That was the last Swart had seen of him.

The sun was now low down, and, without wasting time in idle speech, Hendrik and Groot Willem again mounted their horses, and rode off towards the place where Arend was last seen.

They reached the edge of the timber nearly a mile from the camp, and then, not knowing which way to turn, or what else to do, Willem fired a shot.

The loud crack of the roer seemed to echo far-away through the forest, and anxiously they listened for some response to the sound. It came, but not in the report of a rifle, or in the voice of the missing man, but in the language of the forest denizens. The screaming of vultures, the chattering of baboons, and the roaring of lions were the responses which the signal received.

"What shall we do, Willem?" asked Hendrik.

"Go back to the halting-place and bring Congo and Spoor'em," answered Willem, as he turned towards the camp, and rode off, followed by his cousin.

Chapter Six.
Spoor'em.

The last ray of daylight had fled from the valley of the Limpopo, when Willem and Hendrik, provided with a torch and accompanied by the Kaffir and the dog Spoor'em, again set forth to seek for their lost companion.

The animal answering to the name Spoor'em was a large Spanish bloodhound, now led forth to perform the first duty required of him in the expedition.

The dog, when quite young, had been brought from one of the Portuguese settlements at the north,—purchased by Groot Willem and christened Spoor'em by Congo.

In the long journey from Graaf Reinet, this brute had been the cause of more trouble than all the other dogs of the pack. It had shown a strong disinclination to endure hunger, thirst, or the fatigues of the journey; and had often exhibited a desire to leave its new masters.

Spoor'em was now led out, in hopes that he would do some service to compensate for the trouble he had caused.

Taking a course along the edge of the forest, that would bring them across the track made by Arend in reaching the place where the horse had strayed, the spoor of Arend's horse as well as the other's was discovered.

The tracks of both were followed into the forest, along well-beaten path, evidently made by buffaloes and other animals passing to and from the river. This path was hedged in by a thick thorny scrub, which being impenetrable rendered it unnecessary for some time to avail themselves of the instincts of the hound. Congo led the way.

"Are you sure that the two horses have passed along here?" asked Willem, addressing himself to the Kaffir.

"Yaas, Baas Willem," answered Congo. "Sure dey both go here."

Willem, turning to Hendrik, added, "I wish Arend had let the horse go to the deuce. It was not worth following into a place like this."

After continuing through the thicket for nearly half a mile, they reached a stretch of open ground, where there was no longer a beaten trail, but tracks diverging in several directions. The hoof-marks of Arend's horse were again found, and the bloodhound was unleashed and set upon them.

Unlike most hounds, Spoor'em did not dash onward, leaving his followers far behind. He appeared to think that it would be for the mutual advantage of himself and his masters that they should remain near each other. The latter, therefore, had no difficulty in keeping up with the dog.

Believing that they should soon learn something of the fate of their lost companion, they proceeded onward, with their voices encouraging the hound to greater speed.

The sounds of a contest carried on by some of the wild denizens of the neighbourhood were soon heard a few yards in advance of them. They were sounds that the hunters had often listened to before, and therefore could easily interpret. A lion and a pack of hyenas were quarrelling over the dead body of some large animal. They were not fighting; for of course the royal beast was in undisputed possession of the carcass, and the hyenas were simply complaining in their own peculiar tones. The angry roars of the lion, and the hideous laughter of the hyenas, proceeded from a spot only a few yards in advance, and in the direction Spoor'em was leading them.

The moon had risen, and by its light the searchers soon beheld the creatures that were causing the tumult. About a dozen hyenas were gibbering around a huge lion that lay crouched alongside a dark object on the ground, upon which he appeared to be feeding. As the hunters drew nearer, the hyenas retreated to some distance.

"It appears to be the carcass of a horse," whispered Hendrik.

"Yes, I am sure of it," answered Willem, "for I can see the saddle. My God! It is Arend's horse! Where is he?"

Spoor'em had now advanced to within fifteen paces of where the lion lay, and commenced baying a menace; as if commanding the lion to forsake his unfinished repast. An angry growl was all the answer Spoor'em could obtain; and the lion lay still.

"We must either kill or drive him away," said Willem. "Which shall we try?"

"Kill him," answered Hendrik; "that will be our safest plan."

Stealing out of their saddles, Willem and Hendrik gave their horses in charge to the Kaffir, and then proceeded to stalk. With their guns at full cock they advanced side by side, Spoor'em sneaking along at their heels.

They stole up within five paces of the lion, which still held its ground. The only respect it showed to their presence was to leave off feeding and crouch over the body of the horse, as though preparing to spring upon them.

"Now," whispered Hendrik, "shall we fire?"

"Yes, yes!—now!"

Both pulled trigger at the same time, the two shots making but one report.

Instinctively each threw himself from the direct line of the creature's deadly leap. This was done at the moment of firing; and the lion, uttering a terrific roar, launched itself towards them, and fell heavily between the two, having leaped a distance of full twenty feet. That effort was its last, for it was unable to rise again.

Without taking the trouble to ascertain whether the fierce brute had been killed outright, they turned their attention to the carcass.

The horse was Arend's, but there was not the slightest trace of the rider. Whatever had been his fate, there was no sign of his having been killed along with his horse. There was still a hope that he had made his escape, though the finding of the horse only added to their apprehensions.

"Let us find out," counselled Hendrik, "whether the horse was killed where it is now lying, or whether it has been dragged hither by the lion."

After examining the ground, Congo declared that the horse had been killed upon the spot, and by the lion.

This was strange enough.

On a further examination of the sign, it was found that one of the horse's legs was entangled in the rein of the bridle. This explained the circumstance to some extent, otherwise it would have been difficult to understand how so swift an animal as a horse should have allowed itself to be overtaken upon an open plain.

"So much the better," said Groot Willem. "Arend never reached this place along with his horse."

"That's true," answered Hendrik, "and our next move will be to find out where he parted from his saddle."

"Let us go back," said Willem, "and more carefully examine the tracks."

During this conversation, the hunters had reloaded their rifles, and now remounted for the purpose of riding back.

"Baas Willem," suggested Congo, "let Spoor'em try 'bout here little more."

This suggestion was adopted, and Congo, setting on the hound, proceeded to describe a larger circle around the spot.

After reaching a part of the plain where they had not yet been, the Kaffir called out to them to come to him.

They rode up, and were again shown the spoor of Arend's horse leading away from where its carcass was now lying, and in the opposite direction from the camp.

It was evident that the horse had been farther off than the spot where its remains now rested. It had probably lost its rider beyond, and was on its return to the camp when killed by the lion.

Once more Spoor'em started along the track, Congo keeping close to his tail, the two horsemen riding anxiously after.

But we must return to the camp, and follow the trail of the lost hunter by a means more sure than even the keen scent of Spoor'em.

Chapter Seven.

The Lost Hunter.

As Arend came up to the horse that had wandered from the camp, the animal had arrived at the edge of an extensive thicket, and was apparently determined upon straying still farther. To avoid being caught or driven back, it rushed in among trees, taking a path or trace made by wild animals.

Arend followed.

The path was too narrow to allow of his heading the stray; and, apprehensive of losing it altogether, the youth followed on in hopes of coming to a wider track, where he might have a chance of passing the runaway and turning it towards the camp.

This hope seemed about to be realised, as the truant emerged from the thicket and entered upon an open plain clothed with low heath,—the *Erica vestila*, loaded with white blossoms.

The hunter was no longer obliged to follow upon the heels of the runaway,—the horse; and spurring his own steed, he made an attempt to get past it. But the horse, perhaps inspired by a recollection of the pack-saddle and its heavy load, broke off into a gallop.

Arend followed, increasing his own speed in like proportion. When nearly across the plain, the runaway suddenly stopped and then bolted off at right angles to the course it had been hitherto pursuing.

Arend was astonished, but soon discovered the cause of this eccentric action, in the presence of a huge black rhinoceros,—the borelé—which was making a straight course across the plain, as if on its way to the river.

The runaway horse had shied out of its way; and it would have been well for the horseman if he had shown himself equally discreet. But Arend Von Wyk was a hunter,—and an officer of the Cape Militia,—and as the borelé passed by him, presenting a fine opportunity for a shot, he could not resist the temptation to give it one.

Pulling up his horse, or rather trying to do so, for the animal was restive in the presence of such danger, he fired. The shot produced a result that was neither expected nor desired. With a roar like the bellowing of an angry bull, the monster turned and charged straight towards the horseman.

Arend was obliged to seek safety in flight, while the borelé pursued in a manner that told of its being wounded, but not incapacitated from seeking revenge.

At the commencement of the chase, there was but a very short distance between pursuer and pursued; and in place of suddenly turning out of the track, and allowing the monster to pass by him,—which he should have done, knowing the defect of vision natural to the rhinoceros,—the young hunter continued on in a straight line, all the while employed in reloading his rifle.

His mistake did not originate in any want of knowledge, or presence of mind, but rather from carelessness and an unworthy estimate of the abilities of the borelé to overtake him. He had long been a successful hunter, and success too often begets that over-confidence which leads to many a mischance, that the more cautious sportsman will avoid.

Suddenly he found his flight arrested by the thick scrub of thorny bushes, known in South Africa as the “wait a bits”, and the horse he was riding did wait a bit,—and so long that the borelé was soon close upon his heels.

There was now neither time nor room to turn either to the right or left.

The rifle was at length loaded, but there would have been but little chance of killing the rhinoceros by a single shot, especially with such uncertain aim as could have been taken from the back of a frightened horse.

Arend, therefore, threw himself from the saddle. He had a twofold purpose in doing so. His aim would be more correct, and there was the chance of the borelé keeping on after the horse, and leaving him an undisturbed spectator of the chase.

The field of view embraced by the eyes of a rhinoceros is not large; but, unfortunately for the hunter, as the frightened horse fled from his side, it was he himself that came within the circumscribed circle of the borelé’s vision.

Hastily raising the rifle to his shoulder he fired at the advancing enemy, and then fled towards a clump of trees that chanced to be near by.

He could hear the heavy tread of the rhinoceros as it followed close upon his heels. It seemed to shake the earth. Closer and closer he heard it, so near that he dared not stop to look around. He fancied he could feel the breath of the monster blowing upon his back. His only chance was to make a sudden deviation from his course, and leave the borelé to pass on in its impetuous charge. This he did, turning sharply to the right, when he saw that he had just escaped being elevated upon the creature's horn.

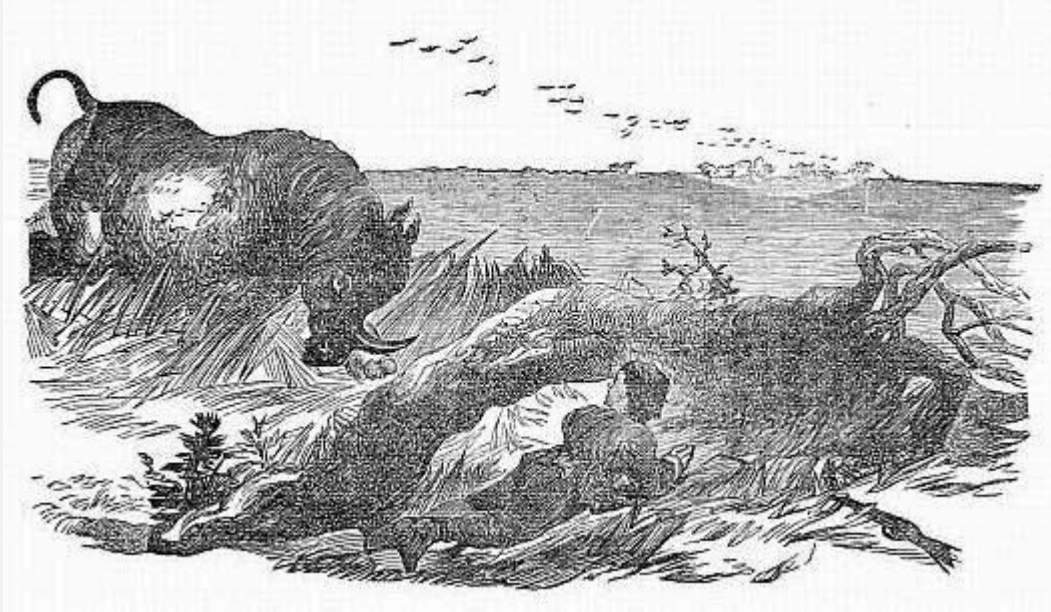
This manoeuvre enabled him to gain some distance as he started off in the new direction. But it was not long maintained; for the borelé was again in hot pursuit, without any show of fatigue; while the tremendous exertions he had himself been making rendered him incapable of continuing his flight much longer. He had just sufficient strength left to avoid an immediate encounter by taking one more turn, when, fortunately, he saw before him the trunk of a large baobab-tree lying prostrate along the ground. It had been blown down by some mighty storm, and lay resting upon its roots at one end, and its shivered branches at the other, so as to leave a space of about two feet between its trunk and the ground.

Suddenly throwing himself down, Arend glided under the tree, just in time to escape the long horn, whose point had again come in close proximity with his posterior.

The hunter had now time to recover his breath, and, to some extent, his confidence. He saw that the fallen tree would protect him. Even should the rhinoceros come round to the other side, he would only have to roll back again to place himself beyond the reach of its terrible horn. The space below was ample enough to enable him to pass through, but too small for the body of a borelé. By creeping back and forward he could always place himself in safety. And this was just

what he had to do; for the enraged monster, on seeing him on the other side, immediately ran round the roots, and renewed the attack.

This course of action was several times repeated before the young hunter was allowed much time for reflection. He was in hopes that the brute would get tired of the useless



charges it was making and either go away itself, or give him the opportunity.

In this hope he was doomed to disappointment. The animal, exasperated with the wounds it had received, appeared implacable; and for more than an hour it kept running around the tree in vain attempts to get at him. As he had very little trouble in avoiding it, there was plenty of opportunity for reflection; and he passed the time in devising some plan to settle the misunderstanding between the borelé and himself.

The first he thought of was to make use of his rifle. The weapon was within his reach where he had dropped it when diving under the tree; but when about to reload it, he discovered that the ramrod was missing!

So sudden had been the charge of the borelé, at the time the rifle was last loaded, that the ramrod had not been returned to its proper

place, but left behind upon the plain. This was an unlucky circumstance; and for a time the young hunter could not think of anything better than to keep turning from side to side, to avoid the presence of the besieger.

The borelé at last seemed to show signs of exhaustion, or, at all events, began to perceive the unprofitable nature of the tactics it had been pursuing. But the spirit of revenge was not the least weakened within it, for it made no move toward taking its departure from the spot. On the contrary, it lay down by the baobab in a position to command a view on both sides of the huge trunk, evidently determined to stay there and await the chance of getting within reach of its victim.

Thus silently beleaguered, the young hunter set about considering in what manner he might accomplish the raising of the siege.

Chapter Eight.

Rescued.

The sun went down, the moon ascended above the tops of the surrounding trees, yet the borelé seemed no less inspired by the spirit of revenge than on first receiving the injuries it was wishing to resent.

For many hours the young hunter waited patiently for it to move away in search of food or any other object except that of revenge; but in this hope he was disappointed. The pain inflicted by the shots would not allow either hunger or thirst to interfere with the desire for retaliation, and it continued to maintain a watch so vigilant that Arend dared not leave his retreat for an instant. Whenever he made a movement, the enemy did the same.

It was a long time before he could think of any plan that would give him a chance of getting away. One at length occurred to him.

Although unable to reload the rifle with a bullet, the thought came into his mind, that the borelé might be blinded by a heavy charge of powder, or so confused by it as to give him an opportunity of stealing away. This seemed an excellent plan, yet so simple that Arend was somewhat surprised he had not thought of it before.

Without difficulty he succeeded in pouring a double quantity of powder into the barrel; and, in order to keep it there until he had an opportunity for a close shot, some dry grass was forced into the muzzle. The chance soon offered; and, taking a deliberate aim at one of the borelé's eyes with the muzzle of the gun not more than two feet from its head, he pulled trigger.

With a loud moan of mingled rage and agony, the rhinoceros rushed towards him, and frantically, but vainly exerted all its strength in an endeavour to overturn the baobab.

"One more shot at the other eye," thought Arend, "and I shall be free."

He immediately proceeded to pour another dose of powder into the rifle, but while thus engaged a new danger suddenly presented itself. The dry grass projected from the gun had ignited and set fire to the dead leaves that were strewed plentifully over the ground. In an instant these were ablaze, the flame spreading rapidly on all sides, and moving towards him.

The trunk of the baobab could no longer afford protection. In another minute it, too, would be enveloped in the red fire, and to stay by its side would be to perish in the flames. There was no alternative but to get to his feet and run for his life.

Not a moment was to be lost, and, slipping from under the tree, he started off at the top of his speed. The chances were in his favour for escaping unobserved by the rhinoceros. But fortune seemed decidedly against him. Before getting twenty paces from the tree, he saw that he was pursued.

Guided either by one eye or its keen sense of hearing, the monster was following him at a pace so rapid that, if long enough continued, it must certainly overtake him.

Once more the young hunter began to feel something like despair. Death seemed hard upon his heels. A few seconds more, and he might be impaled on that terrible horn. But for that instinctive love of life which all feel, he might have surrendered himself to fate; but urged by this, he kept on.

He was upon the eve of falling to the earth through sheer exhaustion, when his ears were saluted by the deep-toned bay of a hound, and close after it a voice exclaiming—

“Look out, Baas Willem! Somebody come yonder!”

Two seconds more and Arend was safe from further pursuit. The hound Spoor'em was dancing about the borelé's head, by his loud, angry yelps diverting its attention from everything but himself.

Two seconds more and Groot Willem and Hendrik came riding up; and, in less than half a minute after, the monster, having received a shot from the heavy roer, slowly settled down in its tracks—a dead rhinoceros.

Willem and Hendrik leaped from their horses and shook hands with Arend in a manner as cordial as if they were just meeting him after an absence of many years.

“What does it mean, Arend?” jocosely inquired Hendrik. “Has this brute been pursuing you for the last twelve hours?”

“Yes.”

“And how much longer do you think the chase would have continued?”

"About ten seconds," replied Arend, speaking in a very positive tone.

"Very well," said Hendrik, who was so rejoiced at the deliverance of his friend that he felt inclined to be witty. "We know now how long you are capable of running. You can lead a borelé a chase of just twelve hours and ten seconds."

Groot Willem was for some time unspeakably happy, and said not a word until they had returned to the place where the lion had been killed. Here they stopped for the purpose of recovering the saddle and bridle from the carcass of the horse.

Groot Willem proposed they should remain there till the morning; his reason being that, in returning through the narrow path that led out to the open plain, they might be in danger of meeting buffaloes, rhinoceroses, or elephants, and be trampled to death in the darkness.

"That's true," replied Arend; "and it might be better to stay here until daylight, but for two reasons. One is, that I am dying of hunger, and should like a roast rib of that antelope I shot in the morning."

"And so should I," said Hendrik, "but the jackals have saved us the trouble of eating that."

Arend was now informed of the events that had occurred to his absence, and was highly amused at Hendrik's account of the misfortune that had befallen Swartboy and Congo.

"We are making a very fair commencement in the way of adventures," said he, after relating his own experiences of the day, "but so far our expedition has been anything but profitable."

"We must go farther down the river," said Willem. "We have not yet seen the spoor of either hippopotamus or giraffe. We must keep

moving until we come upon them. I never want to see another lion, borelé, or elephant."

"But what is your other reason for going back to camp?" asked Hendrik, addressing himself to Arend.

"What would it be?" replied Arend. "Do you suppose that our dear friend Hans has no feelings?"

"O, that's what you mean, is it?"

"Of course it is. Surely Hans will by this time be half dead with anxiety on our account."

All agreed that it would be best to go on to the camp; and, after transferring the saddle and bridle from the carcass of the horse to the shoulders of Congo, they proceeded onward, arriving in camp at a very late hour, and finding Hans, as Arend had conjectured, overwhelmed with apprehension at their long absence.

Chapter Nine.
An Incident of the Road.

Next morning, they broke up their camp and moved down the river, extending their march into the second day.

After passing the drift where the Limpopo had been first crossed, Groot Willem, accompanied by Congo, was riding nearly a mile in advance of his companions. His object in leading the way so far ahead was to bag any game worthy of his notice, before it should be frightened by the others.

Occasionally, a small herd of some of the many varieties of antelopes in which South Africa abounds fled before him; but these

the great hunter scarce deigned to notice. His thief object was to find a country frequented by hippopotami and giraffes.

On his way he passed many of the lofty pandanus or screw pine-trees. Some of these were covered from top to bottom with parasitic plants, giving them the appearance of tall towers or obelisks. Underneath one of these trees, near the river, and about three hundred yards from where he was riding, he saw a buffalo cow with her calf. The sun was low down; and the time had therefore arrived when some buffalo veal would be acceptable both to the men and dogs of the expedition.

Telling Congo to stay where he was, the hunter rode to the leeward of the buffalo cow, and, under cover of some bushes, commenced making approach. Knowing that a buffalo cow is easily alarmed, more especially when accompanied by her calf, he made his advances with the greatest caution. Knowing, also, that no animal shows more fierceness and contempt for danger, while protecting its young, he was anxious to get a dead shot, so as to avoid the risk of a conflict with the cow, should she be only wounded. When he had got as close as the cover would allow him, he took aim at the cow's heart and fired.

Contrary to his expectation, the animal neither fell nor fled, but merely turned an inquiring glance in the direction from whence the report had proceeded.

This was a mystery the hunter could not explain. Why did the cow keep to the same spot? If not disabled by the bullet, why had she not gone off, taking her young one along with her?

"I might as well have been stalking a tree as this buffalo," thought Willem, "for one seems as little inclined to move as the other."

Hastily reloading his roer, he rode fearlessly forward, now quite confident that the cow could not escape him. She seemed not to care about retreating, and he had got close up to the spot where she stood,

when all at once the buffalo charged furiously towards him, and was only stopped by receiving a second bullet from the roer that hit right in the centre of the forehead. One more plunge forward and the animal dropped on her knees, and died after the manner of buffaloes, with legs spread and back uppermost, instead of falling over on its side. Another shot finished the calf, which was crying pitifully by the side of its mother.

Congo now came up, and, while examining the calf, discovered that one of its legs had been already broken. This accounted for the cow not having attempted to save herself by flight. She knew that her offspring was disabled, and stayed by it from an instinct of maternal solicitude.

While Willem was engaged reloading his gun, he heard a loud rustling among the parasitical plants that loaded the pandanus-tree under which he and Congo were standing. Some large body was stirring among the branches. What could it be?

"Stand clear," shouted Willem, as he swerved off from the tree, at the same time setting the cap upon his gun.

At the distance of ten or twelve paces he faced round, and stood ready to meet the moving object, whatever it might be. Just then he saw standing before him a tall man who had dropped down from among the leaves, while Willem's back had been turned towards the tree.

The dress and general appearance of this individual proclaimed him to be a native African, but not one of those inferior varieties of the human race which that country produces. He was a man of about forty years of age, tall and muscular, with features well formed, and that expressed both intelligence and courage. His complexion was tawny brown, not black; and his hair was more like that of a European than an African.

These observations were made by the young hunter in six seconds; for the person who had thus suddenly appeared before him allowed no more time to elapse before setting off from the spot, and in such haste that the hunter thought he must be retreating in affright. And yet there was no sign of fear accompanying the act. Some other motive must have urged him to that precipitate departure.

There was; and Congo was the first to discover it. The man had gone in the direction of the river.

"Water, water!" exclaimed the Kaffir; "he want water."

The truth of this remark was soon made evident; for, on following the stranger with their eyes, they saw him rush into the stream, plunge his head under water and commence filling himself in the same manner as he would have done, had his body been a bottle!

Hendrik and Arend, having heard the reports of the roer, feared that something might have gone wrong, and galloped forward, leaving Hans and Swartboy to bring up the pack-horses.

They reached the scene just as the African, after having quenched his thirst, had returned to the tree where the young hunter and Congo had remained.

Without taking the slightest notice of either of the others, the man walked up to Groot Willem, and, with an air of dignity, natural to most semi-barbarous people, began making a speech. Grateful for having been relieved from his imprisonment, he evidently believed that duty required him to say something, whether it might be understood or not.

"Can *you* understand him, Congo?" asked Willem.

"Yaas, a little I can," answered the Kaffir; and in his own peculiar manner he interpreted what the African had to say.

It was simply that he owed his life to Groot Willem, and that the latter had only to ask for whatever he required, and it should be given him.

"That is certainly promising a good deal," said the sarcastic Hendrik, "and I hope that Willem will not be too greedy in his request, but will leave something for the rest of mankind."

Hans and Swartboy at this moment came up with the pack-horses; and, selecting a spot near the place where the cow had been killed, the party encamped for the night.

For some time, all hands were busy in gathering firewood and making other preparations for their bivouac,—among which were the skinning and cooking of the buffalo calf, duties that were assigned to the Bushman. During his performance of them, the others, assisted by Congo as interpreter, were extracting from the tall stranger a full account of the adventure to which they were indebted for his presence in the camp; and a strange story it was.

Chapter Ten.

Macora.

In the manner of the African there was a certain hauteur which had not escaped the observation of his hearers.

This was explained on their learning who and what he was; for his story began by his giving a true and particular account of himself.

His name was Macora, and his rank that of a chief. His tribe belonged to the great nation of the Makololo, though living apart, in

a "kraal" by themselves. The village, so-called, was at no great distance from the spot where the hunters were now encamped.

The day before, he had come up the river in a canoe, accompanied by three of his subjects. Their object was to procure a plant which grew in that place,—from which the poison for arrows and spears is obtained. In passing a shallow place in the river, they had attempted to kill a hippopotamus which they saw walking about on the bottom of the stream, like a buffalo browsing upon a plain. Rising suddenly to the surface, the monster had capsized the canoe, and Macora was compelled to swim ashore with the loss of a gun which once cost him eight elephant's tusks.

He had seen nothing of his three companions, since parting with them in the water.

On reaching the shore, and a few yards from the bank, he encountered a herd of buffaloes, cows and young calves, on their way to the river. These turned suddenly to avoid him, when a calf was knocked down by one of the old ones, and so severely injured that it could not accompany the rest in their flight. The mother, seeing her offspring left behind, turned back and selected Macora as the object of her resentment. The chief retreated towards the nearest tree, hotly pursued by the animal eager to revenge the injury done to her young.

He was just in time to ascend among the branches as the cow came up. The calf, with much difficulty, succeeded in reaching the tree. Once there, it could not move away, and the mother would not leave it. This accounted for Macora's having been found among the branches of the pandanus. He went on to say, that, during the time he had been detained in the tree, he had made several attempts to get down and steal off, but on each occasion had found the buffalo waiting to receive him upon her horns. He was suffering terribly with thirst when he heard the first shot fired by Groot Willem, and perceived that assistance was near.

The chief concluded his narrative by inviting the hunters to accompany him the next morning to his kraal; where he promised to show them such hospitality as was in his power. On learning that his home was down the river, and at no great distance from it, the invitation was at once accepted.

"One thing this man has told us," remarked Willem, "which pleases me very much. We have learnt that there is or has been a hippopotamus near our camping-ground, and perhaps we shall not have far to travel before commencing our premeditated war against them."

"Question him about sea-cows, Cong," said Hendrik. "Ascertain if there are many of them about here."

In answer to the Kaffir's inquiries, the chief stated that hippopotami were not often seen in that part of the river; but that, a day's journey farther down, there was a large lagoon, through which the stream ran; there, sea-cows were as plentiful as the stars in the sky.

"That is just the place we have been looking for," said Willem; "and now, Congo, question him about camelopards."

Macora could hold out but little hopes of their meeting giraffes anywhere on that part of the Limpopo. He had heard of one or two having been occasionally seen; but it was not a giraffe country, and they were stray animals.

"Ask him if he knows where there is such a country," demanded Willem, who seemed more interested in learning something about giraffes than either of his companions.

Macora could not or would not answer this question without taking his own time and way of doing it. He stated that the native country of himself and his tribe was far to the north and west; that they had

been driven from their home by the tyranny of the great Zooloo King, Moselekatse, who claimed the land and levied tribute upon all the petty chiefs around him.

Macora further stated that, having in some mysterious manner lost the good opinion of Sekeletu and other great chiefs of the Makololo,—his own people,—they would no longer protect him, and that he and his tribe were compelled to leave their homes, and migrate to the place where he was now about to conduct his new acquaintances.

“But that is not what I wish to know,” said Groot Willem, who never troubled himself with the political affairs of his own country, and therefore cared little about those of an African petty chief.

On being brought back to the question, Macora stated that he was only giving them positive proof of his familiarity with the camelopards, since nowhere were these more abundant than in the country from which he had been expatriated by the tyranny of the Zooloo chief. It was his native land, where he had hunted the giraffe from childhood.

Swartboy here interrupted the conversation by announcing that he had enough meat cooked for them to begin their meal with; and about ten pounds’ weight of buffalo veal cutlets were placed before the hunters and their guest.

Macora, who, to all appearance, had been waiting very patiently while the cutlets were being broiled, commenced the repast with some show of self-restraint. This, however, wholly forsook him before it was finished. He ate voraciously, consuming more than the four young hunters together. This, however, he did not do without making an apology for his apparent greed; stating that he had been nearly two days without having tasted food.

The supper having at length come to an end, all stretched themselves around the fire and went to sleep.

The night passed without their being disturbed; and soon after sunrise they arose,—not all at the same time,—for one of the party had risen and taken his departure an hour earlier than the rest. It was Macora, whom they had entertained the evening before.

"Here, you Swart and Cong!" exclaimed Arend, when he discovered that the chief was no longer in the camp, "see if any of the horses are missing. It is just possible we have been tricked by a false tale and robbed into the bargain."

"By whom?" asked Groot Willem.

"By your friend, the chief. He has stolen himself away, if nothing else."

"I'll bet my life," exclaimed Willem, in a more positive tone than the others had ever yet heard him use, "that that man is an honest fellow, and that all he has told us is true, though I can't account for his absence. He is a chief, and has the air of one."

"Yes, he is a chief, no doubt," said Hendrik, sneeringly. "Every African in this part of the world is a chief, if he only has a family. Whether his story be true or not, it looks ugly, his leaving us in this clandestine manner."

Hans, as usual, had nothing to say upon a subject of which he knew nothing; and Swartboy, after making sure that no horses, guns, or other property were missing, expressed the opinion that he was never so mystified in his life.

Nothing was gone from the camp; and yet he was quite certain that any one speaking a native African language understood by Congo, could not be capable of acting honestly if an opportunity was allowed him for the opposite.

Having allowed their horses an hour to graze, while they themselves breakfasted upon buffalo veal, our adventurers broke up their bivouac, and continued their march down the bank of the river.

Chapter Eleven.
Macora's Kraal.

After journeying about three hours, the young hunters came to a place that gave unmistakable evidence of having been often visited by human beings.

Small palm-trees had been cut down, the trunks taken away, and the tops left on the ground. Elephants, giraffes, or other animals that feed on foliage would have taken the tops of the trees, and, moreover, would not have cut them down with hatchets, the marks of which were visible in the stumps left standing. Half a mile farther on, and fields could be seen in cultivation. They were evidently approaching a place inhabited by a people possessing some intelligence.

"See!" exclaimed Arend, as they rode on, "there's a large body of men coming towards us."

All turned to the direction in which Arend was gazing. They saw about fifty people coming along the crest of a ridge, that trended toward the north.

"Perhaps they mean mischief," said Hans. "What shall we do?"

"Ride on and meet them," exclaimed Hendrik. "If they are enemies it is not our fault. We have not molested them."

As the strangers came near, the hunters recognised their late guest, who was now mounted on an ox and riding in advance of his

party. His greeting, addressed to Groot Willem, was interpreted by Congo.

"I have invited you to come to my kraal," said he, "and to bring your friends along with you. I left you early this morning, and have been to my home to see that preparations should be made worthy of those who have befriended Macora. Some of my people, the bravest and best amongst them, are here to bid you welcome."

A procession was then formed, and all proceeded on to the African village, which was but a short distance from the spot. On entering it, a group of about a hundred and fifty women received them with a chant, expressed in low murmuring tones, not unlike the lullaby with which a mother sings her child to sleep.

The houses of the kraal were constructed stockade fashion, in rows of upright poles, interlaced with reeds or long grass, and then covered with a plaster of mud. Through these the hunters were conducted to a long shed in the centre of the village, where the saddles were taken from their horses, which were afterwards led off to the grazing ground.

Although Macora's subjects had been allowed but three hours' notice, they had prepared a splendid feast for his visitors.

The young hunters sat down to a dinner of roast antelope, *biltongue*, stews of hippopotamus and buffalo flesh, baked fish, ears of green maize roasted, with wild honey, stewed pumpkin, melons, and plenty of good milk.

The young hunters and all their following were waited on with the greatest courtesy. Even their dogs were feasted, while Swartboy and Congo had never in all their lives been treated with so much consideration.

In the afternoon, Macora informed his guests that he should give them an entertainment; and, in order that they should enjoy the spectacle intended for them, he informed them, by way of prologue, of the circumstances under which it was to be enacted.

His statement was to the effect that his companions in the canoe, at the time it was capsized by the hippopotamus, had reached home, bringing with them the story of their mishap; that the tribe had afterwards made a search for their chief, but not finding him, had come to the conclusion that he had been either drowned or killed by the sea-cow. They had given him up for lost; and another important member of the community, named Sindo, had proclaimed himself chief of the tribe.

When Macora reached home that morning, Sindo had not yet come forth from his house; and, before he was aware of the chief's reappearance, the house had been surrounded and the usurper made prisoner. Sindo, fast bound and guarded, was now awaiting execution; and this was the spectacle which the hunters were to be treated to.

It was a scene that none of the young hunters had any desire to be present at; but, yielding to the importunities of their host, they accompanied him to the spot where the execution was to take place. This was in the suburbs of the village, where they found the prisoner fast tied to a tree. Nearly all the inhabitants of the community had assembled to see the usurper shot,—this being the manner of death that had been awarded to him.

The prisoner was rather a good-looking man, apparently about thirty-five years of age. No evil propensity was expressed in his features; and our heroes could not help thinking that he had been guilty of no greater crime than a too hasty ambition.

"Can we not save him from this cruel fate?" asked Hans, speaking to Groot Willem. "I think you have some influence with the chief."

"There can be no harm in trying," answered Willem. "I'll see what I can do."

Sindo was to be shot with his own musket. The executioner had been already appointed, and all other arrangements made for carrying out the decree, when Willem, advancing towards Macora, commenced interceding for his life.

His argument was, that the prisoner had not committed any great crime; that had he conspired against his chief for the purpose of placing himself in authority, it would have been a different affair. Then he would have deserved death.

Willem further urged, that had he, Macora, really been lost, some one of the tribe would have become chief, and that Sindo was not to blame for aspiring to resemble one who had ruled to the evident satisfaction of all.

Macora was then entreated to spare the prisoner's life, and the entreaty was backed by the promise of a gun to replace the one lost in the river, on condition that Sindo should be allowed to live.

For a time Macora remained silent, but at length made reply, by saying that he should never feel safe if the usurper were allowed to remain in the community.

Groot Willem urged that he could be banished from the kraal, and forbidden to return to it on penalty of death.

Macora hesitated a little longer; but remembering that he had promised to grant any favour to the one who had released him from imprisonment in the tree, he yielded. Sindo's life should be spared on condition of his expatriating himself at once and forever from the kraal of Macora.

On granting this pardon, the chief wished all distinctly to understand that it was done out of gratitude to his friend, the big white hunter. He did not wish it to be supposed that the prisoner's life had been purchased with a gun.

All Macora's subjects, including the condemned man himself, appeared greatly astonished at the decision, so contrary to all precedent among his fellow-countrymen.

The exhibition of mercy, along with the refusal of the bribe, proved to the young hunters, that Macora had within him the elements of a noble nature.

Sindo, accompanied by his family, immediately made departure from the place, going off to seek a home among kindred tribes, where his ambition would, no doubt, be exercised with greater caution.

During the evening, Macora provided a varied entertainment for his guests. It included a grand feast, with songs and dancing, the latter done to the sounds of the tom-tom drum, and one-stringed African fiddle.

All retired for the night with the understanding that the hunters should the next day be conducted to a place where hippopotami were plentiful.

Chapter Twelve.

Spying out the Land.

Early next morning, after the hunters had reciprocated Macora's hospitality by giving him the best breakfast they were capable of cooking, they started off on their search for sea-cows. Macora, accompanied by four attendants, acted as guide, while fifty others were to follow, to assist in the chase. The pack-horses and all other property were taken along, as they did not intend to return to the

kraal, although the chief earnestly requested them to remain and make his village their home so long as they remained in the neighbourhood.

For more than a mile their way led through small plantations of maize, owned by Macora's subjects, and cultivated by the women and younger people of the tribe.

Our adventurers had seen many kraals of Bushmen, also of Bechuana and Kaffir tribes, and were surprised to observe such evidences of civilisation so far removed from the teachings and example of the Cape Colonists.

On their way down the river, buffaloes were observed in small droves, as also herds of koodoos and zebras. They had reached a land that gave good promise of the very adventures they were in search of.

About five miles from the village they came upon a small open space thickly covered with grass. Here Macora suggested that they should make their hunting camp, as the thick growth of timber seen farther down the river was the resort of every species of game to be found for many miles around.

Macora's suggestion was adopted; and his followers soon constructed a stockade enclosure or kraal, to protect the camp. While this was being done the young hunters were not idle.

On the open plain beyond some antelopes were seen grazing, and Hendrik and Arend went after them for the purpose of providing Macora's people with food.

Groot Willem, on the other hand, preferred going towards the timber, where he had been told there was larger game; and, accompanied by Macora and four attendants, he started off, leaving

Hans with Swartboy and Congo to take care of the pack-horses and other *impedimenta*, as also to superintend the building of the kraal.

Not far from the river-bank, Macora, with Willem, entered a dense forest standing in a tract of low marshy ground. They had not gone far, before coming within sight of some reet boks (reed bucks, *Antelope eleotragus*, Schreber). These were not more than three hundred yards away; and, from the unconcerned manner in which they continued their occupation, Groot Willem saw that they had never been hunted by men carrying fire-arms, although so near to a village of the Makololo. The innocent creatures were unworthy of a shot from his roer, and he passed on without molesting them.

He was soon upon a path that showed signs of being nightly trodden by large animals, on their way to the water. Amongst other spoor, he was pleased to observe that of the hippopotamus. Several of these animals had evidently left the river only two or three hours before, and were then probably grazing in the neighbourhood. They had been so little disturbed by man, that, contrary to their usual custom, they came out upon the land to browse by day.

Willem was satisfied that they had reached a place where they would be content to stop for a while; and, without proceeding any farther, he resolved to commence business by bringing down one of two buffaloes he saw lying at some distance off, under the shade of a clump of trees.

Leaving Macora and his men in care of his horse and three dogs which he had brought with him, he passed to the leeward of the game, trying to get between the buffaloes and the forest, to head them off in case of their retreating to the cover.

Willem was too much of a sportsman to think of stalking upon the buffaloes, and shooting at them while asleep; and after gaining the desired station, he whistled for his dogs, for the purpose of giving the buffaloes a bit of a chase, and trying a shot at them while on the run.

His signal was scarce given, when he heard loud yells from the natives and the report of Macora's musket.

Something had gone wrong; for he saw that his own horse was loose and galloping over the plain, while the natives were scampering in different directions, evidently under the inspiration of fear.

The ox upon which Macora sat seemed trying its speed with his horse. The three dogs had answered his call and were coming towards him. They were pursued by something,—by a creature that passed over the ground in a succession of long low leaps, and yet so much time was lost in gathering strength for each spring, that it did not much lessen the distance between itself and the animals it was pursuing.

The buffaloes had started up and gone off at full canter towards the timber,—passing within less than fifty paces of the spot where Willem stood. He allowed them to escape unmolested. A creature more deserving of his attention was rapidly approaching from the other side.

Chapter Thirteen.
The Faithful "Smoke."

As yet, the dogs did not seem aware that an enemy was after them. They had heard their master's whistle, and having been released from the leash, were only intent in obeying the command.

On rousing the buffaloes from their repose, they probably thought that they had been called for the express purpose of pursuing and destroying them; and, heedless of all else, they followed upon the heels of the great quadrupeds, passing close to the hunter, who in vain endeavoured to call them off. He was soon otherwise occupied.

The creature in pursuit of the dogs, and which had caused the flight of Macora and his attendants, was a large leopard. It was a female, and rapidly there passed through the hunter's mind a conjecture of the circumstances under which the animal was acting.

It had left its young in its forest lair, and had been on a visit to the river for water or food. It had not pursued Macora or his attendants, as its solicitude was for its young, and the dogs were now running in the direction where these were concealed.

At sight of Groot Willem, the leopard desisted from its pursuit of the dogs; and, crouching low upon the ground, crawled towards him,—not slowly, but with a speed only checked by instinctive caution. As it advanced, its whole body was covered by the head, its eyes being the highest part of it presented to the view of the hunter.

The *felidea* was now within ten yards of him and rapidly drawing nearer. Something must be done. The roer was raised to his shoulder, and with a steady hand and eye,—nerved by the perilous position he was in,—he drew a fine sight at the creature's snout and fired.

The shot took effect, for the leopard rolled over, rose up, turned around two or three times, and for a while seemed to have lost all consciousness of what had transpired. Its young and its enemy were for a time apparently forgotten in the agony it was suffering from a broken jaw. This, however, was but for a few seconds, for the sight of the hunter soon after aroused it to a perfect realisation of all that had taken place.

Willem, after firing, had run off to about fifty paces, and then stopped to reload. While so engaged he kept his eye fixed upon the leopard. It was again coming towards him, no longer with the caution it had before exhibited, but in a manner that showed its whole animal nature was absorbed by the spirit of revenge.

By the time he had placed the bullet in the barrel of his gun and driven it home, the brute was close upon him. There was not time for

him to withdraw the ramrod, much less to put on a cap. Grasping his roer by the barrel, he prepared to defend himself, intending to use the weapon as a club. The enraged creature was about to make a spring upon him, when assistance came from a quarter altogether unexpected.

One of the dogs—a large bull-dog called “Smoke”—had not followed the buffaloes to cover. It had obeyed its master’s command when called back from the chase. Just as the leopard was crouching upon the earth to gather force for the final spring, Smoke seized it by one of the hind legs. Not a second of time was lost by Willem. One more chance for life had been thus given him, and he hastened to avail himself of it.

The hammer of the lock was thrown back and a cap placed on the nipple in less time than nine out of ten well-drilled soldiers could have performed the same feat; but by the time it was done, and the gun brought to his shoulder, poor Smoke was lying in his death-struggle along the grass.

The *felidea* had turned to renew the attack on its human enemy. One second more, and its huge body would have been launched against him,—its sharp claws buried in his flesh.

He pulled trigger and sprang backwards. A cloud of smoke rolled before his eyes, and, as this cleared away, he saw the leopard laid out along the earth by the side of the wounded dog,—like the latter, kicking out its legs in the last throes of death.

On looking for his companions, Willem saw that Macora and his men, having stopped at a distance of about five hundred yards off, had witnessed his victory. The chief was now hastening towards him on foot, and was soon by his side, when, pointing to the ox about half a mile away, he tried to make Willem understand that that animal had carried him unwillingly away from his friend.

Perceiving all danger was over, the others came up; when, by signs, the big hunter gave them to understand that he wanted the hide taken off the leopard. The four attendants went to work with their short assagais, in a manner that told him he would not have long to wait for a beautiful leopard skin, as a trophy of his victory, as also a memento of the danger through which he had passed.

He himself turned his attention to the wounded dog, which was still moaning on the ground, and looking at him with an expression that seemed to say, "Why do you not first come and assist me."

Poor Smoke had sacrificed his own life to save that of his master. The creature's back was broken, and it was otherwise severely injured. It was evident that nothing could be done for it. The dog must die, and the great heart of Groot Willem was sorely afflicted.

Turning to Macora, he observed that the chief had reloaded his musket. Willem pointed to the dog's head and then to the gun.

The chief took the hint and raised the weapon to his shoulder.

Groot Willem turned away with his eyes full of tears, and went off in pursuit of his horse.

Chapter Fourteen.

The Lagoon.

On returning to the camp, they found that Hendrik and Arend had been successful in their chase of the antelopes, and the greater part of two were cooking over a large fire.

A quantity of felled timber had been brought to the ground for construction of the kraal, and the work of building it had already commenced.

For the labour of his followers Macora would accept nothing but a small quantity of coffee, a bottle of Schiedam and some tobacco, and in the evening he took his departure, after seeing his friends safely established in their camp.

Three of his people were left with the hunters, with orders to make themselves useful in whatever way they could be employed. This addition to the company was, however, a source of great annoyance to the Bushman. Any communication made to them required the assistance of his rival, Congo.

Congo had others under him,—people to whom he gave instructions and commands. Swartboy had not, and was, therefore, very discontented with the arrangements.

"You and I must do something to-day," said Arend to Hendrik, as they were eating their first breakfast at the new camping-place.

"Yes," replied Hendrik, "Willem has one day the start of us in adventures, but I dare say fortune will favour us ere long."

"She has favoured us all I think," said Willem. "How could we have a better prospect of success? There is apparently an abundance of game; and we have found people willing to assist us in getting at it,—willing to perform most of the toil and leave us all of the sport."

"You are quite right," said Hendrik; "our brightest hopes could not have been crowned by a more favourable commencement, although two days ago we were repining. What do you say, Swartboy?" he added, turning to the Bushman; "are you content?"

"I berry much content, Baas Hendrik," answered Swartboy, with an expression that did not confirm his words.

That day the young hunters, leaving Swartboy and the Kaffir in charge of the camp, made a visit to the lagoon, where they expected to find hippopotami.

They passed by the place where Groot Willem had killed the leopard, and observed that the bones of that animal, mingled with those of the faithful Smoke, were scattered over the ground, clean-picked of their flesh by the jackals and hyenas.

Half a mile farther on they reached the lagoon; and



while riding along its shore, they all pulled up to listen to an unfamiliar and indescribable sound, that seemed to proceed from two dark objects just visible above the surface of the water. They were the heads of a brace of sea-cows. The animals were making towards them, uttering loud cries that could not be compared with anything the hunters had previously heard. Any attempt to kill them in the water would only have resulted in a waste

of ammunition; for, with only the eyes and nose above the surface, there was no chance for a bullet to strike them with fatal effect.

The monsters showed some intention of coming out and making war; but, on getting nearer, they changed their design, and, turning about, floundered off out of reach.

Before proceeding many yards farther, they saw three other hippopotami, this time not in the water, but out upon the plain. They were browsing on the grass, unconscious that an enemy was near.

"Let us get between them and the water," suggested Willem. "By that means we will make sure of them."

Riding forward at a sharp pace, the hunters succeeded in this design; and, for a time, the retreat of the hippopotami appeared impossible.

Instinct does not lead these animals to flee from a foe. They only make for the water without regard to the position of the enemy.

On the first alarm, therefore, the three hippopotami started for the lagoon, going at a heavy rolling pace, and much faster than might have been supposed possible for creatures of such ungainly shape. As they ran in a direct line, the hunters were compelled to glide out of their way, or run the risk of being trodden under foot.

Hans and Groot Willem were together; and, as soon as the broad side of a hippopotamus came fairly before them, both fired at the same beast, taking aim behind the shoulder. Hendrik and Arend fired about at the same time at another.

Onward rolled the immense masses towards the river, but before reaching it the one to which Hans and Willem had devoted their attention was seen to go unsteadily and with less speed. Before arriving at the bank, it gave a heavy lurch, like a water-logged ship,

and fell over upon its side. Two or three abortive efforts were made to recover its feet, but these soon subsided into a tremulous quivering of its huge frame, that ended in the stillness of death.

Its two companions plunged into the water, leaving Hendrik and Arend a little chagrined by the failure of their first attempt at killing a hippopotamus.

Hans and Groot Willem had no pretensions to military prowess, and the first was generally absorbed in some subject connected with his botanical researches. But he could claim his share in killing a hippopotamus under circumstances no more favourable than the two who had allowed their game to escape.

Chapter Fifteen.

Hippopotami.

Herodotus, Aristotle, Diodorus, and Pliny have all given descriptions more or less correct of the hippopotamus, river-horse, or zeekoe (sea-cow) of the South African Dutch.

So great has been the interest taken in this animal, of which European people have long read, but never until lately seen, that the Zoological Society cleared 10,000 pounds in the year of the Great Exhibition of 1851, by their specimens exhibited in the gardens at Regent's Park.

Hippopotami procured from Northern Africa were not uncommon in the Roman spectacles. Afterwards, the knowledge of them became lost to Europe for several hundred years; and, according to the authority of several writers, they entirely disappeared from the Nile.

Several centuries after they had been shown in Rome and Constantinople, it was stated that hippopotami could not be transported alive to a foreign country; but the progress of civilisation

has refuted this erroneous hypothesis, and the harsh, heavy sound of its voice, since May, 1850, has been familiar to the frequenters of a London park.

According to Michael Boyn, the hippopotamus has been found in the rivers of China. Marsden has placed them in Sumatra, and others say they exist in the Indus, but these statements have never been sustained by well-authenticated facts, and the creature is now believed to be exclusively a native of Africa.

Monsieur Desmoulins describes two species,—one the *H. Capensis*, or the hippopotamus of the Cape, and the *H. Senegalensis* of the Senegal river.

How the animal obtained its name would be difficult to imagine, since a quadruped more unlike a horse could hardly exist.

When in the water, the hippopotamus can place its eyes, ears, and nose on a level with the surface, and thus see, hear, and breathe, with but little danger of being injured by a shot. It is often ferocious in this element, where it can handle itself with much ease; but on dry land it is unwieldy, and, conscious of its awkwardness, it is rather timid and sometimes cowardly.

These huge creatures are supposed to serve a good purpose by uprooting and destroying large water-plants that might otherwise obstruct the current of the stream and hinder the drainage of the surrounding country.

The hide of the hippopotamus is used by the natives for many purposes. Although soft when stripped off, it becomes so hard, when thoroughly dry, that the Africans manufacture spears and shields of it.

Many of the Cape colonists are very fond of what they call “zeekoe speek,” which is a portion of the flesh salted and preserved.

The greatest value which the hippopotamus has, in the eyes of man, is found in its teeth,—its large canine tusks being the finest ivory known, and much prized by the dentists. It keeps its colour much better, and lasts longer than any other used in the manufacture of artificial teeth.

Tusks of the hippopotamus are sometimes found sixteen inches in length, and weighing as much as a dozen pounds. Travellers have even affirmed that some have been seen measuring twenty-six inches in length; but no specimens of this size have as yet been exhibited in the museums of Europe.

The hide of a full-grown hippopotamus is thicker than that of the rhinoceros; otherwise, it very much resembles the latter. Its thickness protects the animal against the poisoned arrows and javelins of the natives. But for this, it would soon become extinct in the rivers of Africa, since, unlike most animals, there is no difficulty in approaching the hippopotamus within bow-shot distance. It can only be killed by the natives after a great deal of trouble combined with ingenuity.

The plan generally adopted is, by digging pits in places where the hippopotami are known to pass in leaving the water to feed on the herbage of the neighbouring plain. These pits have to be dug in the rainy season, when the ground is soft; for during the dry months the earth becomes so hard as to resist the poor implement used by the natives in place of a spade. The pit is concealed with much care, and as months may pass without a hippopotamus straying into the trap, it may be imagined how strong an effort of perseverance and patience is required in capturing one of these amphibious creatures.

Another method of killing them is by suspending heavy pointed beams over their paths, where they proceed from the river to the meadows adjoining. These beams are elevated thirty or forty feet high, by a line which extends across the sea-cow's track. This line is connected with a trigger, and when rudely dragged by the force of

the moving body, the beam descends upon the animal's back, burying the sharp point in its flesh.

The use of fire-arms is now becoming general among the natives of Africa; and, as the value of hippopotamus ivory well repays the trouble of procuring it, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the ungainly animal, now one of the commonest sights in the rivers of Southern Africa, will soon become one of the rarest.

Chapter Sixteen.
Hunting Hippopotami.

The hippopotamus killed by Groot Willem and Hans was a fine specimen,—a bull full-grown and with teeth and tusks large and perfect.

Measuring it with the barrel of his roer, Willem pronounced it to be sixteen feet in length; and he estimated its circumference around the body at but one foot less.

Leaving it where it had fallen, they rode to another part of the lagoon. The fine hippopotami they had seen inspired them with a cheerful prospect for the future,—as far as hunting that species of game was concerned,—but a still brighter one was in store for them.

Not half a mile from where the first was killed, they reached a small pool about four feet in depth. Seven hippopotami were wallowing within it, and others were seen grazing the low swampy ground not far-away. They had been so little molested by man that they were not afraid of feeding by daylight. Those in the pool were wholly at the mercy of the hunters; for they had not the courage to leave it; and the water was not of sufficient depth either to conceal or protect them.

For nearly half an hour the four young hunters stood by the side of the pool, loading and firing whenever a favourable opportunity presented. The seven huge creatures were then left dead or dying, and the hunters returned to their kraal.

Macora was waiting for them, having come over for the purpose of making a "morning call." As a present to the young hunters, he had brought them a milch cow, for which they were very thankful.

The cow was consigned to the keeping of Swartboy, who had strict injunctions to look well after it. "That cow is worth more to us than either of the horses," remarked Hendrik to the Bushman, "and I would not trust it to the keeping of Congo; but I know it will be safe with you."

Swartboy was delighted.

When Macora was told that they had that morning killed eight hippopotami, he became roused to a state of tremendous excitement. Two of his attendants were despatched immediately to his village, to convey the pleasing intelligence to his people, that an unlimited amount of their favourite food was waiting for them.

Having done enough for one day, the hunters reposed in the shade of their tent, until about two hours before sunset, when they were roused by the arrival of nearly three hundred people, men, women, and children, of Macora's tribe,—all anxious to be led to the bodies of the hippopotami.

Groot Willem was afraid that the disturbance made by so many people would drive every sort of game from the neighbourhood, and that they would have to move their camp. But knowing this argument would not be strong enough to convince several hundred hungry people that so large a quantity of good food should be wasted, no objection was made to conducting them to the scene of the morning's sport.

Groot Willem and Hendrik, attended by Congo, were soon in their saddles prepared for a night's shooting at the lagoon. They started off, accompanied by Macora and all his following, leaving Hans and Arend to take care of the kraal.

On reaching the place where the first hippopotamus had been killed in the morning, a flock of vultures and a pack of jackals were driven from the carcass; and several of the natives stopped to prevent these carnivora devouring any more of the animal's body, by appropriating it to themselves.

Obedying the instructions of their chief, Macora's followers had brought with them long and strong rheims,—that is, cords made of rhinoceros hide,—and, on reaching the pool in which the seven dead hippopotami were lying, Macora gave orders for the carcasses to be hauled out.

This work, under ordinary circumstances, would have been next to impossible; but taking into consideration the flatness of the ground, and the united strength of some hundred and fifty men capable of handling a rope, the thing was soon accomplished.

The task of skinning and cutting up then commenced; while the women and children kindled fires and made other preparations for a grand banquet.

Until a late hour of the night, the natives remained at work. All the flesh not required for immediate use was separated into long slips, to be dried in the sun, and thus converted into *biltongue*, while the whole of the teeth were to remain the property of those who had killed the hippopotami.

The two hunters, Groot Willem and Hendrik, on that night had not far to travel in order to obtain a sufficiency of their favourite sport.

Attracted by the odour of the slain pachyderms, lions, hyenas, and jackals came prowling about the pool, loudly expressing their disapprobation of the fact that they themselves had not been invited to partake of the feast. Notwithstanding the large number of human beings collected upon the spot, the hyenas came close up, and, with deafening roars, threatened to make an attack.

The guns of Groot Willem and Hendrik were, for a time, kept constantly cracking, and the ugly brutes at length grew more wary, betaking themselves to a safer distance.

The hunters had no desire to lose time or ammunition, in mere wanton destruction of life. They only desired to kill such game as might contribute towards remunerating them for the long journey; and they soon ceased firing at hyenas and jackals. Leaving the pool, they walked along the shore of the lagoon, towards the ground where they had seen the hippopotami during the earlier hours of the day.

Night being the usual time for those animals to feed, the youths calculated upon making an addition to the list of their prizes,—nor were they disappointed.

Half a mile from the spot where Macora and his tribe had been left feasting, was an open plain, lit by the beams of a brilliant moon. Ten or fifteen dark objects were seen moving slowly over its surface; and leaning forward in their saddles, the hunters could see that they were hippopotami. They rode gently towards them.

The animals, entirely unacquainted with the dangerous character of those who were approaching, neither stirred from the spot nor took any notice of the horsemen, until the latter were within close range of them.

"That seems to be one of the biggest of them," whispered Groot Willem, pointing to a large bull that was browsing at less than a hundred paces off. "I shall make sure of him. You, Hendrik, take another, and let us both fire together."

Willem, as he spoke, raised the heavy death-dealing roer to his shoulder. Taking aim for the centre of the head, he fired. The next moment, the monster was seen staggering backwards, drawing its shattered head along the ground.

It was not thinking of a retreat to the water,—of retiring through fear of further danger, or of anything else. It was in the agonies of death!

This manner of action was not long sustained, for after trailing about ten yards from where it was struck, it fell heavily on the earth and turned over on one side, to move no more in life.

Hendrik had fired almost at the same instant of time; but for some seconds, the creature to which his attention had been directed, made no acknowledgment of the favour. It started off, and, along with the others, made straight towards the lagoon.

For a time, Hendrik was again chagrined to think that the rival hunter had been more successful than himself. His chagrin, however, was not destined to long continuance; for on their way to the water, one of the hippopotami was observed to tumble over in its tracks.

After loading their guns, the horsemen rode up to the prostrate animal and found it struggling to rise. The bullet from Hendrik's rifle had entered its right shoulder; and another from the same gun now put a period to its struggles as well as existence.

The two hunters, not yet contented with their success, took cover under a cluster of trees; and, dismounting from their horses, lay in wait to see if the hippopotami would again oblige them by coming out upon the plain. Neither in this watch were they disappointed. Occasionally, they could hear the harsh bellowing of the animals as they came to the surface of the water, and before long, the bodies of three huge monsters were seen moving slowly towards them. Reserving fire until one came within a few yards of their position, both hunters discharged their pieces almost simultaneously.

With a cry that resembled the combined snorting of a hog and the neighing of a horse, the "zeekoe" faced back towards the lagoon; but, instead of moving off, it commenced turning slowly round and round, as a dog may be sometimes seen to do before laying himself down to repose. In a similar fashion did the hippopotamus lie down to rise no more.

Three others were shot on that same night, making fourteen hippopotami killed within twenty-four hours. This was a greater number, so Macora said, than had been killed by his own people within the two preceding years.

Chapter Seventeen.
To the Giraffe Country.

After passing some four or five weeks in hippopotamus hunting, Groot Willem became anxious to engage in the real business for which he had undertaken the hunting expedition.

They had collected more than seven hundred pounds' weight of the finest ivory, but this success did not hinder them from becoming weary of a pursuit that was no longer amusement, but business.

From several conversations held with Macora about giraffes, they had learnt that the young of those animals could not be taken alive without the greatest ingenuity and trouble.

Where camelopards are discovered they can easily be run down and shot; but to secure the young unharmed, is a different affair, and an undertaking, which, from Macora's account, promised to occupy all the time that the hunters wished to remain away from Graaf Reinet.

Groot Willem was anxious to secure the name, fame, and reward, now depending on the delivery of the two young giraffes to the Dutch

Consul. Hendrik and Arend wished to return to their sweethearts; and Hans was longing to undertake his intended voyage to Europe.

Under these circumstances, a proposal from Willem, that they should make a move, was well received by all.

When the intention and object of their leaving was made known to Macora, the chief seemed in much trouble.

"I cannot allow you to go alone," said he; "there would be danger in your journey to my native land, perhaps death. Instead of capturing camelopards alive, you might leave your bones to bleach upon the plain. You must not go alone. Though we may not procure what you are in search of, I shall be your companion, and my best warriors shall attend you. The tyrant Moselekatse may destroy us all, but I will go. Macora will not allow his friends to encounter the peril without sharing it with them. To-morrow I shall be ready with all my men."

Such was the substance of Macora's speech, as interpreted by Congo; and the young hunters, much as they respected the chief for his many acts of kindness towards them, were gratified by this new proof of his friendship.

He proposed to forsake his home and undertake an expedition of nearly two hundred miles, in which he had nothing to gain and everything to lose. This he was willing to do, out of gratitude to one whom fate had brought to his assistance through the merest accident.

Macora's offer was not rejected; and preparations for the journey were immediately commenced.

The ivory obtained from the hippopotami was stored away for safe keeping until their return.

This was about the only preparation for a departure our adventurers had to make; but such was not the case with Macora's warriors. Poisoned arrows had to be prepared, bows and shields repaired, and assegais sharpened.

On the morning of the next day after Macora had determined on the journey, he led forth from his village fifty-three of his best men; and a start was made towards the North.

Several oxen were taken along, laden with dried hippopotamus flesh, crushed maize, and other articles of food to be used on the journey. Several cows were also driven along to yield a supply of milk.

One of the pack-horses belonging to our hunters had been placed at the disposal of the chief; and on this he rode, generally keeping close by the side of Groot Willem.

Owing to the nature of the country, and the inability of the oxen for fast travelling, their progress was but slow.

They found plenty of game along the route, but none of it was pursued for the sake of amusement. Only a sufficient quantity was killed to provide the camp with fresh meat, and no time was lost in procuring it, as antelopes were constantly coming within shot of the hunters, as they moved along the line of march.

Only one incident worthy of notice occurred during the journey, in their camp of the sixth night after starting. One of the Makololo had risen to put some fresh fagots on a fire burning near him. Placing his hand upon the ground for the purpose of picking up a piece of wood, he suddenly started back, at the same time uttering a cry of terror.

Several of his companions sprang to their feet; and, for a moment, a scene of confusion ensued that baffled every attempt on the part of the young hunters to obtain an explanation of it. At length, it transpired that a snake had caused the commotion. One of about

eight feet in length was dragged up to the light of the fire and submitted to examination. It was writhing in the agonies of death. Its head had been crushed by a blow. Its colour, which was nearly black, left no doubt in the minds of the natives as to the nature of the reptile they had killed.

"Picakholu! picakholu!" exclaimed several at the same time, and their attention was immediately turned to the man who had first made its acquaintance.

He exhibited two deep scratches on the back of his right hand. On beholding them, his companions uttered a cry of commiseration, and stood gazing at the unfortunate man with an expression that seemed to say: "*You must surely die.*"

His colour soon changed to a deeper brown. Then his fingers and lips began to move spasmodically, and his eyes assumed a fixed and glassy expression.

In about ten minutes from the time he had been bitten, he seemed quite unconscious of anything but agony; and would have rolled into the fire, had he not been held back by those around him.

In less than half an hour, he was dead,—dead, while the body of the serpent with the mangled head was still writhing along the grass.

The Makololo was buried at sunrise, three hours after death; and so virulent is the poison of the picakholu that, ere the body was deposited in the grave, it was already in a state of decomposition!

Chapter Eighteen.

A Giraffe Chase.

In the evening of the twelfth day after leaving the Limpopo, they reached a small river, which Macora called the Luize. He informed the

hunters, that one day's journey down this stream would take him to the ruins of the village where he had been born and had lived until within the last two or three years, and his desire to see his native place was about to be gratified.

On one thing Macora could congratulate himself. The chief Moselekatse, by driving him from his country, had profited but little. All the Makololo cattle and other objects of plunder had been safely got away out of reach of the robber chief. None of Macora's people had remained in the land, so that there was no one to pay tribute to the conqueror; and the country had been left to the undisturbed possession of the wild beasts.

Macora's tribe were not now living in a conquered condition; nor were they now prevented from paying a visit to their former home.

The plan proposed by the Makololo chief for catching the young giraffes, was to build a *hopo* or trap, in some convenient place where a herd of giraffes might be driven into it,—the old ones killed and the young ones secured alive.

No better plan could be devised than this, and it was unanimously adopted.

A site for the *hopo* has to be chosen with some judgment, so that labour may be saved in its construction; and, satisfied that the chief would act for the best, the hunters determined on leaving to him all the arrangements regarding it.

A suitable place for the trap, Macora remembered having seen, a few miles down the river; and thither they repaired.

On the way, they passed the ruins of the deserted village, and many of the natives recognised amid the heaps of rubbish the places that had once been their homes.

Five miles farther down, they reached the place which was to be enclosed as a hopo. It was a narrow valley or pass, leading from a large forest to the river-bank,—and the variety and quantity of spoor over its surface, proved that most animals of the country daily passed through it.

The forest consisted chiefly of mimosa-trees, whose leaves are the favourite food of the giraffe. Plenty of other timber was growing near, such as would be needed in constructing the required inclosure.

Macora promised that his people should go to work on the following day; when pits should be dug and trees felled for the fence of the hopo.

Willem inquired if they had not better first make sure that giraffes were in the neighbourhood, before expending their labour in constructing the trap. This Macora declared was not necessary. He was quite certain that they would be found by the time the trap was ready for receiving them. He also advised the hunters to refrain from molesting any giraffes they might see before the inclosure should be completed, which, according to his calculation, would be in about two weeks.

The hunters now began to understand the difficulties of the task they had undertaken, and were thankful for the good fortune that had brought them the assistance of the Makololo chief. But for him and his people, it would have been idle for them to have attempted taking the giraffes alive.

Well mounted, they might ride them down and shoot as many as they pleased, but this would have been but poor sport; and even Groot Willem would, in due time, have got tired of it. It was not for this they had come so far.

Next morning, the work of making the hopo was commenced; and to inspire the young hunters with the hope that the labour would not

be in vain, Macora showed them the spoor of a drove of giraffes that had visited the river during the night.

The chief would not allow his guests to take any part in the toil, and unwilling to be idle, Groot Willem, Hendrik, and Arend determined on making an excursion down the river.

Hans remained behind, content in the pursuit of his botanical studies, joined to the amusement of killing antelopes, and other game for the use of Macora's workmen.

Swartboy remained with him.

Wishing to be as little encumbered as possible on an excursion, intended to last only for a couple of days, Willem and his companions took with them but one horse, besides those for the saddle. This was in the care of Congo, who, of course, followed his master, "Baas Willem."

Nothing could be more beautiful than the scenes passed through on the first day of their hunt. Groves of palms, and other trees, standing over flower-clad plains on which gnooks, hartebeests, and other antelopes were browsing in peace. A flock of gayly-plumaged birds seemed at home in every tree; and everything presented to their view was such as fancy might paint for a hunter's paradise. On that day, our adventurers had their first view of the lordly giraffe. Seven of those majestic creatures were seen coming from some hill that stretched across the plain.

"Don't move," exclaimed Hendrik, "and perhaps they will stray near enough for us to get a shot before we are discovered."

On came the graceful animals across the sunlit plain, like living towers throwing long shadows before them. The trees in perspective seemed lower than their crested heads. When within about two hundred yards of the hunters, the latter were discovered by them.

Turning suddenly in their tracks, the giraffes commenced a rapid retreat.

"Our horses are fresh. Let us run them down," exclaimed Willem. "In spite of what Macora has said, I must kill a giraffe!"

The three leaped into the saddles, and started in pursuit of the flying drove, leaving Congo in charge of the pack-horse.

For some time, the horsemen could not perceive that they were gaining on the camelopards trotting before them in long shambling strides. They were not losing ground, however, and this inspired them to greater speed.

When the chase had been continued for about four miles, and the horses began to show signs of exhaustion, the pace of the giraffes was also observed to have become slower. They, also, were distressed by the rate at which they had been moving.

"One of them is mine," shouted Willem, as he spurred forward in a final charge.

A huge stallion, exhibiting more signs of distress than the others, had fallen into the rear. The hunters soon came up with him; and, separating him from the herd, they fired a volley into his massive body. Their shots should have brought him down; but, instead of this, they seemed only to reinvigorate his wearied limbs, and he strode on faster than ever.

The hunters only paused long enough to reload, and then, resuming the chase, once more overtook the giraffe.

Another volley was fired, Groot Willem taking aim just behind the animal's shoulder, the others firing skyward towards its head. The giraffe stopped suddenly in its tracks, and stood tottering like a forest-tree about to fall. Its head began waving wildly, first to the

right and then to the left. A shuffle or two of its feet for a time, enabled it to maintain its equilibrium, and then it sank despairingly to the earth.

Proudly the hunters dismounted by the side of the now prostrate but once stately creature,—once a moving monument, erected in evidence of its Creator's wisdom, but now with its form recumbent upon the carpet of the plain, its legs kicking wildly in the agonies of death.

Chapter Nineteen.

The Camelopard.

There is perhaps no animal living so graceful in form, more beautiful in colour, and more stately and majestic in appearance than the camelopard, now generally known by the French appellation of giraffe. Measuring eighteen feet from the hoof of the fore leg to the crest of its crown, it stands, as an American would express it, "The tallest animal in creation." There is but a single species of the giraffe, and from the elegance and stateliness of its shape, the pleasing variety and arrangement of its colours, and the mildness of its disposition, its first appearance in Europe excited considerable interest.

Although this animal was well known to the ancient Romans, and indeed, played no inconsiderable part in the gorgeous exhibitions of that luxurious people, yet, with the ultimate overthrow of the Roman Empire, the camelopard finally disappeared from Europe, and for several centuries remained a perfect stranger to the civilised world.

It is not until towards the close of the fifteenth century, that we again hear of the giraffe's appearance,—when it is related that Lorenzo de Medici exhibited one at Florence.

The first of these animals seen in England was a gift from the Pasha of Egypt to George the Fourth. It arrived in 1828, and died during the following year.

On the 24th of May, 1836, four giraffes were exhibited in the Zoological gardens at Regent's Park. They were brought from the south-west of Kordofan, and were transported to London at an expense of 2386 pounds three shillings and one penny.

From a casual glance at the giraffe, its fore legs would appear nearly twice as long as the hind ones, but such is not the case. This difference of appearance is caused by the great depth of shoulder, compared with the hips. In proportion to the rest of its body, the camelopard has rather a small head, upheld by a neck nearly six feet in length, gently tapering towards the crown. The animal's height, reckoning from the top of the head to the hoofs of the fore feet, is about equally divided between neck, shoulders, and legs. Measured from the summit of the hips to the hoofs of the hind feet, it rarely exceeds six and a half, or seven feet.

The head of the giraffe is furnished with a pair of excrescences, usually called horns, although very unlike the horn of any other animal. They are of a porous bony texture covered with short, coarse bristles. Naturalists have, as yet, failed to determine for what purpose these osseous processes are provided. They cannot be either for offence or defence, since they are too easily displaced to afford any resistance in the case of a collision.

The eyes of the camelopard are worthy of all praise. They are of large size, even softer and more gentle than those of the far-famed gazelle, and so placed that it can see in almost every direction without turning its head.

All its senses are very acute; and being an animal of timid habit, it can only be approached by man when mounted upon a fleet horse.

The camelopard feeds on the leaves and blossoms of an umbrella-shaped tree,—a species of mimosa, called mokhala by the native Africans, and cameel-doorn (Camelthorn) by the Dutch settlers of the Cape.

As a grasper and feeler, the tongue of the giraffe is used, as the trunk of the elephants; and its great height enables it to gather the leaves of the mokhala far beyond the reach of the latter.

The camelopard's skin is exceedingly thick,—often as much as an inch and a half—and so difficult of penetration, that frequently, twenty or thirty bullets are required to bring the creature to the ground. These wounds it receives and suffers in silence; for the giraffe is dumb.

Unlike that of most other animals, its hairy coat becomes darker with age.

The colour of the female is somewhat lighter than the male, and she is also of much inferior stature.

The camelopard can only defend itself by kicking; and it uses its heels in this way more effectively than any other creature,—the horse not excepted. The prominence of its eyes enables it to see behind, when directing its heels against an enemy, and so secures its taking a certain aim; while the blow it can give will crush in the skull of a man, or leave him with a couple of broken ribs. If unmolested, it is among the most innocent of animals.

A creature so strangely shaped, and possessing so much speed and strength, was certainly designed by the Creator for some other use than browsing upon the leaves of mimosa-trees; but that use, man has not yet discovered.

Chapter Twenty.
A Race for Life.

Leaving the body of the giraffe very reluctantly, (Groot Willem having a strong desire to take it along with him,) the hunters started off in search of the river. Much to their gratification, the Luize, or another stream equally as large, was seen not far from them, and they rode along its bank for the purpose of finding a place where they might water their horses, now thirsty after the long run they had made in chase of the giraffe.

For about half a mile they found the stream inaccessible, by reason of the steepness of its banks; but a small pool was discovered a short distance from the river, and by this they halted to give their weary horses a little rest. These also needed food; and it was the intention to give them an hour or two upon the grass that grew luxuriantly around the pool. The saddles were taken off, and the horses turned out to graze upon it.

"I suppose that Cong will have sense to pack up and follow us," said Hendrik.

"Yes," answered Groot Willem, "I think we may expect to see him here within two hours."

"But are you sure that he can find us?"

"Certainly he can," replied Willem. "He knows that we are bound down the river, and the stream will guide him. If not, he has Spoor'em along with him. We should probably meet him on his way if we were to go up the river."

"But we don't want to go up at present," said Hendrik. "Our way is down."

"Then we had better stay here till he comes."

While they were thus talking, there was heard a dull, heavy sound, accompanied by a real or fancied vibration of the earth.

The trees in a neighbouring grove appeared to be shaking about,—some being upset as if a violent hurricane was sweeping down among them.

The horses took the alarm; threw up their heads, snorted, and galloped to and fro, as if uncertain which way to retreat.

Next moment, from among the moving trees, emerged a herd of elephants, each or most of them uttering trumpet-like cries as they entered upon the open plain.

The horses galloped off the ground; and the hunters, believing that their lives depended on recovering them, started in pursuit.

Almost on the instant, this purpose had to be relinquished. One of the elephants, in advance of its fellows, was charging upon them; and they would have enough to do to secure their own retreat. The others went after the horses, and all seemed to have gone mad with the exception of three or four that remained by the pool.

The situation of the hunters was now one of imminent danger. A well-directed volley might stop the charge of the elephant rushing towards them, and put the others to flight. This seemed to be the idea of all three; for each took aim at the same instant of time and fired in the same direction. The volley was delivered in vain. The elephant, with louder rear and longer strides, came thundering on, only infuriated by their attempt to check its course.

There was no time to reload; and all three retreated, with a terrible apprehension of being overtaken, and that one or two others of them should fall a victim to the gigantic pursuer. They ran towards the stream. To have gone in any other direction would have been to impale themselves upon the trunks of the other elephants, now also

coming towards them, aroused to rage by the cry of their wounded companion.

They succeeded in reaching the bank, and thought of throwing themselves into the water; when a shout from Arend counselled them to a different course.

"Follow me," cried he, and the next instant he was seen upon the trunk of a cotton-tree that had fallen across the stream.

So close was the enraged elephant by this time, that Groot Willem, who was hindmost, felt the tip of its trunk touching the calf of one of his legs, as he scrambled on to the tree.

The top of the tree was several feet lower than the bank of the river where its roots still adhered; and in descending the trunk, they had, as Hendrik said, to "climb downwards."

The branches had lodged on some rocks in the middle of the stream, which had prevented the tree from being carried away by the current that ran rapidly past the spot.

For a while, they considered themselves safe; and, although their situation would have been far from agreeable under ordinary circumstances, they experienced the indescribable emotions of happiness that are felt after a narrow escape from some great peril.

The elephant was tearing at the upturned roots of the tree, and making other impotent attempts to get at them. They were besieged, but in no danger for the time of a closer acquaintance with the besieger.

On examining their place of refuge, they saw that the rock on which the tops of the tree rested, was not more than thirty feet in circumference at the water's edge; and not half that at the top, which was about ten feet in diameter.

There was but little more than room for them to stand upon it; but, as the branches were large and long, they had plenty of room to move about, proceeding in much the same manner as monkeys would have done in a similar situation.

From the behaviour of the enemy, he seemed to have come to a perfect understanding of the position in which they were placed; and, for a minute or two, he appeared to be meditating whether he should abandon the siege, or continue it.

Meanwhile, the hunters, after resting for a few moments from their late severe exertion, commenced reloading their rifles and preparing for further hostilities.

As though aware of their intention, the elephant quietly walked away.

"He is off now," said Groot Willem, "but we had better not be in any hurry to follow him. I can endure a little more rest."

"I hope we shall not have to make a longer stay than will be agreeable," remarked Hendrik. "But we must not leave here until the whole herd has taken its departure. Unlike any we have seen before, these elephants do not seem to be the least afraid of us."

The position in which our hunters were placed was several feet below the level of the river's bank, so that they were unable to see anything of the plain above.

Arend proposed returning up the trunk of the tree and giving the enemy a parting shot, should the animal be still within range.

To this, Groot Willem and Hendrik objected. They were willing the elephant should depart, if so inclined, without further molestation from them.

A few minutes passed and Arend again proposed going up to see if their enemy was near. This was also opposed by the others.

"No, not yet," said Willem. "Let us not show ourselves on any account. He may be still watching for us, and, seeing you, may think we are impatient to get away. That would encourage him to remain. We must be as cautious as if we were dealing with a human enemy."

Half an hour passed, and then Groot Willem ascended the tree, until his head was on a level with the bank. One glance was sufficient, and, with a grave countenance, he looked back to his companions.

"It is as I thought," said he, "the brute is still there. He is watching for us. He wants revenge; and I believe that he'll have it. We shall be hungry before we get away from here."

"Where is he?" asked Hendrik.

"At the pool close by, giving himself a shower-bath; but I can see that he keeps constantly turning his eye in this direction."

"Is he alone?" inquired Arend.

"Yes; the others appear to have gone off. There is only himself by the pool. We have wounded him; but, for all that, he is able to move rapidly about; and we shall have to kill him outright before we can pass him upon the plain."

To this there was no answer, and, Groot Willem again returning to the rock, all three laid hold of their guns, and prepared to attack the enemy.

Chapter Twenty One.

A Creature hard to kill.

Groot Willem again ascended the tree, this time armed with his roer, and followed by his two companions. The elephant was still at the pool; and, to make him leave it and draw nearer, Willem showed himself on the bank. This plan did not succeed. The elephant saw him, but with reason or instinct that seemed almost human, it was evidently waiting until they should leave their retreat before again commencing hostilities.

"It's of no use my firing from here," said Willem, "I must endeavour to get nearer. Don't be in my way, for in all probability, there may be another chase."

The distance from the tree to the pool was close upon a hundred yards; and, after walking from the bank about one third of that distance, Willem came to a halt.

The elephant, coolly and philosophically, awaited his approach, apparently satisfied to let him come as near as he pleased.

The position in which the animal stood was unfavourable for Willem to make his favourite shot; but, as it would not move, he was obliged to fire at its head. The report of his gun was answered by a roar and an impetuous charge.

Willem instantly made for the tree, and secured his retreat, with the elephant but a few paces in his rear.

At the same time—and without evincing the slightest acknowledgment—the huge beast received two further shots from Hendrik and Arend.

While the guns were being reloaded, the monster again retired to the pool. There it was saluted by seven more balls without even once attempting to approach its tormentors in their place of retreat.

It now wanted but two hours to sunset, and dark heavy clouds were descried rolling up from the south-west. Thirteen shots had been expended on the elephant, and to all appearance it was still uninjured. There was a prospect of compulsory confinement before them. They might have to remain in their aqua-arboreal retirement the whole night under the pelting of a pitiless storm. Three more shots were fired, without any apparent result. The rain soon came down,—not in drops, but dishfuls.

Often as they had been exposed to heavy showers, none of them could remember witnessing anything like that. All their care was devoted to keeping the ammunition and the locks of their guns dry; and any attempts at breaking the blockade to which they were subjected, was, for a time, relinquished.

By the last light of day, Groot Willem made another reconnaissance and found the elephant still patiently waiting and watching.

A night so dark that they could not distinguish each other by sight now mantled the river, and the heavens above continued pouring forth their unabated wrath. They might now have stolen away unknown to the besieger; but they had no longer the desire to do so. Confident that the animal could not keep its feet till morning, after the rough handling it had received, they resolved upon staying till it fell, and securing its fine tusks.

Two or three hours passed, and still the rain kept falling, though not quite so heavily as at first.

"I don't like this sort of thing," said Hendrik. "Swart and Cong, in the pits, could not have been much unhappier than we are. I should

like to know if the enemy is still on guard. What do you say to our going off?"

"We mustn't think of it," counselled Arend. "Even if the elephant be gone, we cannot find our horses in such a dark night. If it be still waiting for us, we could not see it five paces off, while it might see us. We had better stay when we are till morning."

"Your advice is good, Arend," said Willem. I don't believe that we have a gun among us that could be discharged; if attacked, as we are now, we should be defenceless.

Arend's suggestion was adopted, and they resolved to remain upon the rock till morning.

During the night, the rain continued to pour, half drowning them in their exposed situation. The hours passed slowly and wearily. They began to have serious doubts of ever seeing day again; but it came at length.

Just as the first faint gleams of the aurora appeared in the east, they were startled by a sudden crashing among the branches of the tree, and the next moment, they saw the bridge by which they had reached the rock, in the act of being carried away by the current!

"Look out!" shouted Arend; "the tree is off. Keep clear of the branches, or we shall be swept along with it."

All rushed together to the summit of the rock, reaching it just in time to avoid the danger thus indicated; and, in another moment, their communication with the main land was entirely cut off.

The dawn of day found them on an islet of stone, of such limited extent that there was barely standing-room for the three. The river, swollen by the flood, lipped close up to their feet, and was threatening to rise still higher. There was the prospect—not a very pleasant one—

that they themselves might be carried off after their treacherous bridge.

The elephant was no longer a cause of the slightest anxiety. The means by which they might have placed themselves within the reach of that danger had been removed; and, like Prometheus, they were bound to a rock.

The banks on both sides were too high for them to effect a landing, even should they be able to stem the rapid current. All three could swim, and it might be possible for them to reach the shore by swimming down stream to some place where the banks were on a level with the water.

But to this method of getting out of their difficulty, there were several objections. Their guns would have to be left behind, and could not be recovered. A distant view of them lying upon the rock might be all they would ever have. To abandon their arms was a thing not to be thought of. Their hunting would be over for that expedition.

Besides, they were in a part of the river where the current was swift, turbulent, and strong. It would carry them down with irresistible force. The rapids were full of rough jagged rocks, against which their bodies might be crushed or lacerated; and the chances were that some of them might never succeed in reaching the shore in safety.

"And there is another reason why I don't like taking this water trip," said Hendrik. "I noticed yesterday, just as we came forward here, a couple of enormous alligators. In all likelihood, there are scores of them."

"Then I say, stop where we are for the present," said Arend. "Alligators are always hungry, and I don't relish to be eaten by them."

"I am not yet so hungry as to leave my roer behind me; therefore, I second your proposal," said Groot Willem.

It was carried *nemini dissentiente*. They did stay where they were, but not very patiently. The sun ascended high into the heavens. Its beams seemed to have their focus on the spot where they were standing. They never remembered having experienced a day so hot, or one on which all felt so hungry. Hendrik and Arend became nearly frantic with the heat and the hunger, though Groot Willem still preserved a remnant of calmness.

"I wonder if that elephant is watching for us yet?" said he. "If so, he is what Swartboy calls Congo,—an 'ole fool! I'm sorry we can't oblige him by paying him a visit, and rewarding him for his prolonged vigil."

Willem's attempt at being witty was intended to cheer his disconsolate companions. But it was a sad failure. Neither could reply to it even by a smile.

Chapter Twenty Two.
A Separation.

All day long did they stay on the islet of stone. They were no longer apprehensive of being swept away by the flood. They saw that it had reached its highest, but its subsidence had not yet commenced.

The sun was already in the zenith, hotter than ever, literally roasting them upon the rock. The situation was intolerable.

"Shall we have to stay here another night?" impatiently asked Hendrik.

"It looks deuced like it," answered Willem.

"And to-morrow, what shall we do then?" inquired Arend. "There may be no better chance of getting off than there is now."

"That is true," said Willem. "We must think of some way of getting out of this disagreeable prison. Can any of you think of a plan?"

"I have a proposal to make," said Hendrik. "Let one of us take to the water and look down stream for a landing-place. If he succeeds in reaching the bank in safety, he could come up again, and by swinging out one of those long climbing plants we see hanging to the trees, there would be some chance of the other two catching it. By that means we may get off."

"That's not a bad idea," rejoined Arend; "but which of us is to run the risk of the swim. For my part, I'm quite willing to incur it."

"There is certainly great danger," said Hendrik; "but there is also danger of starvation if we stay here."

"Quite true," rejoined Arend. "But for my part, I would rather feed a crocodile than die of hunger myself. So I'm willing to risk the swim. If you don't see me on the bank in three or four hours you may conclude that either the crocodiles have eaten me, or that I've been shattered among the rocks."

The others would not listen to Arend's self-sacrificing proposal; and for a time, it was debated among them, as to who should run the risk, each protesting what under other circumstances he would scarce have done,—that he was a better swimmer than either of the other two.

As each insisted on taking the peril upon himself,—and none of them would yield the point, a proposal was made to cast lots.

This was done; and Hendrik, the suggester of the plan, was the one chosen by fate to carry it into execution.

"I am glad of it," said he, after the thing had been decided. "It is but just that I should be permitted to carry out my own proposal. So here goes!"

Hastily undressing himself, he shook hands with Arend and Willem, dropped into the flood, and was away with the rapidity of an arrow.

Anxiously the others gazed after him; but in less than three minutes, he was no longer under their eyes, the rough rapid current having carried him clean out of sight.

Two hours passed, which were spent by Arend and Groot Willem in, a state of anxious suspense. Two hours more and it became terrible.

"Night is fast approaching," remarked Arend. "If Hendrik does not return before night, I shall swim after him."

"Yes, we may as well, while we have the strength to do it," answered Willem. "If you go, so will I. We shall start together. How long do you think we should wait?"

"Not much longer. Certainly within a mile, he ought to have found a place where he could land. That distance he must soon have made, at the rate he was travelling when he left us. He should return soon now, or never."

Another hour passed and still no signs of Hendrik.

"Remain you, Willem," proposed Arend, "and let me go alone."

"No," replied the great hunter; "we go together. I once thought that I should never abandon my gun as long as I lived; but it must be. We must not stay here any longer. I grow weaker every hour."

The two were taking off their boots and preparing to enter the water, when their ears were saluted by the sound of a familiar voice.

Congo was seen upon horseback on the bank of the river, just opposite the rock.

"Nebber fear, baas Willem," shouted he. "I come back by-'m-by."

As he said this, he galloped away. The loud roar of an elephant proclaiming the cause of his sudden departure.

"O heavens!" exclaimed Arend. "How much longer must we stay here?"

"Until to-morrow, I expect," answered Willem. "Congo cannot return to the camp and be back before to-morrow."

"But do you think he will go off without trying to assist us?"

"Yes. What can he do alone? Nothing. He knows that, and has gone for help. Of himself, he could not kill the elephant; and even if it was not there, he could do nothing to get us off the rock."

"The distance to the bank must be about twenty yards. Of course there is a way by which we may be got ashore; but it will require a rope. The climbing plants would do, but Congo has not noticed them. I believe that he understood at a glance the difficulties to be overcome, and has gone to the camp for assistance."

"I hope so," replied Arend, "and, if such be the case, we need not fear for ourselves. We have now only to endure the annoyance of waiting. My only anxiety is for Hendrik."

Willem made no reply, but by his silence Arend could perceive that he had but little hope of ever seeing Hendrik gain.

Slowly the sun went down and the night once more descended over the rolling river. Their anxiety would not allow them to sleep, even had they not been hindered by hunger. Of water they had a plentiful supply,—too much of it,—although this was not obtained without some difficulty, as they had to dip it up in one of their powder-flasks, emptied for the purpose.

Another morning dawned, and the sun made his appearance,—again red and fiery,—his beams becoming fiercer as he ascended the cloudless sky.

They had but a few hours more to wait until they might expect the return of the Kaffir; but would he surely come? They knew that travelling in Africa was a very uncertain business. Their present position was proof that some accident might occur to hinder him from reaching the camp.

By this time they were almost certain that some serious misfortune, perhaps death itself, had befallen Hendrik.

As if to confirm them in this belief, just then three large crocodiles were seen swimming around the rock, lingering there, as though they expected ere long to get their sharp teeth into the flesh of those who stood upon it.

The great hunter became angered at the sight. It suggested the probable fate of their companion, as it might, in time, be their own. He seized hold of his roer, and, drawing the damp charge, freshly loaded the gun. Aiming at the eye of one of the hideous monsters, he pulled trigger.

The loud report was followed by a heavy plunging in the water, and the behaviour of the crocodile gave evidence of the correctness of the hunter's aim.

After springing bodily above the surface, it fell back again, and commenced spinning around, with a velocity that threw showers of spray over those, who stood watching its death-struggles.

Its two companions retreated down the river, and, as the brothers saw them depart, the thoughts of both were dwelling upon the same subject.

Both were thinking of Hendrik! We also must go down stream, and see what has become of him.

Chapter Twenty Three.

From Bad to Worse.

On finding himself in the water as he parted from his companions, Hendrik had not much exertion to make.

A gentle motion of the limbs sustained him on the surface, and he was borne onward with a velocity that promised a speedy termination of his voyage.

Some place must soon be reached where the banks would be low enough to be ascended, and the current not too quick to hinder him from crossing to the shore. He was spirited past several rocks, one of which he only avoided with great difficulty, so swiftly did the current carry him along.

When about a mile from his companions, as he supposed himself, he saw that the banks on both sides were shelving and he tried to reach the shore.

The current was still rapid as ever, and for each foot made in the direction of the land, he was borne several yards down the channel of the stream.

The velocity with which he was moving awoke in his mind a vague sense of a danger not thought of before starting, and altogether different from those that had been taken into calculation. His voyage, so far, had been successful. He had escaped unharmed by rocks or crocodiles; but he had evidence that a danger, as much, if not more to be dreaded, now threatened him. The water seemed gliding down an inclined plane, so rapidly was it sweeping him on; and beyond this, directly before him, he could hear the roaring of a cataract! What had been at first only a conjecture, soon became a certainty. He was going at arrow-like speed towards the brow of a waterfall. Throwing all his energies into the effort, he struggled to reach the shore at a point where the bank was accessible.

He had nearly succeeded. Ten feet nearer, and he would have been able to grasp the o’erhanging bushes. But that distance, little as it was, could not be accomplished, and on he glided towards the engulfing fall.

On the brink of the water-precipice he saw the sharp point of a rock jutting about three feet above the water. More by good luck, than any guidance on his part, he came within reach of it as he was hurried onward. Reaching out, he caught hold; and hugging it with both arms, he was able to retain his hold. His body was swung around to the leeward of the rock, until his legs hung dangling over the fall. Although the force of the current was partly broken by the interposition of the rock, it required him to exert all his strength to save himself from being washed over. After a time, he succeeded in gaining a footing. There was a little ledge on the rock just large enough for one foot, while the other sought support on the pointed apex. To have attempted to swim ashore could only end in his destruction. Though almost within leaping distance of the bank, he had no place to spring from, and to have fallen short, would have been fatal. He could do nothing but remain as he was.

Hours passed, and the torture of standing in one position irksome at that, became unbearable. He could only obtain rest by getting into the water again and hugging the rock with both arms as he had done before. But this method of resting himself, if such it could be called,

could not be endured longer than two or three minutes, and he was compelled soon to return to the upright attitude.

"There is not the least danger of crocodiles here," thought he while in the water hanging on to the rock. "Should one pass this way, it would not have time for touching me, even if it were starving." All night long did he continue in this dread position.

Morning dawned, and once more he had to endure the agony of gazing on the bank within a few feet of where he stood, though as unapproachable as if miles of moving water separated him from it.

Fortune seemed determined to torture him to the last extreme.

There was no hope of his gaining the bank above, and it now occurred to him to look below. Craning out as far as he could, he made an inspection of the fall. It was about thirty feet in clear descent. Below, the water ran frothing away and soon became smooth and tranquil, as if reposing after the violent leap.

Should he allow himself to be carried over the cataract? This was the question he now commenced considering. If he could only have assured himself that there was deep water underneath, he would at once have decided to commit himself to the descent. But there was the probability that he might be precipitated upon jagged rocks, and of course killed by the fall. Besides, he saw that the banks below were steep on both sides, and he might have to swim for a long distance before being able to land. After a descent of thirty feet he might be incapable of continuing above the surface of the water. At all events, he would be in no condition for a long swim.

After long and earnestly debating the question in his own mind he gave up the thought of making the too perilous attempt.

Notwithstanding the agony arising from his own position, he was not free from concern for his comrades left upon the rock.

Willem and Arend would in all likelihood come after him, if they had not already done so. One or the other, or both, might have left the rock and been carried over the cataract in the night, unseen by him during the darkness.

As the time passed on, his sufferings approached the point of despair. They at length became so great that once or twice was he tempted to put a termination to them by giving his body to the cataract, and his soul to Him who had bestowed it. But this demon of temptation was driven out of his mind by a mental vision of angelic loveliness.

The remembrance of Wilhelmina Van Wyk came before him like some fair angel, commanding him to hope and wait. He obeyed the command.

Chapter Twenty Four.
Reunion.

Time was passing. They upon the islet rock were getting very impatient for the return of Congo. They were certain that he would bring assistance with as little delay as possible, but most of his journey would have to be made in the night,—a dangerous time for travelling.

He had now been gone long enough to reach the camp and return. "Sister Ann" on the watch-tower of Bluebeard's castle could not have gazed more earnestly than did they for his reappearance upon the bank above them. Their anxious vigil was at length rewarded. Near the hour of noon their ears were greeted by shouts, and shortly after they saw Hans, Congo, and Macora standing on the bank above them. The chief was accompanied by about a score of his followers, carrying long ropes by the direction of Congo.

"Where is Hendrik?" was the first question of Hans, asked in a trembling voice.

"We cannot tell," was the reply. "He swam down the river in the hope of being able to make the bank below. We have great fear that some misfortune has befallen him."

While the three yägers continued the solemn conversation, Macora took a number of his people a short distance up the river.

Near the bank was found the prostrate trunk of a tree about fifty feet in length. It had long been down; and was quite dead and dry. After making the lines fast to one end of it, it was pushed into the stream and directed in such a manner as to drift down to the rock on which the two youths were standing. The other end of the rope was firmly grasped by several of Macora's men.

Swiftly the log, carried by the current, came in contact with the rock; when the men, keeping the rope on a taut stretch, prevented it from going farther.

With the nimbleness of a couple of cats, Willem and Arend sprang on to it, and, setting themselves astride, were hauled to the bank, where both were at length safely landed.

The first thing they saw, was the body of the elephant at which they had fired so many shots. The animal had at length succumbed, sinking into its eternal sleep in spite of its implacable anger.

As the hunters were no longer in any anxiety for themselves, their apprehensions became all the more keen for the fate of their missing friend. Although suffering greatly from fatigue as well as the want of food, Willem and Arend would not stay even to eat, till a search had been made for him.

There is no sentiment of the human mind, unless it is self esteem, that is capable of resting on so unstable a foundation as hope. Hendrik had now been absent more than twenty-four hours. The

chances were a hundred to one against their ever seeing him again, either dead or alive; and yet they had hope.

Provided with food to eat along the way, they started down the river,—many of the Makololo *very* unwillingly. They had just performed a journey of near thirty miles in only a few hours' time, and of course they were weary.

But this was not the only reason why their exertions were prolonged with some reluctance. They had been told of the manner in which Hendrik had left his companions; and, guided by reason,—instead of a strong feeling of friendship,—unlike Hans, Willem, and Arend, they had no hope of seeing him again. For, from their acquaintance with the country, they knew of the cataract; and were confident that he must have been carried over the falls; thence a shattered, inanimate mass rolling onward to ocean.

When little more than a mile down stream, Groot Willem discharged his gun. The report echoed in afar along the banks. Every one paused and stood listening to hear if there should be any response.

It came.

Faintly and from afar they could distinguish the sounds of a human voice. Uttering a shout of joy, the three hunters rushed forward, and soon after, when Hans shouted "Hendrik," they heard from the river the words, "Here, this way."

A minute more, and they were standing within a few feet of the object of their search, and had a full comprehension of what had hindered him from returning to the succour of his companions.

As the Makololo had come out well provided with comestibles, the hungry hunters were fed to their full satisfaction and then all went back to the place where the elephant had breathed its last. There

forming their camp, they kindled fires, and made ready to pass the night,—the followers of Macora feasting upon one of their favourite dishes,—baked elephant's foot.

Congo had still his tale to tell. When deserted by the others in their pursuit of the giraffes, he had waited two or three hours, expecting them to return. He then started off along their spoor, but being hampered by caring for the pack-horse, he progressed but slowly.

Night overtook him by the body of the dead giraffe. Unable through the darkness to follow the trail any farther, he remained by the carcass till morning.

By that time, the heavy rain had obliterated the spoor so completely that even Spoor'em, the hound, could only follow it with great difficulty. After a time, Congo saw that the horse-tracks separated, going in different directions. He followed one set of them for some time till the horse himself was found, but without saddle, bridle, or rider.

This was Willem's horse, that had taken flight on the approach of the elephants.

Congo had gone the wrong way for finding his master, and he now returned upon the horse's tracks. This, of course, brought him to the place where the elephant had first charged; and, on reaching the bank of the river and looking over, he saw the situation in which the hunters were placed. But the wounded elephant was there, and this, charging upon him, hindered him from continuing the observation. He had seen enough to know that he must go to the camp for assistance, and this was just what he did.

They passed the night by the pool, pleasantly enough. The joy of once more being together would have deprived them of sleep, had it not been for their extreme weariness. But Hans and the chief, seeing the other three so exhausted, did not insist on hearing the details of

the dangerous adventure; and at an early hour the camp was buried in the silence of slumber.

Two horses had been lost. This, under the circumstances, was a serious misfortune; but their own lives had been miraculously preserved; and none of them was now disposed to find fault with fortune for anything that had occurred.

Next morning, they started back to the place where the giraffe-trap was being constructed. On reaching it, they found Swartboy impatiently waiting for their return. His expressions of joy at seeing them once more safe and sound were accompanied with the declaration that they had been more fortunate than he had expected, considering that they had gone forth with only Congo for their guide.

Chapter Twenty Five.

Mistakes of a Night.

As nearly two weeks would be required for constructing the hopo, Groot Willem determined on making another hunting expedition. There was plenty of game in the immediate neighbourhood; but the chief strongly protested against the firing of guns, lest the sounds should betray their presence in the place.

Several giraffes had been seen in the mimosa groves, and the banks of the river were marked with their spoor.

Macora objected to their being alarmed, as it would drive them away before the pen could be got ready for them.

Groot Willem was a hunter, and out on a hunting expedition. This being the case, he could not remain for two weeks idle; and taking Hendrik and Congo along with him, he left the camp to visit a river, which, according to the chief's account, lay about thirty miles to the north-west. They expected to reach it in one day, and could have

done so, but for a large drove of elands, which was encountered upon the way, and the pursuit of which delayed them.

They encamped that night, as they supposed, about five miles from the river, and the next morning continued on, to reach it. A ride of between ten and fifteen miles was made, but no river was arrived at.

Early in the afternoon, they came upon a tiny rivulet running out of a pool, or *vley*. Supposing it to be a tributary of the river they were in search of, they concluded that by following it down, they should reach the main stream. This, however, they were in no haste to do, since the country around the pool appeared to be the best sort of hunting-ground. The fresh tracks of many varieties of animals could be seen in the mud; and Willem proposed that they should stay over night and lie in wait by the *vley*.

To this Hendrik agreed; and the horses were tethered out to graze.

A suitable place for a pit was chosen twenty paces from the pool, and, in less than an hour, two excavations were made, in which the hunters might conveniently conceal themselves.

Early in the evening, leaving Congo at some distance off, under the protection of a large fire, they repaired to the pits, and there commenced their silent vigil.

The first animals that made their appearance were antelopes of a small species; and, as the hunters were not in want of food, no attempt was made to hinder the little creatures from having their drink and retiring.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the herd, which ended in a rush from the pool. A leopard had pounced on one of them, and, as the others left the ground, the leopard was seen shouldering its victim

with the intention to carry it off. As it turned side towards them, Willem fired, and the large heavy bullet from the roer went crashing through the creature's ribs.

With a loud roar it sprang upwards; then, standing on its hind feet, it walked forward a few paces and fell. The shot had been discharged at random through the dim light, but a better could not have been made with the most deliberate aim, and in the light of day.

After this, the pool was visited by hyenas, jackals, and various other creatures not worth the powder that would be required in killing them.

Some time elapsed, during which the hunters had nothing else to interest them than listening to the snarls, laughter, and growling of the carrion-eaters assembled around the pool.

"I can't say there's much sport in this," muttered Hendrik, discontentedly. "I've hard work in keeping awake."

Another hour passed without their seeing any game worthy of their attention, when Willem, too, became weary of inaction.

They were thinking of vacating the pits and joining Congo by the camp-fire, when something heavier than hyenas was heard approaching the spot. With only their eyes above the surface of the ground, they gazed eagerly in the direction from which proceeded the sound. Two large animals appeared through the darkness, evidently approaching the vley.

"Quaggas!" whispered Willem, as he strained his eyes to assure himself of their species.

"Yes," answered Hendrik. "Let us knock them over. They're not much good, but it will serve to wake us up."

Doubtful whether a shot at anything better might be had that night, Groot Willem was nothing loath, and was the first to fire. The animal at which he had aimed fell forward, and they heard a heavy plunging, as it rolled over into the pool.

Its companion was about turning to make off when Hendrik fired. There was no apparent interruption to its flight, and Hendrik was under the impression that his shot had missed. He was soon undeceived, however, by hearing the animal fall to the earth with a dull heavy sound, at the same time uttering a groan, which did not seem unfamiliar, and yet was not the cry of a quagga.

Without saying a word, both leaped out of the pits, and hastened towards the fallen animals, with a strong presentiment that there was something amiss.

The animal brought down by Hendrik was first reached.

It was not a quagga, but a horse!

"A horse!" exclaimed Willem as he stooped over the carcass to examine it. "It is not mine, thank God, nor yours neither."

"That is rather a selfish remark of yours, Willem," said Hendrik. "The horse belongs to some one. I can see a saddle-mark on its back."

"May be," muttered Willem, who thought nearly as much of his steed as his great roer. "For all that I'm glad it isn't mine."

They then proceeded to the vley, where the other horse was still struggling in the shallow water. As it was evidently unable to get to its feet, and wounded to the death, another shot was fired to release it from its misery.

Wondering to whom the two horses could belong, they returned to the camp-fire; both under the impression that they had destroyed enough of animal life for that night.

Early the next morning they left the pool, and, continuing down stream, within two hours reached the river they had been so long in search of. Here they determined to stop until the next day, and their horses were again tethered out; and, as they were somewhat wearied, they lay down to take repose under the shade of a mokhala tree. From this they were startled by the loud barking of Spoor'em and the calls of Congo.

Springing to their feet they found themselves surrounded by a party of about forty Africans, some armed with spears, while others carried bows and arrows.

From the hostile attitude of the new-comers the hunters saw that they meant mischief; and, seizing their guns, they determined to defend themselves to the last.

Chapter Twenty Six.

Captured.

Pushing in front of Groot Willem, Congo entreated him not to make resistance; and so strong seemed his desire that they should surrender without making an effort to maintain their freedom, that he caught hold of the gun which Hendrik had already brought to his shoulder.

"Poison! arrows and spears all poison!" shouted the Kaffir, who appeared well-nigh scared out of his senses.

Both Willem and Hendrik had heard, seen, and read enough of the African tribes who use poisoned spears and darts, to feel something of Congo's alarm.

They were not cowards, but they saw before them several men carrying weapons more deadly at short distance than their own fire-arms. Only one drop of blood had to be drawn by the point of one of their javelins, to cause certain death accompanied by horrible agonies!

They could not expect to conquer thirty or forty men, without receiving a scratch or two in the encounter; and knowing this, they took Congo's advice and surrendered.

When the Kaffir saw that the capture of himself and his masters had been effected without a battle, he recovered his self-possession, and demanded of the natives the cause of their strange conduct.

An individual then stepped forward who appeared to have some influence over the others; and by his eloquence Congo became a little wiser, and a great deal more alarmed.

The African spoke in a language which only the Kaffir understood. He stated that he had lost two horses,—both of which had been killed at a vley where they had gone to drink. Although grieved at the loss of his horses, both which he had received as presents, he was quite happy in having discovered the party whom he believed to have wilfully destroyed his property.

The hunters directed Congo to inform him that the horse had been shot by mistake,—that they very much regretted the circumstance; and were quite ready and willing to make ample compensation for the damage he had sustained.

This the black chief declared was all he required, and the hunters were invited to accompany him to his village, where they could talk over the terms of compensation.

All started up the river, but the behaviour and methodical division of their escort convinced the hunters that they were considered as captives.

"This is very unfortunate," said Hendrik. "We shall have to part with something we can ill spare. They will not be satisfied with trifles, and perhaps will want our horses in exchange for those killed."

"They shall not have them then," rejoined Willem, with an air of determination, forgetting at the moment that he was a prisoner, and the horses already in possession of their captors.

About a mile from the place where the Africans had come upon them, they reached a small collection of huts, from which issued a large number of women and children. It was evidently the kraal of their captors.

The leader of the party lost no time in proceeding to business. He was anxious to have his claim settled; so also were Groot Willem and Hendrik. Congo was again called to act as interpreter.

The black chief desired him to inform his masters, that the horses he had lost were of immense value. They had been given to him by an esteemed friend, a Portuguese slave-merchant; and he declared that, in his opinion, they were the best horses in the world. No others could replace them.

"Very well," said Groot Willem, when this communication had been made; "ask him what he expects us to pay."

"All this ceremony is not for nothing," remarked Hendrik, while Congo was again talking to the chief. "We shall have some trouble in getting off from this fellow unless we surrender everything we've got."

"He mustn't be too greedy," replied Willem, "or he will get nothing at all. We have performed a silly action, and expect to pay for it."

"Those are brave words," answered Hendrik, "but I don't think we have power to act up to them. It will be they who will dictate terms; and what can we do?"

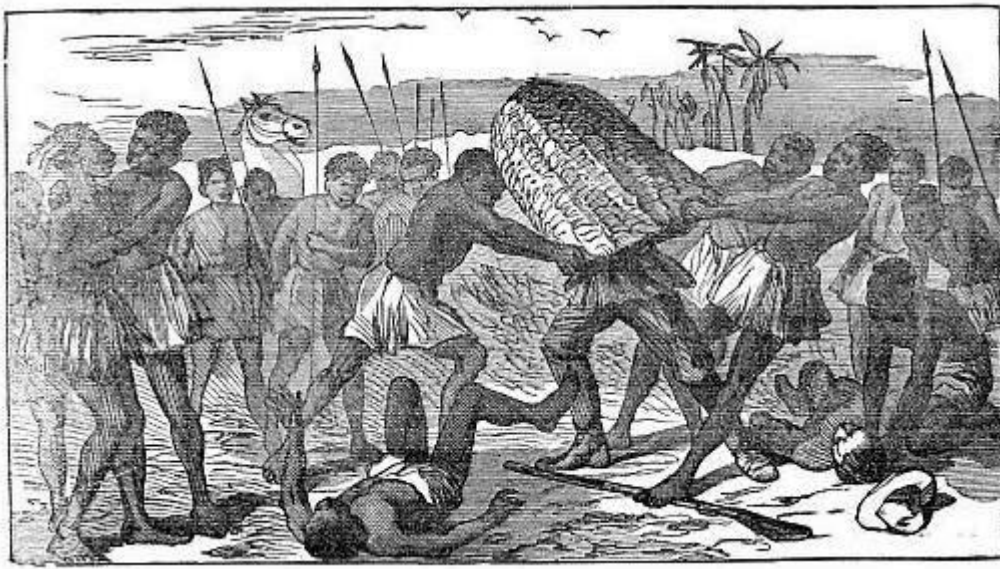
The chief, before making known his conditions, desired it to be understood that, a mistake having been committed, on that account he would not be hard upon them. He would not punish them for what they had done, more than to require compensation for his loss, which he at the same time gave them to understand was wholly irreparable.

From the appearance of the horses they had killed, the hunters believed that the animals had been left behind by some slave-trader, too merciful to take them any farther. They had evidently been used up by a long journey, and the chief had probably been thanked by their former owner for allowing them to die a natural death in his dominions.

The amount of damage was at length declared by the plaintiff, who was at the same time acting as judge.

"Tell them," said he to the interpreter, "that all I require, by way of compensation, will be their own horses along with their guns and ammunition."

"What!" exclaimed Groot Willem, jumping to his feet



in rage,
"Give them my horse and roer? No, not for all the horses in Africa."

Hendrik was no less surprised and enraged at the attempt to extort from them; and, seeing the folly of continuing the parley any longer, the youths, without saying a word, walked off towards their horses, intending to mount and ride off.

This intention was opposed by the chief and others of the tribe, when an affray ensued, in which Groot Willem measured his strength against half a score of the natives. In their attempt to take his gun from him, several were hurled to the earth, and amongst them the chief himself. He did not desire to discharge the piece. A shot could only have killed one, while his enemies were legion.

Whether they would have conquered him without taking his life, or not, was doubtful, had not one of the Africans, more cunning than his fellows, adopted an ingenious expedient to terminate the struggle. Seizing a large cone-shaped basket, used for catching fish, he ran behind the young hunter and clapped it, extinguisher-like, over his head. The basket was immediately laid hold of by two or three others; by whom the giant was dragged to the earth and held there until they had bound him with thongs of zebra hide.

Before this feat had been accomplished Hendrik had received a blow from one of the natives that prevented him from making any resistance; and he too was trussed up for safe keeping.

Congo had not interfered in the outrage on his masters, but on the contrary he seemed rather pleased at the turn events had taken. This, however, did not prevent the Africans from tying him like the others.

The rage of Hendrik, on awaking from a brief period of stupor and finding himself fast bound, would be difficult to describe. There can be no greater agony to a brave and sensitive man than to find himself helpless for revenge after having undergone a deep humiliation.

Groot Willem, no less brave but of a different temperament, was more resigned to the indignity they were enduring. His anger had been aroused by the attempt to take from him a thing he greatly prized,—his gun. He had been defeated in trying to retain it; but now that it was gone, and along with it his liberty, he determined to exert some degree of philosophy and patiently wait for what should happen next.

Congo, who had appeared indifferent to seeing his masters bound,—in fact rather pleased at it,—now looked sad enough while submitting to similar treatment. His fellow-captives could have no sympathy, since his behaviour had not failed to beget suspicions of his ingratitude.

Chapter Twenty Seven.

In Thongs.

The prisoners were compelled to remain inactive spectators of a division of their property, most of which was appropriated by the chief himself, as a sort of compensation for the loss of his horses, and the damage his own person had sustained in the capturing of one of his

prisoners. For, before securing Groot Willem, he had been sent to the earth under a blow from that sturdy hunter's roer.

Beyond this present humiliation, the hunters had placed themselves under another and more serious obligation,—that of satisfying a desire for revenge.

"It is no use, baas Willem," said the Kaffir, who had managed to get close beside his master. "We'll be killed for showing fight."

Congo next expressed his opinion that, had no resistance been offered to the chief, an opportunity might have been afforded them for returning to Macora. He was quite positive now that no chance for this would be allowed, not even to himself, who had only been pretending to be a traitor for the sake of gaining favour, and thus being enabled to assist them, his young masters.

"Do you think they really intend to kill us, Congo?" asked Willem.

"Yaas, baas. Sure they intend it," answered the Kaffir. "They 'fraid now to let us go."

"But, if they intend killing us, why do they not do so at once?" inquired Hendrik.

Congo explained, that their captors belonged to a wandering tribe of Zooloo Kaffirs, a warlike people, who had but little respect for white men. They were of a race that demanded tribute of the Portuguese at the north, and obtained it; and he was sure that they would never forgive the insult of their chief being knocked down in the presence of his subjects. That, alone, would lead to their being killed.

His explanation of the reason why they were not killed immediately showed him to be so well acquainted with the manners and customs of the people into whose hands they had fallen, that,

after its relation, Willem and Hendrik could no longer doubt the truth of his assertions.

He said that white men were never put to death within sight of the kraal, lest the affair might be talked of by the women and children in the presence of other white men who might pass through the country. Although all might be well aware of their fate, but few would witness their execution. They would be led away some night, two or three miles from the village and then put to death. Their executioners would return to the kraal with the story that they had been sent back to their own country.

The chief, Congo believed, was not yet ready to witness their execution, being too well pleased with his late acquired property to think of any other business for the present.

Willem and Hendrik, after all that had been told them, were not prepared to give up every hope. Some chance to escape might offer, though it should be with bare life; for they could not expect to take with them their horses and guns.

As evening came on, the watch over the prisoners seemed less strictly kept than during the earlier hours of the day. But in vain they strove to rend the thongs that bound them, or slip from their embrace. They had been too securely tied, most likely by one whose experience, alas! had been but too well perfected in the enslavement of his own unhappy countrymen.

During the evening, an individual was observed approaching. Stepping up to where Groot Willem was bound, he commenced an earnest scrutiny of his features.

Willem fancied that the man had a familiar look, and, examining him attentively, he recognised no less a personage than the banished Sindo, the individual whom he had saved from the wrath of Macora. Here was a sudden transition from despair to hope. Surely the would-

be chief could not be ungrateful! Perhaps he would intercede in their behalf! This was but his duty.

Willem strove to make him understand that he was recognised, hoping the knowledge of that would stimulate him to exert himself on their behalf. The attempt wholly failed. With a scornful expression upon his features, the man moved away.

"That's Sindo," muttered Willem to his fellow-prisoners. "He appears at home among them. Will he not assist us?"

"Yaas, that is Sindo," said Congo, "but he no help you."

"Why do you think so, Cong?"

"He no big enough fool do dat."

This might be true. Sindo had once got into trouble through treason, and had narrowly escaped death. He would be a fool to incur such a danger again, in the new home he had found for himself.

This was the construction Groot Willem was inclined to put on the African's conduct. Sindo was acting ungratefully. He had not shown the slightest sympathy for those who had befriended him in his hour of adversity. On the contrary, he had cut their acquaintance in the most unceremonious manner.

All night long they lay in their thongs. Morning came and still they were not set free.

"What does this treatment mean?" asked Hendrik. "What do they intend doing with us?"

"I am beginning to have fears that Congo is right," answered Willem. "They do mean harm. They have robbed and kept us tied up all night. Those acts look suspicious."

"But dare they deprive us of life?" asked the ex-cornet. "We are white men, and of a race who avenge each other's wrongs. Will they not be afraid of the consequences of proceeding to extremities?"

"So I once would have thought," replied Willem, "but from the way we are now treated, I believe they fear nothing."

"I tell you, baas Willem," joined in Congo, "the chief here got too much fear."

"Indeed! He has a peculiar way of showing it."

"I mean, he's 'fraid to let us go. We'll have to die, baas Willem."

The Kaffir uttered these words with a resigned expression of countenance, that proclaimed him inspired by a firm conviction of their truth.

"Must this be, Hendrik?" said Willem, turning to his companion. "It hardly seems possible. Tell me, am I dreaming?"

"I can answer for myself," replied Hendrik, "for I was never more awake. The rheims around my wrists are nearly cutting off my hands. I shall die if I have to remain tied up much longer. But dare these people put us to death?"

For a time, the captives remained silent. They were reflecting upon the many atrocities which they had heard to have been committed by Zooloo Kaffirs on the white settlers of the Cape country,—deeds of unprovoked violence performed much nearer the reach of retribution than these now were. The savages into whose hands they had fallen were protected by distance from any chance of

being chastised from the south; and they had no respect for the cowardly Portuguese of the north.

This was not all. The hunters had first done them an injury, and then refused what had been demanded for compensation. In that resistance, a chief had been outraged by a blow. Moreover, there was property which the natives dearly prized; and the safest way to secure it would be to render their captives incapable of ever afterwards claiming it, or seeking redress for the spoliation.

The whole case wore a black look. Our adventurers began really to believe that Congo was telling the truth, when he said, they *would have to die!*

Chapter Twenty Eight.

Led out to die.

Another day passed over, and no change was made in the treatment of the prisoners. In fact very little notice was taken of them, except by the women and children. The chief with some others of the tribe spent the day amusing themselves by firing the captured guns at a target, and learning the use of the various articles they had taken from their captives.

"What are they waiting for?" exclaimed Hendrik in an impatient tone. "If they are going to put us to death, it would be almost better for us than to endure this misery."

"True," rejoined Willem; "life is not worth much, suffering as we do; still, where there's uncertainty, there is hope. Think of that, Hendrik. We have seen nothing of Sindo to-day. How carefully the ungrateful wretch keeps out of our sight!"

"If we were not in need of a friend," said Hendrik, "I dare say he would acknowledge our acquaintance. But never mind. He's the last

that will ever prove ungrateful, since we're not likely ever again to have an opportunity of befriending any one in distress."

Night came on, and amongst the tribe the captives observed an unusual excitement. Several of the men were hurrying to and fro carrying torches and evidently making preparations for some great event. The horses were also being saddled.

"I tole you so," said Congo. "They take us away to die."

Willem and Hendrik remained silent spectators of what was going on. A party of the natives then approached them, and the three prisoners were set loose from the trees. Some scene, solemn and serious, was about to be enacted; but worn out with their misery, and weary of their long imprisonment, almost any change appeared a relief.

The chief of the tribe was now seen mounted on Willem's horse, heading a procession of from ten to twelve men. He rode off towards the pool, where his horses had been killed. The prisoners were conducted after him. Spoor'em and the other dogs accompanied the party, wholly unconscious of the fears that troubled their masters. As the procession passed out of the village, the old men, women, and children were ranged along the road, to see them depart. These gazed after them with expressions of curiosity, not unmingled with pity, though there were some that appeared to show satisfaction. The captives observed this, and talked of it. Why did they, the villagers, feel so much interested in their departure? They had not taken much heed of their arrival; and but little attention had been paid to them while bound to the trees. Why should there be now? There was but one answer to these questions. The natives were looking upon them with that expression of sad curiosity with which men gaze upon one who is about to suffer a violent death.

The chief was carrying Willem's roer, and from his behaviour he seemed preparing for an opportunity to use it. At intervals he brought it to his shoulder and glanced along the barrel.

"Ask them where we are being taken, Congo," said Hendrik.

The Kaffir spoke to one of the natives who was near him, but only received a grunt in reply.

"He don't know where we go," said Congo, interpreting the gruff answer to his question, "but I know."

"Where?"

"We go to die."

"Congo!" exclaimed Willem, "ask after Sindo. He may do something to save us, or he may not. There can be no harm in trying. If not, we may get him into some trouble for his ingratitude. I should feel a satisfaction in that."

In compliance with his master's command, Congo inquired for Sindo. The chief heard the inquiry and immediately ordered a halt, and put several questions to his followers.

"The chief just like you, baas Willem," said Congo. "He too want know where Sindo am."

The procession was delayed while the parley was going on. After it had ended, the chief and another rode back to the village;—they were now about half a mile distant from it. The prisoners, with their guards remained upon the spot. The chief was absent nearly an hour, when he returned seemingly in a great rage. By his angry talking, every one was made aware of the fact. Congo listened attentively to what he said.

"He's talking about Sindo," said the Kaffir. "He swear he kill dat nigga to-morrow."

"I hope he'll keep his oath," said Willem. "I suppose we have succeeded in awaking his suspicions against the wretch he was harbouring; and he will be punished for his ingratitude. He should have tried to save us,—even at the risk of having again to make change of his tribe."

The march was again resumed, the chief leading the way with two of his subjects, one on each side of him carrying torches.

After proceeding a little farther the prisoners recognised the spot where they had been made prisoners. The chief then delivered an harangue to his followers, which Congo interpreted to his fellow-captives. The bearing of it was, that the white strangers had wilfully and maliciously killed two of his horses,—the finest animals in the world. They had refused to make such reparation as lay in their power; and, when he had attempted to recompense himself for their loss, he had been resisted, knocked down, and severely injured in the presence of his own people. He stated, furthermore, that it was the unanimous opinion of the oldest and wisest of his subjects, that for these crimes the prisoners ought to be punished,—that the punishment should be death; and that he had brought them to the spot where the first offence had been committed as a proper spot for executing this just decree.

After Congo had translated the speech to his fellow-captives, they directed him to inform the chief that he was welcome to the horses, guns, and other property, if he would let them depart, and they would promise never to return to his country or trouble him any more. Moreover, they would send him a present, by way of ransom for their liberty and lives.

In answer to this communication they were told, that, as they were white men, their words could not be relied upon. Instead of presents, they would be more likely to seek some revenge; and that, to guard against this, he was determined they should die.

Against this decision they were not allowed to make any appeal. From that moment no attention was paid to anything they said. Their guards only shouted, when Congo attempted to put in a word; while those who were around the chief began to make preparations for carrying out the dread sentence of death.

Chapter Twenty Nine.

Just in Time.

It was soon known to the captives, what mode of death was to be adopted for them. The gestures of the chief made it manifest, that he was about to make trial of his new weapon,—Willem's roer.

One reason why his prisoners had been spared so long may have been for the purpose of learning how to use the weapon with effect, on an occasion so important as the execution of two white men.

The rheims that bound Hendrik's wrists had been tied much tighter than was necessary. The green hide had shrunk in the burning sun to which the prisoners had been exposed during the day. In consequence, his hands were lacerated and swollen, and he was suffering more torture than either of the others.

This was not all the agony he was enduring. The fate Congo at first only conjectured had now assumed a horrible certainty. Death seemed inevitable; and Hendrik's active mind, susceptible of strong emotions, became painfully anxious at the approach of death. He feared it. Nor did that fear arise from an ignoble cause. It was simply the love of life, and the desire to cling to it.

He who loves not life is unworthy of its blessings; for those who hold them cheap, and would part with them willingly, have either not the sense to appreciate, or are so evil as only to know life's bitterness.

Hendrik had a strong desire to live,—to enjoy future days;—and, as he looked upon the preparations being made to deprive him of it, he felt an unutterable anguish. Of all his regrets at parting with the world, there was one supreme,—one thought that was uppermost. That thought was given to Wilhelmina Van Wyk. He should never see her again! His love of her was stronger than his love of life.

“Willem,” he exclaimed, “must this be? Shall we die here? I will not,—I cannot!”

As he spoke, the whole strength of his soul and body was concentrated into one effort for regaining his liberty. He struggled to release his wrists from the rheims. The effort was not without a result. It sent the drops of blood dripping from the ends of his fingers.

Groot Willem was not unmoved in these dire moments. He too had his unwillingness to die,—his chapter of regrets. One, that he should never again see his relatives; another, that the object for which he had undertaken the expedition could never be accomplished.

The faithful Kaffir was not rendered insensible by knowing that death was awaiting him, and now near at hand.

“Baas Willem,” he said, looking pityingly upon his young master, “you be going to die. I bless that God your father and mother has told me about. I never more go back to Graaf Reinet, to see them cry for you.”

The arrangements for the execution were by this time completed; but the cruel chief was not allowed to try his skill in the manner he had designed.

Just as he was about to raise the roer to his shoulder and take aim at one of the condemned captives, a large party of dark-skinned men made their appearance upon the spot.

In the scene of confusion caused by their arrival, the would-be murderers knew not whether they were friends or foes, until they heard a war-cry that was strange to their ears, and saw themselves surrounded by a body of stalwart warriors armed with bows, spears, and guns,—at least two guns were seen, carried by two white men, whom the captives joyfully recognised. It was Hans and Arend. Their companions were Macora and his Makololo.

The reprieve was effected in an instant, and along with it the release of the prisoners.

There was no occasion for the shedding of blood, for there was no resistance made on the part of the intended executioners. Their captives were at once delivered up along with their guns, horses, and other property,—the principal part of which was restored before any explanation could be given.

And now again was Groot Willem called upon to obey the dictates of a humane heart, and intercede with Macora to obtain mercy for others. But for him, the Makololo chief would have put to death every Zooloo upon the ground, and then proceeded to their village to seek further retaliation.

They all united in restraining him from violence; and the baffled murderers were permitted to take their departure without the least outrage being inflicted upon them.

"Your arrival was very fortunate," said Hendrik, addressing Hans and Arend. "Just in the nick of time; but to me it is very mysterious. How came you and your friends here to know of our dilemma?"

"There's no great mystery about it," answered Hans. "When we were told this morning that you were captured and in danger of being killed, of course we started immediately, and have been travelling all day in hot haste to your rescue."

"But how was it possible for you to learn that we were in trouble?"

"From Sindo, the man Macora was going to kill for his ambition."

Sindo, then, had not been ungrateful; he had walked, or rather run, all night, to give warning of the danger threatening those to whom he owed his life. Having no influence among their captors, he knew that the only plan for serving the captives was to give notice to those who had power to assist them. This act of gratitude he had successfully accomplished.

There is many a slip between the cup and the lip. The adage was in their case illustrated. But for the mention of Sindo's name, as the captives were being conducted to the place of execution, awakening in the Zooloo's mind a suspicion of treachery, the rescuers would have arrived too late. The delay caused by the inquiry after Sindo, at the village, was that which had caused the cup to slip.

The released captives now inquired for Sindo, wishing to embrace him.

He was not upon the ground. Completely exhausted with his long run, he had not been able to return with the deliverers, but had remained at the camp, where the hopo was being constructed.

No time was lost in staying by a spot fraught with so many unpleasant memories; and by the dawn of day our adventurers and their African friends were well on the way towards their encampment.

On reaching it they found Swartboy in a state of strange mental confusion, through joy at their return, and anger at Congo, for having allowed those under his care to get into such terrible trouble.

The service that Sindo had rendered his white friends fully re-established him in the favour of Macora, and he was invited to make

his home again among his own people,—an invitation that was eagerly accepted.

Chapter Thirty.
The Hopo.

Groot Willem was, for the time, cured of the desire to seek further adventures in the chase. He had come to the place for the express purpose of procuring two young giraffes, and taking them safely to the Dutch consul. The experience of the last few days had shown him that his object would not be better accomplished by thus exposing himself to the chances of dying some horrible death. Guided by this dearly-bought belief he was contented to amuse himself by joining the Makololo in the construction of the trap. In this work he was assisted by the other three, all of whom were now thinking more of home than of giraffes, or anything else.

The trap was to consist of two high fences converging upon each other, so as to form a figure somewhat in shape like the letter V. They were to be about a mile and a half long; and at the point of convergence a space was to be left open, wide enough to permit of the largest animal to pass through. Beyond the angle, or where it should have been, had the fences met, was dug a pit about forty feet long, fifteen wide, and eight deep. Heavy trunks of trees were laid along its edges, slightly projecting over them. The intention was, that any animal driven through would be precipitated into the pit from which escape would be impossible. Near it the fences were made of great strength and height, to resist any attempt at leaping over them, or pressing them down.

The pit was covered with reeds and rushes; and no means were neglected to make the hopo as effective as possible for the purpose required of it.

Working with a will,—both white hunters and black Makololo,—the hopo was soon pronounced complete, and ready to receive the game;

and the next day was appointed to carry out the objects of its construction. A mimosa forest lay in front of it,—for on this account had the situation been selected. This forest was to be “beaten” by the men of Macora, and all its four-footed denizens driven into the trap.

Early in the morning the whole tribe, with the white hunters and their dogs, mustered for the grand drive. They were divided into two parties. Willem, Hendrik, and Macora led one to the left, while Hans, Arend, and a principal warrior and hunter of the Makololo conducted the other to the right, thus taking the mimosa forest on both flanks. The area to be surrounded was about four miles in length and three in breadth.

On arriving at its northern edge, the great cover was entered by the beaters along with most of the dogs. The white hunters, who were mounted on their own horses, and some of the Makololo who rode upon oxen, kept along the borders, to prevent the startled game from breaking cover at the sides. For a time the beaters and their canine companions appeared vying with each other, as to which could make the greatest noise; and the effect of their united efforts was soon observed by those riding outside the timber.

Before they had proceeded half a mile from the point of separation, they had sufficient evidence that the repose of many species of wild beasts had been disturbed. Mingled with the loud trumpeting of elephants were the sounds of crashing branches, the roar of lions, the shrieks of baboons, and the wild, horribly human, laughter of hyenas.

Those riding outside had been instructed by Macora to keep a little in the rear of the line of beaters; and the wisdom of this counsel was soon made clear to Groot Willem and Hendrik. A herd of elephants broke from the bushes, but a few yards ahead of them, and were allowed to shamle off over the plain unmolested. They were not wanted in the trap.

Some zebras also broke from the cover soon after and they also were permitted to escape scot free.

When not far from the termination of the drive, at that side where Willem and Hendrik were guarding, a grand drove of buffaloes rushed into the open ground. Fortunately the party were at some distance from the timber at the time, and also a little to the rear of the rushing herd, else they would have had some difficulty to escape from being run over and trampled to death. Several of the buffaloes left the forest nearly opposite to them, and in joining the main drove they took a course that caused the hunters some hard riding to get out of the way of their horns.

Immediately after the fortunate escape of the buffaloes,—fortunate for the hunters themselves,—the eyes of Groot Willem were blest with the sight of the objects he most desired to see. A small herd of seven or eight giraffes, in escaping from the skirmishers, noisily advancing among the trees, shot forth into the open ground. They were near the funnel-shaped extremity of the trap. If once outside the fence they would get off; and the toil of two weeks would all have been undertaken to no purpose. Striking the spurs into the sides of his horse, Groot Willem, followed by Hendrik, galloped forward to cut off their retreat. Never did Willem remember a moment of more intense excitement.

Two young giraffes were seen with the herd. Were they to escape the enclosure of the *hopo*? A few seconds would decide. The herd and the hunters were now moving in two lines at an angle to each other, their courses rapidly converging. This was soon observed by the timid giraffes; and, unconscious of the danger that threatened them, they turned and were soon within the wide and far-extended jaws of the *hopo*.

Had they continued in their first course only a few paces farther, they would have been safe from the fate that awaited them; but, as man himself often does, in seeking safety they took the direction leading to danger.

The beaters had now reached the termination of the mimosa forest; and the parties from both sides were now coming together to the open ground. Within the two walls of the hopo they could see before them a living, moving mass, composed of many varieties of animals; among them they saw with regret two elephants and a rhinoceros.

Towering far above the heads of all others were those of the giraffes, which seemed striving to be the foremost in precipitating themselves into the pit.

The mass of moving bodies became more dense, as the space in which they moved grew contracted by the enclosing fences.

When about a quarter of a mile from the pit, the sagacious elephants turned, and, seeing an army of men and dogs advancing towards them, broke through the fence and were free. Several zebras—much to the delight of the hunters—followed through the breach they had made. The camelopards were too far ahead to avail themselves of this means of escape. They were doomed to captivity.

The Makololo were all mad with the excitement of the chase. Uttering discordant ear-piercing yells, they rushed onward, impatient to witness the struggles of the multitudes of victims certain to be precipitated into a hole, towards which they were rushing heedless of all else but fear. Every demoniac passion existing in earthly life appeared to be fully aroused within the souls of their pursuers. They seemed frantic with rage at the escape of the elephants, though these would undoubtedly have defeated the object for which the hopo had been erected. Their only object seemed to be the destruction of animal life, the shedding of blood, the sight of agony.

Chapter Thirty One.

Disappointed.

Before reaching the pit, several antelopes and other animals had been passed,—killed or injured in the crush and rush. Such of these as were still living, received but a passing glance and a blow from those who were hastening onward to a scene more wild—more frightful and horribly human in origin and execution—than words will describe.

The novelty and excitement of the scene, and the infectious example of the maddened Africans, inspired Groot Willem and his companions with a savage, blood-seeking intoxication of mind that urged them forward with nearly as much insane earnestness as the most frenzied of the Makololo.

The herds they had been driving before them were now concentrated into a quivering, struggling, noisy mass. The pit was soon full of roaring, bellowing, bleating, growling victims of the chase, that were piled one upon another, until hundreds escaped by passing over the backs of those that had preceded them.

When the overflowing of the pit had passed off, and the hunters came up to gaze on what remained, they beheld a scene never to be forgotten in life. Underneath, they could hear the roaring of a lion, being smothered by its favourite game. For the first time, it had too many antelopes within its reach. There was one creature in the crowd that was not to be overlain by the others. It was the muchocho, or white rhinoceros, they had seen while driving in the game. Every time it moved, bodies were crushed, bones broken, and the cries of rage and distress from what seemed a miniature representation of a perdition for animals became imperceptibly diminished by several voices. The muchocho was apparently standing on its hind legs in the bottom of the pit, while the upper part of its body was supported by the creatures that were screaming under its immense weight.

Mingled with the struggling mass were seen some of the camelopards; and, fearing they might be subjected to the destroying

power of the huge rhinoceros, Willem placed the muzzle of his roer near one of its eyes, and fired.

The report of the gun was scarcely heard, so stunning to the ears of all was the fracas that continued; though the effect of the discharge was soon evident on the muchocho. It ceased to live.

All hands now set to work at clearing the pit, in order to save the young giraffes from being killed; that is, if they were yet living. Rheims with loops at the ends were thrown over the heads of the antelopes and other small game, by which they could be hauled out.

After a short time spent at this work, a partial clearance was effected. The body of a young giraffe was now carefully got out. It was examined with an interest verging on delirium. It was quite warm, but lifeless, its neck being broken.

One of the old ones,—a large bull,—struggling violently, was now the most conspicuous animal in the pit, and being, as Hendrik said, “too much alive,” was killed by a bullet.

The head and neck of another young giraffe was seen, whose body was nearly buried under animals larger than itself. It was apparently unharmed. Every care was taken to get it out without injury, and it was drawn gently up and two rheims placed around its neck, in order to hinder it from running away. It was not more than two months old,—just the age the hunters desired,—but it soon became evident that there was something wrong. While continuing its struggle for freedom, they observed that one of its fore feet was not set on the ground. The leg was swinging to and fro. It was broken.

The creature was young, bright, and beautiful, but could not be taken to the Colony. It could never visit Europe. The only favour that could be shown this suffering, trembling, frightened victim of Groot Willem’s ambition was to put it out of pain by shooting it, and the young hunter witnessed its death with as much pity and regret as he had felt at the loss of poor Smoke.

The pit was at length emptied; and the hunters now paused to contemplate their spoil. Seven giraffes had been destroyed, nearly all of them by having their necks broken. These, six or seven feet in length, had been too delicately made to resist the impetus of the heavy herds passing over them.

Although they had failed in procuring what they wanted, it was not yet proved that the hopo had been built in vain. It might still be available for another time. So they were informed by Macora, who said that, in two or three days, other giraffes might be found in the mimosa grove, and a second drive could be tried.

This partly reconciled the hunters to the disappointment of the day, though all felt a strong regret that two of the beautiful creatures, such as they wished-for, had been driven into the trap only to die. Many herds might be discovered, without having among them any young, such as the two now lying dead at their feet. Other young camelopards might be caught and killed; but many failures must occur before Groot Willem would relinquish the undertaking for which he had travelled so far.

The time was not wholly lost to the Makololo, for a supply of food had been obtained that would take them some time to preserve, and longer to eat.

The day after the grand hunt, long rheims, suspended on upright poles, were covered with strings of meat drying in the sun, while all the bushes and small trees in the vicinity were festooned after the same fashion. For the dried meat, or *biltongue*, only the best and favourite portions of each animal were used, and the rest was removed beyond the encampment, where it formed a banquet for vultures, hyenas, and other carrion creatures of the earth and air.

Three days after the butchery, all that remained of the slaughtered animals was the dried meat and polished bones.

Chapter Thirty Two.

Driven away.

Four days after the unsuccessful attempt to capture the young giraffes in the hopo, the spoor of others were found on the river-bank.

Another herd of camelopards had made a home in the forest of *cameel-doorn*. Some of the herd were young. This was evident from the spoor.

The hopes of Groot Willem, that he might succeed in accomplishing his dearest wishes, were again high and strong; and his companions were no less enthusiastic.

Another attempt to fulfil their mission might be successful.

If so, Hendrik and Arend within a few weeks would be in the society of those of whom they were hourly thinking, and Hans would be making preparations for the long-contemplated visit to Europe.

The chief Macora had not shown the least inclination to abandon them on the failure of the first attempt. He had promised his assistance until the object they desired should be obtained; and, although domestic and political duties called him home, he stated his determination to stay with them.

His promise had been given to Willem, and everything was to be sacrificed before that could be broken.

For his devoted friendship the hunters were not ungrateful. They had learnt by this that without his assistance they could do nothing.

On the evening before the day intended for the second trial of the hopo, the giraffe hunters, in high spirits, were sharing with the chief their last bottle of Schiedam, as a substantial tribute of respect to the man who had made their wishes his own.

While indulging in pleasant anticipations of the morrow, their designs were suddenly upset by a communication from Sindo.

He had but just returned from a journey to the north,—to the place where he had found a home after being banished by Macora,—to the tribe which owed for its chief him whose horses had been shot by our hunters.

Sindo's visit had been a stolen one, for the purpose of bringing away his wife and children. In this he had been successful; but he had also succeeded in bringing away something more,—information that the Zooloo chief, that our young hunters had offended, was still thirsting for revenge for his losses and disappointments.

He had seen Moselekatse, the tyrant-king of all that part of Africa, and had informed him that the Makololo chief, Macora,—his old enemy,—had returned to his former home, and had robbed a friend of the noble chief Moselekatse of valuable property,—of horses, guns, and slaves.

A large force had immediately been sent to capture Macora and his people, or chase them, as Sindo said, "out of the world."

The enemy might be expected in two or three hours!

Sindo's warning was not unheeded; and scouts were at once sent out to watch for the approach of the enemy. A danger that Macora had already apprehended was now threatening them.

Early next morning the scouts returned with the report that Moselekatse's warriors were indeed coming. They had camped during the night about five miles off, and might be upon them within an hour.

Hastily springing upon their horses, Arend and Hendrik galloped off in the direction of the enemy, for the purpose of making a

reconnaissance. During their absence the others were packing up all their valuables, and making preparation for either a fight or a flight.

The two cornets returned half an hour afterwards, bringing the report, that about three hundred armed men were approaching.

"There is not the least doubt but that they mean war," said Hendrik. "We rode up to within three hundred yards of them. Immediately on seeing us they commenced yelling, and rushing about the plain; and, as we turned to ride back, several spears were sent after us."

"Then the sooner we get away from here the better," suggested Hans. "There are too many of them for us to hold our own with."

"Macora does not seem to think so," observed Groot Willem.

All turned to the chief, who, along with his men, was observed making preparations for a pitched battle.

"Ask him, Congo," said Willem, "if he thinks we can drive the enemy back."

The Kaffir made the inquiry, and was told, in reply, that Moselekatse's men were never driven back except by superior numbers, and that they certainly would not be defeated by a few.

"But what means that? Is he going to stay here for all of us to be killed?"

To this question the chief answered that he and his men were going to act according to the desire of his friend Willem.

"Then they shall be off as quick as possible," said Willem. "None of them shall lose their lives on my account, if I can help it."

Not a moment was lost in getting away from the ground and so sudden was the departure that the Makololo had to leave behind them the dried meat they had taken so much trouble in curing.

The retreat was not commenced one moment too soon. As Groot Willem and Hendrik remained a little behind the others, they beheld the enemy approaching the spot that had been relinquished by the Makololo, apparently eager for a conflict.

There was no longer a doubt of the real object of their visit. They had come for the purpose of taking vengeance. Their cries and angry gestures proclaimed it; and, without waiting to see or hear more, the young hunters put spurs to their steeds and joined Macora in the retreat.

Chapter Thirty Three.

The Retreat.

Macora and his party were in hopes that the pursuit might not be continued far,—that the enemy, satisfied in having broken up their camp and driven them off the ground, would return to their own country.

In this hope they were doomed to disappointment. It turned out that those in pursuit of them formed an expedition sent out by Moselekatse for the purpose of extending his dominion and there was not the least likelihood that the tyrant would relinquish his object until he had obtained success. This soon became the conviction of Macora; and he lost no time in hastening back to his home, and preparing for the invasion.

As the Makololo are of a race superior to most other South African tribes, the young hunters were surprised to see the feeling of alarm exhibited by them on learning that one of Moselekatse's armies was advancing to attack them. In place of preparing to resist the

approaching foe, a majority of the Makololo seemed only to contemplate flight.

A little information from Macora concerning Moselekatse was a satisfactory explanation of this mystery. He informed his white guests that the Matabili—that is, the people of Moselekatse—were the greatest warriors in Southern Africa,—that Moselekatse, their king, could command five thousand men, and that frequently his orders to the officers who led them to battle were to give no quarter to the enemy. Macora admitted that his own people were not cowards, but that he could not maintain a war against such a king as Moselekatse. He was quite certain that, should they make a stand and give battle to the foe, at least one half of his tribe would be killed. They would moreover be stripped of all their property, and what was left of the tribe would have to become slaves of the tyrant, and look after his cattle. There was but one way of holding their own with Moselekatse; and that was to remove everything of any value beyond his reach. By this means had Macora and his people maintained their independence for several years, and the same method must be resorted to again.

This was the decision arrived at; and, on reaching his own kraal, Macora at once put the design into execution.

The cattle were hastily collected and driven off, while the men, women, and children started after them, each carrying a load of household utensils, elephants' teeth, and such other property as could be conveniently removed in such a hasty decampment. The women, children, and cattle were sent on in advance, while Macora and his warriors followed behind as a rear-guard, to protect them against any surprise.

Some time would be required in crossing the Limpopo, and, as the distance to the nearest drift was about five miles, there could be danger of an attack before all could effect the crossing of the stream. This fear was fully realised. The ford was not a safe one; and there was great difficulty in getting some of the cattle to take it: many of them had to be assisted in landing on the opposite bank. All this

required time; and, before the crossing was completed an alarm was given. The Matabili were coming up in the rear.

So accustomed were Moselekatse's warriors to success in any engagement, that they made no halt before commencing hostilities, although not more than two hundred of them had got forward upon the ground.

Armed with assegais, and defended with shields, they rushed forward with hideous yells, exhibiting an insatiate thirst for blood that can only be acquired by long familiarity with deeds of violence.

But although the Makololo had fled from their home without striking a blow in its defence, they now proved themselves warriors in the true sense of the word.

Rushing to the encounter, they met the Matabili hand to hand, and in the conflict that followed both parties fought with the fury of demons. One might have supposed that Macora's principal object was the protecting of his white friends. From the behaviour of his men it was evident that he had commanded them to keep between the young hunters and the enemy. But the opportunity for practising a little of their own profession was not lost upon the two young soldiers Hendrik and Arend. They were foremost to fire on the Matabili; though their example was quickly followed by Willem and Hans, who took their first sight at the body of a human being along the barrel of a gun.

As the four pieces were discharged, a like number of Moselekatse's men went to the earth; and two more were shot down the next instant by Macora, Sindo, and another Makololo, all three of whom chanced to be armed with muskets.

Under cover of their horses the hunters loaded again,



and four more of their enemies were prevented from taking any further part in the conflict.

Could the assailants have closed with those who were shooting them down, the hunters would soon have fallen before their assegais, but this they were prevented from doing by the Makololo. Protected by their shields, and each side having great skill in using them, a single pair of the native combatants would contend for a long time before either would be seen to fall.

This, however, was not the case when any of the four hunters selected an antagonist for his aim. Every report of their guns was followed by the fall of a dusky assailant; and the Matabili warriors soon discovered the thinning of their ranks. They learnt too, that fire-arms, which they had long held in contempt, might, if properly handled, become very destructive weapons.

They now saw that they had made a mistake in commencing the action so confidently, and before the arrival of their full force, and were at length compelled to retreat, leaving more than thirty of the dead upon the ground.

In the affray, Macora lost but six men, and was so gratified with the result that he was half inclined to pursue his enemies, in the hope of rendering the victory more substantial and complete. Knowing, however, that any advantage he might obtain would be but temporary, that several thousand men would soon be against him, and that in the end he would be compelled to retreat, he abandoned the idea of pursuing the discomfited enemy, and continued the crossing of the stream.

By sunset the whole tribe, with all their property, was safe on the opposite shore, where the warriors were placed in a strong position to repel any attempt on the part of the Matabili to effect a crossing. This being done, the retreat was continued. Macora had now no country. He had lost his home, by assisting his white friends. He was now a fugitive, with a vengeful foe in his rear, and without friends in front. His tribe was too small to command respect amongst those he might encounter upon his march. They would soon hear that he was pursued by the great chief Moselekatse, and there was a prospect of his people being hunted from place to place, and allowed no rest until robbed of all their cattle,—their only wealth,—and perhaps also of their lives.

While Willem and his companions were regretting the misfortunes they had been the means of bringing upon their protector, the chief's greatest trouble appeared to be his disappointment in having failed to assist them.

The last things taken over the river were the bodies of the Makololo killed in the battle; and these were buried during the night.

On the contrary, the bodies of the Matabili were left where they had fallen, to be stripped of their flesh by the beasts of prey.

To give the hunters some idea of the character and customs of his enemies, Macora informed them that none of the Matabili ever buried their dead, not even their own kindred; but that sons will drag the

bodies of their parents out from their village into the open plain, and there leave them to the tender mercies of the hyenas and vultures.

During the night, the roars, growls, and other evidences of brutish strife, heard across the river, convinced the Makololo guard left there, that by morning only the bones of their slain enemies would be found upon the field of battle. This was music to the ears of the Makololo, while the thought of their having defeated the renowned warriors of Moselekatse almost compensated them for the loss of their homes.

Chapter Thirty Four.

Tyranny and Loyalty.

Before a start could be made the next morning, Moselekatse's braves were seen assembling in large force on the opposite bank of the river. As we have said, the women, children, and cattle had been sent forward with all possible haste, while most of the men remained to check the advance of the enemy, and, if possible, cover the retreat for another day.

The Bushman Swartboy had been put in charge of several oxen laden with ivory,—a responsible trust, that partly reconciled him to the annoyance of leaving his white masters behind, and with no one to look after them but Congo, who, as he asserted, was always leading them into trouble.

On leaving home, the young hunters had taken the precaution to bring with them several guns, besides those used in the chase; and now the reserve pieces were brought out and made ready for use. By early daybreak the Matabili commenced crossing. Urged by the fear of the tyrant's displeasure, in case their cowardice being reported to him, they advanced recklessly into the stream.

The first five or six were shot down. This did not check the ardour of the others, who rushed madly down the bank, and commenced wading through the water, which rose above their waists.

The only landing-place on the opposite side was by a small galley or ravine, not more than ten feet in breadth. To ascend through this gulley would be a work of some difficulty, even if unopposed. But with the passage disputed by the spears of the opposing Makololo, it would be one of desperate danger. For all that, the Matabili determined on the attempt, and were soon in the act of making it.

Plunging madly across the drift, they were soon gathered in a grand crowd at the entrance of the gulley, and striving to ascend it five or six at a time. The passage would admit of no more. At the first glance Macora saw the advantage of his position, and encouraged his men to hold it. Not one of a dozen of the Matabili, who strove to enter the ravine, succeeded in getting up its slippery sides. Without a firm footing their assegais and shields could not be used to any advantage; and their dead bodies were soon swept off by the current of the river.

Those who succeeded in getting a little way up the gulley were opposed by enemies on both sides of it, and easily speared to death. Meanwhile the white hunters were constantly loading and firing upon those who could not be reached by the spears of the Makololo; and in less than ten minutes the enemy again discovered that they had made a mistake. They saw the impracticability of getting across the river while opposed from the opposite bank. When this fact became fully comprehended, they retreated to the other shore, and the roar of battle was again hushed, or only continued by wild cries of vengeance.

In this second combat only four or five of the Makololo were wounded; their wounds being caused by assegais thrown by those who had no other opportunity of using their weapons.

Knowing that, should he abandon such a good position for defence, his enemies would immediately pursue, Macora determined to hold it, if possible, until such time as the unprotected portion of his tribe could get to some point distant from the scene of danger. For two hours the hostile parties on both sides of the river remained

without further strife, except that which might be called a war of words. Threats and taunting speeches were freely exchanged, and mutual invitations to come across,—none of which was accepted.

It was at length determined by Macora and his people to leave the place, and proceed after the retreating tribe. It was not to be done, however, without a *ruse*; otherwise the Matabili would immediately cross and follow them. But this very thing had been thought of by Hendrik, who now laid his plan before the chief.

"Let all of your people steal off," said he to Macora. "The trees will hinder the enemy from seeing them go. We that are mounted can easily escape at any time. Let us stay, then, and keep showing ourselves to the enemy as long as we can deceive them."

The plan appeared feasible, excellent. Macora at once gave consent to its being put into execution.

"Stay," said Groot Willem. "Don't make any movement till I open practice upon them with my long roer. I think the gun will carry to where they are, over yonder. An occasional bullet whistling past their ears will let them know that some of us are still here, and keep them from suspecting that the others are gone."

As Willem spoke, he crept out to a projecting point upon the bank, and, taking aim at a big Matabili who stood conspicuous on the other side, let fly at him. The man, with a loud yell, tumbled over in his tracks, while others, also exposed, hastened to conceal themselves behind the bushes. At this crisis the Makololo stole silently away, leaving their chief, with Sindo and one or two others who had horses, along with the four hunters, to guard the crossing of the stream.

During nearly an hour that they remained by the drift, no other attempt was made by the Matabili to approach near the bank. Nothing was seen of them; and Macora, beginning to suspect that they might have withdrawn from the place and got over by some other drift, suggested the giving up the guard, and hastening on after his tribe.

There was good sense in the suggestion; for if the Matabili had found another crossing, the tribe might be in danger. It was determined, therefore, to withdraw, but in such a way that the enemy might still believe them to be there.

Several articles of dress were hung upon the bushes, only slightly showing towards the opposite side of the stream, and in such fashion as to look like a portion of their persons; and then, Groot Willem firing a last shot from his great gun, the guard withdrew one after another, riding stealthily off among the trees.

The sun was not more than an hour high, when they overtook their retreating comrades on foot, and a little later, all going together, came up with the women and children. As it was now near sundown, and water chanced to be close at hand, they decided to halt there for the night.

The Makololo chief was fortunate in overtaking his people at the time he did. Ten minutes later and they would have met with a greater misfortune than had yet befallen them; for, scarce had Macora commanded the halt, when a party of about a hundred Matabili were discovered hovering upon the flanks of the proposed camping-place, that, but for the arrival of Macora and his men, would have instantly made their attack. This party of the enemy must have crossed a drift higher up the river, as it was from that direction they appeared to have come.

Not thinking themselves strong enough to begin the assault, for their design had been to come up with the women and children while the warriors were by the river, the Matabili kept their distance. But this was soon increased by the action of the white hunters, who, mounted on their horses and making use of their guns, were more than a match for the hundred. These riding towards them, and firing a few shots, sent the Matabili scampering off to a safer distance. Having chased the hundred warriors out of sight, they returned to the camp, where they found Macora in a state of great anxiety. He could see nothing before him but the destruction of himself and his tribe.

Groot Willem demanded an explanation of his increased apprehension, and reminded the chief that in their encounters with the enemy they had been so far successful. Macora stated in reply his belief that two or more detachments of Moselekatse's army had been sent against him. They would yet unite and show no quarter to him, his tribe, or his friends. Their losses in the last two encounters had been too great for them to show the least mercy.

He furthermore informed his guests that none of Moselekatse's warriors dare return to their chief unsuccessful. Both they and their leaders would be put to death; and this knowledge would stimulate them to a total recklessness of danger and a determination to succeed in their enterprise.

"There is but one plan I can think of," continued the Makololo chief,— "but one way of saving my poor people, and that is, by sacrificing myself. By hurrying on to the west, they may yet succeed in evading the pursuit of these Matabili, and join their own kindred under the sway of the great chief Sebituane. He would be able to protect them. As for me," added Macora with a sigh, "I cannot go along with them."

The young hunters asked for an explanation, and it was given. Owing to some long past misunderstanding, Macora had incurred this ill-will of Sebituane, who never forgot nor forgave an offence, and, were he to return there, would surely order him to be killed.

Macora's advice to the hunters was, that, provided as they were with horses, they should remove themselves out of the reach of danger, by taking their departure for their homes. This generous counsel Groot Willem at once refused to follow, and all the rest joined him in declining it, each saying something to give encouragement to the other. As for Macora's own people, they now gave a rare proof of their loyalty. When counselled by their chief to save themselves, and leave him to his fate, one and all rebelled against the proposal; the warriors loudly declaring that sooner than forsake him they would die by his side.

For the first time in their lives our adventurers saw a chief who appeared to suffer affliction from being too much beloved by his people! He proposed saving their lives at the expense of his own, by requesting them to carry him a captive to Sebituane! But his followers were loyal to a man: to a man they rejected the proposal.

Chapter Thirty Five.

Welcome Tidings.

The white hunters were greatly vexed at thought of the trouble they had brought upon the chief and his tribe, and tried to devise some plan by which all might be extricated from their difficulties.

They proposed that Macora and his people should seek refuge from their enemies by retreating to the country of the Bakwains,—a western branch of their own great nation, the Bechuanas, which was not far-away.

In reply to this proposal, Macora said that none of those people would give them protection. They dreaded to incur the displeasure of Moselekatse, and, to keep friends with him, would even assist his warriors in their destruction.

The hunters then proposed that Macora should take leave of his tribe and accompany them to the south, while his followers might go on to the country of Sebituane.

This plan the chief emphatically declined to adopt. Death would be preferable to that. He would not desert those who had so nobly stood by him.

Moreover, it was still doubtful whether they could succeed in reaching Sebituane. They might look for the Matabili by the break of day; and, encumbered as they were with women, children, and cattle, their flight was too slow for safety.

This opinion Macora expressed to some of his followers, and, at the same time, told them that there was one ox belonging to the tribe that the Matabili should not have. He described the ox as the fattest one in their possession.

His men took the hint; and in less than two hours an ox was killed, cooked, and eaten.

Early in the evening, a fire was seen and shouts were heard not more than half a mile from them. They believed that a body of their enemies was encamped near, and only waiting for a concentration of their forces before commencing another attack.

They were agreeably disappointed about this; for, when morning dawned, their eyes were gratified by the sight of two large covered wagons outspanned upon the plain, with several oxen and horses grazing near them. They were at no great distance off, and must have come there in the night. It could be nothing else than an encampment of white hunters or traders.

Our adventurers, one and all, rode hastily for the camp, and in a few minutes were exchanging salutations with the owners of the wagons. As they had conjectured, it was a party of traders. They were from Port Natal. They had been on an excursion to the north, and were now returning to the Port. They were attended by some Kaffirs who had accompanied them from Natal, and also a number of natives they had picked up in the north.

While our adventurers were trying to obtain from them a supply of ammunition and such other things as they stood in need of, their attention was called to Macora, by seeing that individual behaving somewhat after the manner of a mad man. Although his people were more than half a mile away, he was shouting to them and gesticulating in the most violent manner, as if imparting some communication or command.

The hunters looked in every direction, and with feelings of apprehension. They expected to see the Matabili again coming to the attack. But no foe was in sight.

It was not until the chief had succeeded in attracting the attention of his followers, and had worked them into a high state of excitement, with what he was saying to them, that our hunters understood the meaning of his words and gestures. It turned out that some of the native attendants who accompanied the white traders were from the country of Sebituane, and, therefore, the kindred of Macora's people. Only a few days before they had left their native place. From these, the chief had learnt that Sebituane was no longer a living man. He had died some weeks before, leaving his daughter Ma-Mochisane in full authority at the head of the Makololo nation.

Macora was no longer afraid of returning to his nation. His only fear, now, was that the Matabili might come up in such strength as to destroy all chance of his ever revisiting his native land.

There was now an opportunity for his followers to have a secure and permanent home; and, at thought of this, old and young exerted themselves to hasten their departure from the perilous spot.

The party of traders consisted of three white men with nine African attendants, all of them well-armed. Their assistance—especially those who had fire-arms—might have been very valuable to the hunters in the difficulty in which they now found themselves.

Groot Willem, wholly unconscious that there were people who would not do as they would be done by, lost no time in telling them of the danger that threatened himself and his friends, and that they were every moment expecting an attack from a large party of hostile Matabili. He expressed his pleasure at the good fortune that had brought them a distance at such an opportune moment. He fancied that his communication would be sufficient to secure the co-operation of the traders, and that they would at once take the retreating party under their protection.

To his great surprise and indignation, as also that of his friends, the effect of his story upon the traders was the very opposite to that he had anticipated. They had not time for another word of conversation, but immediately commenced *inspanning* their oxen.

In ten minutes after, they were *trekking* to the south-east, *en route* for Port Natal. They were not the men to endanger their lives and property by remaining longer than they could possibly avoid in the society of those who had the misfortune to be surrounded by enemies.

Had there been in the minds of our adventurers the slightest desire to abandon the chief Macora in his hour of need, the conduct of the white traders would have killed it. The mean behaviour of the latter had one good effect. It inspired all hands with a determination to do their best in making their retreat before the Matabili; and the march was immediately resumed.

Men, women, and children were all equally active and earnest in getting beyond the reach of the pursuing foe. They knew that a long journey was before them, and a powerful and merciless enemy in their rear. Even the dogs seemed to understand the danger that menaced their masters, and exerted themselves in urging along the droves.

By travelling until a late hour, a good distance was made that same day; and as nothing was seen or heard of the pursuing savages, our adventurers began to think that the pursuit had been abandoned.

Although riding on horses, they were far more fatigued than the Makololo, who went on foot, and who, used to such an exodus, thought nothing of its toils. The hunters would gladly have given up their flight, thinking there was no longer a need for it. "It is only the wicked and foolish who flee when no man pursueth," was their thought.

But in this, the chief did not agree with them. Instead of neglecting to take precautions, he was very particular about all the appointments of their night camp, stationing guards around it, and outlying pickets, to prevent any sudden surprise. Never, since the retreat commenced, had he appeared more apprehensive of an attack.

Our hunters became anxious to ascertain for what reason all these precautions were being taken; and with Congo's assistance, they made inquiry.

The explanation Macora condescended to give was, that Moselekatse's warriors never slept till they had accomplished their purpose. They would certainly not relinquish the pursuit without a greater defeat than they had yet sustained. They were, he said, only waiting until their different parties could be got together, and they should be in force sufficient to insure the destruction of him and his tribe. In two days more he would be able to reach the Makololo territory, where they would all be safe; and for that reason he was determined not to neglect any means that might secure the safety of his followers or that of the guests under his protection. His own life was little to him compared with the duty he had to perform for others.

Next morning, they were on the move before daybreak, and hastening forward with all possible speed. Hendrik, Arend, and Hans accompanied Macora with some reluctance, partly because they believed that flight was no longer necessary.

"Never mind," urged Groot Willem, to encourage them. "It will only last two days longer, and we are going to a part of the country we have not yet visited."

Before noon, there was some reason for believing that Macora had reasoned aright. A party of the Matabili suddenly appeared in advance of the route they were pursuing.

It was not large enough to attempt opposing the progress of the Makololo, and, on seeing the latter, fled.

In the afternoon, some scouts that had been left in the rear hastened with the news that a large body of the enemy was coming up in pursuit.

The forces of Moselekatse had become concentrated; and the hunters now agreed with Macora that flight could no longer avail them, and that in less than twenty-four hours a contest would be inevitable.

It would never do to be attacked when on the march. They must halt in some place favourable for defence. There was no such place within sight, but Macora believed he might find a more defensible position on the bank of the river; and towards that he hastily proceeded.

Chapter Thirty Six.

Besieged.

It wanted but an hour to sundown when the Makololo reached the river. The enemy could not be far-away, and preparations were immediately commenced for receiving them.

Hendrik and Arend, laying claim to more wisdom in military affairs than the others, rode a little in advance for the purpose of choosing the battle-field.

Good fortune had conducted them to a spot favourable to the carrying out of their scheme.

A little above the place where they first struck the stream, the current had made a sort of horseshoe bend, leaving a peninsula, which, during the rainy season when the river was swollen, formed a

large island. The narrow and shallow channel was here uncovered with water to the width of about fifty yards, and over this the cattle were driven. Quickly did the Makololo secure themselves and their property in a position where they could not be surrounded.

There was but one way in which the enemy could easily reach them,—by the isthmus, which was not more than fifty yards in width. Growing by the side of the river and on the edge of the isthmus, was a gigantic nwana-tree, which nature had been for hundreds of years producing,—as Hendrik declared, for the special purpose of saving them.

The nwana is one of the most remarkable trees of the African forest. Some of them obtain the extraordinary size of ninety feet in circumference, and are lofty in proportion. Its wood is as soft as a green cabbage-stalk, and has been pronounced “utterly unserviceable.” The hunters did not find it so.

Amongst other implements brought from Graaf Reinet were two good axes, which their former experiences of a hunter’s life had taught our young adventurers were indispensable on an expedition.

The nwana-tree was to be felled across the bar, so as to block up the approach to the peninsula. It would form a barricade behind which an enemy could be efficiently opposed. Swartboy produced the axes, and the hunters set to work to cut down the tree,—two working at a time, and in turns relieving each other. At every blow the axes were buried in the soft spongy wood. A grand gingerbread cake could not have yielded more readily to their efforts.

Fortunate that it was so, as they believed that their safety depended on felling this forest monarch before the arrival of the Matabili. The latter could not be far-off, and every exertion was made to get the fortress ready for receiving the attack. There was a doubt as to the direction the tree would take in falling. Should it topple over into the water, their labour would be lost, and the way would be open for the Matabili to reach them by a rush. Should it fall across the

isthmus, it would form an insurmountable barrier to their enemies. In silence and with intense interest did the Makololo stand watching for the result. At length the tree began to move; slowly at first, but as they gazed upon its trembling top, they could see that it was going to come down in the right direction. Gaining velocity as it got lower, a swishing sound was made by its branches as they passed through the air; and then the gigantic mass struck the ground with a crash, till its huge trunk lay stretched across the isthmus, filling it from side to side, with the exception of a few feet at each end. They had now a barricade that could not be easily broken, if but manfully defended. They were ready to receive the attack of the foe.

They would not have long to wait. As night came down, large fires were observed in the distance. The Matabili had evidently arrived, and were probably waiting for day, to obtain a knowledge of their position before they should commence the attack. Before taking their stand by the river, Macora had called for four volunteers to proceed by stealth from the spot, and if possible reach some neutral tribe that might come to his rescue. He was now in a position from which he could not move without the certainty of being defeated and of course destroyed. He might be able to maintain it for several days; and knowing that his enemies would not raise the siege until compelled to do so, his only hope was that of obtaining aid from some neighbouring chief, jealous of the encroachments of the Matabili.

Anxious to become fully reinstated in the good opinion of his chief, Sindo was the first who had offered to go upon this perilous scout. Three others having also volunteered, they had been despatched in couples,—one pair leaving an hour after the departure of the first. This division of the embassy was to insure a greater chance of its being successful. If one couple should have the ill luck to get captured, the other might escape.

By the earliest hour of day the enemy began to show himself, not far from the fortified camp. From the top of the fallen nwana our hunters could see a large crowd of dusky warriors, that appeared to number at least six hundred. To oppose these, Macora had not more

than two hundred and fifty men who were capable of taking part in the fight.

At either end of the great trunk, as already stated there was an open space that would require to be carefully watched. At both points Macora had placed some of his bravest warriors, while the others were distributed along the barricade, with instructions to spear any of the enemy that should attempt to scale it.

The Matabili had already examined the position and appeared confident of success. They had at last brought their game to bay, and were only resting from the fatigue of the long chase before taking steps to "carry the fortress."

It was bright daylight as they advanced to the assault. Dividing themselves into two parties, they made a rush at the open spaces by the ends of the barricade. A fierce conflict came on which lasted for some ten minutes, and at length resulted in the assailants being forced to retreat, after leaving several of their warriors dead in the gaps.

But this temporary victory was not obtained without loss. Eight of the Makololo had also fallen dead, while several others were severely wounded.

Macora's features began to assume an anxious and troubled expression. Knowing that an enemy of superior force to his own was before him, that all means of retreat was now cut off, and that an attempt to enter the enclosure had nearly proved successful, he could not avoid feeling a gloomy foreboding for the fate of his people.

He knew too well the disposition of the Matabili to suppose that they would easily relinquish their design.

Fear of Moselekatse's displeasure on account of the losses they had already sustained, as well as the prospect of plunder, would

inspire them with the determination to fight on as long as there was the slightest hope of obtaining a victory.

No assistance could be expected from other tribes of the Makololo in less than three days. Could his position be maintained for that time?

As the chief looked at the dead and wounded lying around him, this question could not be answered in a satisfactory manner. His foes were too numerous, and repeated attempts would in the end enable them to succeed.

This was the belief of the Makololo chief; and, notwithstanding his confidence in the wisdom and strategic prowess of the white hunters, he was now in a state of great anxiety.

Two hours after the attack the only Matabili in sight were those they had killed, but for all that it was well known that the survivors were not far off.

Night descended over the scene. The camp-fires of the enemy could be distinguished through the darkness; but that signified nothing.

Morning found our adventurers still undisturbed. To all appearance Moselekatse's warriors, yielding to despair, had returned to their chief, to suffer the punishment that would certainly follow from their permitting themselves to be defeated.

This was the belief of the white hunters, who now earnestly urged Macora to make no further delay, but hasten on towards his countrymen.

This advice the chief positively refused to follow. He admitted the superiority of his allies in the arts of hunting and even war, but in a knowledge of the character of Moselekatse and his warriors he knew

himself to be their superior. He was now in a position where he and his people might successfully sustain themselves, and he disliked leaving it, lest they should fall into some ambuscade of the enemy. Had he not had reasons for expecting assistance, the case might have been different, but confident that aid would be immediately sent to him, he thought it better to remain where they were.

Believing that there was a possibility of the chief being in the right, Groot Willem and his companions of course consented to remain; not, however, without stipulations.

If within thirty-six hours there was no appearance of either friends or enemies, Macora promised that he would continue the march towards his country.

Chapter Thirty Seven.

Not quite too late.

The stipulated time passed, and nothing was seen of the Matabili; neither was anything known of the result of the mission of Sindo and his companions.

The young hunters were now quite certain that their enemies had relinquished the idea of conquering a band protected by the intellects and weapons of white men, and that they had returned home.

With this opinion, that of the chief did not quite coincide. Nevertheless, according to the agreement, he commenced making preparations for departure.

The cattle were driven out of the enclosure, and again started along the track, all acting as drovers, and urging the animals onward with as much energy as if they believed that the enemy was in close pursuit. To Groot Willem and his companions there was something very inconsistent in the conduct of the Makololo.

They fought like brave men when forced to face the foe but now that no enemy was near, they exhibited every sign of cowardice!

At Willem's request, Congo asked the chief for an explanation of this unaccountable behaviour.

Macora admitted the truth of what was said, but added that his white friends would see nothing strange in it, if they were only better acquainted with the strategy of Moselekatse and his warriors.

The precaution of keeping scouts in the rear was not neglected; and, a few hours after the march had commenced, one of these brought the news that the Matabili were in pursuit.

As Macora had supposed, they had been waiting for him to forsake a position so favourable for defence.

As the white hunters had now experienced the advantage of receiving the pursuers in a fortified place, Hendrik and Arend, spurring their horses, rode some distance in advance of the herds, for the purpose of selecting a second battle-field.

In finding this, fortune refused to favour them for the second time. The country through which they were now passing was an open plain, presenting no natural advantages for anything but a "fair field and no favour." This was not what they required.

"We have gone far enough," said Hendrik, after galloping about a mile. "Our friends can hardly reach this place before being overtaken. We must turn back to them."

"Of course we must," mechanically replied Arend, who was earnestly gazing across the plain.

Hendrik turned his eyes in the same direction, and to his surprise saw from twenty to thirty men coming rapidly towards them.

"We are going to be surrounded!" said Arend, as he turned his horse to retreat.

Without further speech, the two galloped back to their companions.

"Macora was right," said Hendrik, as he joined Groot Willem and Hans. "We should not have left the place where we were able to keep these Matabili at bay. We have made a mistake."

While Macora was being informed that warriors had been seen ahead, several of the scouts driven in reported that a large body of the Matabili was rapidly approaching from the rear. For a moment Hans, Hendrik, and Arend were not quite certain that the white traders they had met the day before were much to blame for withdrawing from the scene of danger. To them life seemed of too much value to be relinquished without some powerful reason.

Hopes long and dearly cherished were now before the minds of our young adventurers. They could not avoid thinking of their own safety. But they had too much honour to think of deserting the brave Makololo, whom they themselves had been instrumental in bringing into trouble.

They all looked to Groot Willem, who would not abandon the brave chief, to whom they were so much indebted,—not even to save his own life. They faltered no longer. Macora's fate should be theirs.

The chief was now urged to order a halt of his people; and, in compliance with the request, he gave a shout that might have been heard nearly a mile off.

It was answered by several of those in advance, who were driving the cattle; but amongst the many responsive voices was one that all recognised with a frenzied joy.

The sound of that particular voice was heard at a great distance, and only indistinctly, but on hearing it the Makololo commenced leaping about the ground like lunatics, several of them shouting, "Sindo! Sindo!"

All hastened forward as fast as their limbs could carry them, and in a few minutes after were met by a large party of Makololo warriors, who communicated the pleasing intelligence that more were coming up close behind.

Sindo and his companions had succeeded in the accomplishment of their mission.

Ma-Mochisane, just at that crisis, chanced to be on a visit to the southern part of her dominions, and to have with her many warriors of different tribes of her people.

Macora, a friend of her childhood, was remembered. The desire of aiding him was backed by the hereditary hatred for the Matabili, and not a moment was lost in despatching a party of chosen fighting men to his assistance.

They had arrived just in time. Two hours later, and those they had been sent to rescue would have been engaged with their enemies without the advantage of a position favourable for defence.

The result was that, instead of encountering a small band of outcast and wearied Makololo, Moselekatse's men found themselves opposed by a large force of warriors fresh and vigorous for any fray,—men who had often been led to victory by the noble chief Sebituane.

Moselekatse's soldiers saw that there was but one way of saving themselves from the disgrace that threatened them; that was by a sudden change in the tactics they had been hitherto pursuing. They resolved on an immediate onslaught.

They made it, only to be repulsed.

After a short conflict they were completely routed, and retreated in a manner that plainly expressed their intention to discontinue the campaign.

From that hour the young hunters never heard of them again.

Three days after the retreat of the Matabili our adventurers were introduced at the court of Ma-Mochisane by Macora, who made formal declaration of his fidelity to his new sovereign.

On the return of the chief from his long exile he was enthusiastically received by his countrymen,—the more as from his having incurred the resentment of the Matabili.

Chapter Thirty Eight.

A Talk about Home.

"I have a favour to ask of you, my friends," said Hendrik, the day after they had been introduced at court. "I want a little information, if either of you can give it."

"Very well," said Willem; "I, for one, will do all in my power to instruct you. What do you wish to know?"

"If we are to stay in this part of the world any longer," continued Hendrik, "I wish some one to give me a good reason for our doing so. I am ready to return home."

"And so am I," said Arend.

"And I also," added Hans. "The last three or four weeks have given me quite enough of hunting giraffes, or anything else. We have been hunted too much ourselves."

"I'm sorry to hear you talking in this way," said Groot Willem, "for *I* am not ready to return yet. We have not accomplished the purpose for which we set forth."

"True," replied Hendrik, "and I believe we never shall."

"Why do you think so?" asked Willem, with a look of surprise.

"Tell me why I should *not* think so," answered Hendrik. "To begin with general principles, people are rarely successful in every undertaking in life. We have been fortunate on our two former expeditions, and we have no great cause to complain should we be disappointed in this one. We cannot always expect to win. Fortune is fickle; and my chief desire now is that we may reach home in safety."

"I am not prepared to go home yet," rejoined Willem, in a way that told his companions he was in earnest. "We have only been in the neighbourhood of the Limpopo for a few short weeks; and we have been successful in getting a good many hippopotamus teeth. We have made but one attempt to capture giraffes; and I have not come more than a thousand miles, to relinquish an undertaking because I have met with one failure. What are we here for? The journey from Graaf Reinet to this place should not be made for nothing. We must have something to show for the loss of our time, besides the loss of our horses; and when we have made four or five more unsuccessful attempts at procuring what we came for, then I'll listen patiently to your talk about returning,—not before."

Hendrik and Arend were thinking of the many narrow escapes from death they had met within the last few weeks, but perhaps more of their sweethearts. Hans could not withdraw his thoughts from the anticipated voyage to Europe but these motives for action would have been powerless as arguments with Groot Willem, even had they made

use of them. He had come to the north for two young giraffes. Both time and money had been lost in the expedition, and his companions could give no substantial reason why they should not make some further attempt to accomplish the object for which it had been undertaken.

Willem was generally inclined to yield to the wishes of his companions. On trivial affairs, he never made them unhappy by any spirit of opposition, nor did he suffer himself to be made so. But they could not control him now. It was not in the nature of either Hans, Hendrik, or Arend to return home and leave him alone; and since he continued, as Hendrik said, "obstinate as a *vlacke varke*" they were reluctantly compelled to remain.

They were told that within one day's journey to the west, there was a large forest of *cameel-doorn*, where giraffes were often seen, and they determined to pay this forest a visit.

Macora had become a great favourite at court; and, having the business on hand of establishing his tribe in a new home, he could not accompany them. He assured them, however that there was no fear of their not finding giraffes in the aforesaid forest, as well as a convenient place for constructing a trap to capture them. They would also have men to assist them.

In order not to put them to any trouble in communicating with him, he sent four of his best messengers along with them, two of whom were to be sent to him whenever the hunters had any important news to communicate.

With feelings of renewed pleasure, our young hunters once more set forth upon an expedition, which, instead of being a retreat from savage foes, was but the parting from friends,—that might be met again.

Hendrik and Arend had occasionally forgotten the allurements of home in the excitement of the chase; but when driven from one place

to another, and often in danger of losing their lives, it is not to be wondered at that their thoughts should revert to the tranquil scenes of civilised life.

Swartboy was highly delighted at thought of parting with the Makololo. For several days past he had been sorrowing within himself at the misfortune of being found in bad company, or professing to sorrow for it. What the Bushman's real opinions were, will ever be an unimportant mystery on earth; though he never lost an opportunity of endeavouring to prove that all the misfortunes occurring to his masters had been owing to the fact that they were guided by Congo,—that they had been in company with people who spoke a language the Kaffir could understand, and that he himself could not. This he seemed to think was sufficient reason for any trouble that might befall them. They had left the tribe now, and Swartboy had become one of ten, and not one among hundreds. He had certain duties to perform that gave him a status in the company. His complaints and suggestions were now listened to, and he began to give expression to the hope that he might yet succeed in bringing the expedition to a successful issue!

On the way to the mimosa forest nothing of any interest occurred, even to Hans, who, along the route, kept lingering behind his companions to examine the plants that were to be seen along the way. There was one little incident, however. Apparently a very interesting one to the dogs.

While passing an elevation that might almost have been called a mountain, a troop of chacmas, or dog-faced baboons was seen descending from the summit, probably in search of water. The hunters had often heard that dogs have a greater hatred for these animals than for any others; and they now had strong evidence of the truth of this statement. Only one dog of the whole pack had ever encountered chacmas before; yet, immediately on seeing them, all seemed aroused to the highest pitch of fury it was possible for canine nature to attain. Simultaneously they rushed towards the baboons, baying savagely as they ran.

Sheer instinct seemed to have stirred them to this animosity against animals whose aspect, in some respects, resembled their own.

"Ride forward," shouted Willem, "or our dogs will be killed."

Up to this time the baboons had shown no disposition to retreat. They appeared to think that the trouble of fighting dogs was not so great as that of returning up the mountain; but at the first report of Groot Willem's roer, they scattered off after a fashion that left the dogs not the slightest chance of overtaking them.

Only one of them remained behind, and it was the animal that had received the shot. Being wounded, it was immediately attacked by the dogs, who could not be choked off till they had torn the ugly brute into shreds.

Chapter Thirty Nine.

Among the Mimosas.

The hunters were now intent upon but one object,—that of procuring the giraffes. The roar of a lion near the camp could not have drawn them out of it. An elephant carrying many pounds of ivory was a sight that did not awaken sufficient interest to tempt a pursuit. All had a full appreciation of the task to be accomplished before they could return to their home, and they would allow nothing to interfere with the business before them.

By the side of the mimosa grove, which was now to be the scene of their labours, ran a small stream. On its banks they soon discovered the spoor of giraffes. Some of the tracks were of small dimensions, evidently the hoof-marks of young calves. Groot Willem was in high spirits. There was once more a prospect of satisfying his hunter ambition. His companions, though not so confident of success, were equally as anxious to obtain it.

The day after their arrival on the borders of the *cameel-doorn* forest, a drove of giraffes was seen coming out from among the timber and making their way to the stream.

The timid animals, unaware of their proximity to man, walked on until within one hundred and fifty yards of the spot where the hunters stood, before seeing the latter. They then turned suddenly, and with a swift but awkward gait retreated westward across the open plain, and entirely away from the mimosa forest. Hendrik and Arend were with some difficulty restrained from pursuing them. There was an opportunity for an exciting chase; and to remain inactive and see the giraffes disappear over the plain, required a strong self-denying effort.

It was Groot Willem who held them in check.

"Did you not see that there were three young ones in the drove?" said he. "Their home is very likely in this forest and we must not frighten them away from it."

"They have already been hunted," answered Hendrik. "I am sure I saw an arrow sticking in the side of one of them. Some black has amused himself by torturing a creature he was unable to kill."

"It's a great pity they saw us at all," said Willem; "but they will probably return to the shelter of the trees. We must make sure that they have their haunt about here; and then we can send for some of Macora's people, and let them build us another trap. That appears to be the only way of catching them."

Another day passed, in which the hunters amused themselves in killing reed bucks and other game in larger quantities than they required. Nothing more of the giraffes was seen; and on the next day the party started off on the spoor of the giraffes they had seen.

Another mimosa forest was discovered about fifteen miles farther to the west; and on riding around it, they came upon a small lagoon. Its banks were trampled with the hoof-marks of many giraffes, some of which were very small. They had evidently been lately made, and by the same drove they had seen three days before. From this it was evident that the flock frequented both forests.

"We have seen quite enough for the present," said Willem. "Our next plan is to send for Macora's promised assistance, and construct another trap."

In this all the others agreed; and then arose the question. Where shall the trap be built?

"We may as well have it at the other grove," said Hendrik, "for we can easily drive them back to the place where they were first seen."

No strong reasons could be advanced against this suggestion, and it was adopted.

Next morning two of the Makololo were despatched to Macora, for the purpose of claiming his promised assistance; and all went back to the forest first visited, and there encamped.

On the day the chief's workmen were expected to arrive, Hendrik and Arend had ridden a few miles up the stream seeking for something to destroy. Impelled by that incomprehensible desire for taking life so natural to the hunter, they could not rest quietly at night unless they had killed something during the day.

They had arrived at a thick belt of forest, consisting of acacias and evergreen shrubs, and trees of the strelitzia, zamia, and speckboom, when their ears were assailed by the sound of breaking branches, and the unmistakable rushing of some large animals through the thicket.

"Prepare yourself, Arend; we may have some sport here," cried Hendrik, and both drew rein to await the *dénouement*.

A few seconds only elapsed when the forms of two full-grown giraffes were observed breaking from the thicket. On the back of one of these was a leopard. Blood was streaming down its breast, and it was reeling wildly in its gait.

Knowing that the leopard is a cowardly creature, and that its capability for taking its prey is so great that it rarely suffers from want of food, and never where there is an abundance of game, the youths knew that its attack on the giraffe must have been caused by some other motive than that of satisfying the appetite of hunger. Its young had been disturbed in their lair, or the giraffes had in some other way aroused its animosity. On reaching the open ground it was seen that the unencumbered giraffe quickly forsook its companion, which was now showing unmistakable signs of being able to go but a very little farther. Its life-blood was flowing from its neck, and the stately monster was about to topple over under the injuries it had received from its fierce, agile enemy. The hunters were spectators of an incident such had probably never before happened,—that of a leopard killing a giraffe. Circumstances had favoured the beast of prey; and the huge ruminant, that had in some unconscious way aroused its anger, was being destroyed by an animal not the tenth part of its own strength or bulk.

Two dogs that were along with the hunters, not heeding the voices of their owners, essayed to take a part in the destruction of the innocent creature. Both ran yelping after it, and endeavoured to lay hold of its heels. Lifting one of its feet, the tottering camelopard dashed it with unerring aim against one of the dogs, with a force that threw the cur several feet backward, where it lay sprawling in the last convulsive motions of life. By making this effort, the reeling body of the giraffe lost its balance, and throwing its head violently to one side it fell heavily to the earth, its shoulders covering part of the leopard's body, and crushing the latter to death. Like Samson, the leopard had brought destruction upon itself!

Handing the reins of the bridle to Arend, Hendrik walked up within a few feet of the leopard's head, and put an end to its snarling screams by a ball through the brain.

What little life remained in the giraffe soon departed from it, along with the blood which the beast of prey had let out of its veins. Standing over the two carcasses, the hunters tried to arrive at some comprehension of the strange scene they had witnessed. They had heard of a lion having ridden on the back of a giraffe for a distance of many miles, and had treated the story as a fabrication. Before them was evidence that a leopard had travelled no little distance in a similar manner. Why should not a lion do the same? Notwithstanding the thickness of the hide that covered the neck of the giraffe, it had been torn to shreds, that were hanging down over its shoulders. The long claws and tusks of the leopard had been repeatedly buried in its flesh, arteries and veins had been dragged from their beds and laid open, ere the strength and life of the animal had forsaken it. This could not have been the work of a few seconds.

Several minutes may have been required for inflicting the injuries the giraffe had suffered, and during that time its merciless foe was probably wholly unconscious that it was being borne far from the scene where the attack had been commenced. Death had saved it from the surprise of discovering that, in the practice of its ferocious fury, it had been carried far away from the young it was making such efforts to defend.

Chapter Forty.
Another Disappointment.

Three days after the departure of the messengers, Macora's promise of aid was again fulfilled by the arrival of thirty workmen. A site for the hopo was chosen about half a mile from the forest edge, and the construction of it was immediately commenced.

Anxious to learn the result of another attempt at capturing giraffes, the hunters toiled early and late. Two of them were constantly handling the axes, felling small trees, which the blacks transported to the place where they were to be used, while the other two superintended the setting of the sticks. The labour of constructing this trap was not so great as the other, for a more convenient site had been chosen. The two fences were to be placed a little beyond the sides of the mimosa grove, which was not more than half a mile wide; nor was the pit made so large as the first; and by toiling nearly all the time from sunrise to sunset, the contrivance was got ready for use in seven days.

While the work was progressing, several giraffes had been seen in the neighbourhood, and the hopes of the hunters were once more in the ascendant. All were in high spirits with the prospect that, within two or three days, they might be on their return to Graaf Reinet. To make more sure of success they paid a visit to the second mimosa grove, taking along with them a large party of the Makololo. Their object was to drive the giraffes out of that tract of timber into the one where the trap was being prepared for them. During their excursion no camelopards were seen in this second grove; but this, in the opinion of the hunters, was of little consequence. They would be discovered in the place where they were wanted; and in this hope they hastened back to the hopo.

The same means for driving the giraffes into the trap were again employed. A regular battue was established,—all hands taking share in it. The Makololo, accompanied by their dogs, and making as much noise as lay in their power, passed through the tract of timber, while Willem and Hendrik rode along one side, and Hans and Arend on the other.

As the beaters drew near the end where the trap was established, Willem began to have an apprehension that something was wrong. No herds of large game were seen escaping from the cover. No sounds of crashing sticks and breaking branches struck upon his ear. The forest seemed deserted by all but the noisy Makololo, who were working their way through its shady aisles. The termination of the

battue was at length reached. Within the pen were seen enclosed a few small antelopes of common species, a pair of brindled gnus, and some wild hogs.

This was a bitter disappointment. The giraffes had got away, no one knew how or where. They might return again; but no one could be certain of this. Those amongst the Makololo who professed to be best acquainted with their habit, expressed the belief that they had migrated to some extensive forests far-away towards the south, and that no more camelopards might be found in that neighbourhood for the six months to follow. They (the Makololo) were anxious to return to their homes. Perhaps this may have guided them in their opinion. They had huts to build, and land to cultivate for their families, and had neglected these duties in obedience to the command of their chief. The hunters could not reasonably detain them longer, and, though with reluctance, permitted them to take their departure.

Three days were passed in riding about the neighbourhood, and exploring it within a circle of twenty miles. Several small groves of *cameel-doorn* were found, but no camelopards could be seen. They had evidently forsaken that district or country, and might not return for many weeks or months. The Makololo appeared to have spoken the truth.

"I don't say that we have been acting like fools," said Arend; "but I will say that we deserve to be called nothing else, if we squander any more time in search of what fate has decreed that we are not to obtain."

"Go on, Arend!" exclaimed Hendrik. "I could not talk more sensibly myself."

"I have nothing more to say at present," said Arend, with a significant shake of the head, as much as to say that the subject was too plain to require discussion.

"What should we do, Hans?" asked Groot Willem.

"Start for home," was the ready answer. "I am now of Hendrik's opinion," continued the botanist. "We should not expect to be successful in every undertaking, and we have for some time been engaged on one in which we seem destined to fail."

"Very well," said Groot Willem. "Let us first go back to the country of Macora. It will be so far on our way to Graaf Reinet."

Seeing that Swartboy was anxious to give his opinion on this important subject, Hendrik was kind enough to give him a chance by asking for it. The Bushman possessed to an extraordinary degree the not unusual accomplishment of saying a very little in a great many words. Fortunately, for the gratification of his vanity, the hunters were at supper, and had time to listen to his circumlocution.

The failure of the expedition so far was, in Swartboy's opinion, wholly owing to Congo. He had known from the first that no success could attend them while guided by a Kaffir, or any race of blacks whose language a Kaffir could understand.

Swartboy further informed them that in his childhood he had daily seen giraffes; and that if they were amongst his countrymen, the Bushmen, who, in his opinion, were honest and intelligent compared with other Africans, they would have no difficulty in procuring what they required. This communication, to those who knew that the Bushmen were, perhaps, the lowest specimens of humanity to be found in all Africa, only created a smile on the faces of his listeners; but with this proof of his eloquence Swartboy seemed quite satisfied.

On their arrival at Macora's new settlement, the chief expressed much regret at the failure of their expedition, but could give Willem but little or no hope that there was other chance of success, at least for some time to come.

Camelopards, he said, often migrated from one district to another, travelling for several days at a time, and often going thirty or forty miles a day. A drove containing young ones, such as were required,

might not be seen in the neighbourhood for several weeks. He still promised to render all the assistance himself and tribe were capable of affording.

Willem might have remained to try another trap, but the voice of his companions was in favour of at once setting out for Graaf Reinet. This soon became too emphatic for him to resist, and the great hunter had to yield. A sort of compromise was, however, agreed upon, which was that they should go home, not on a direct course for Graaf Reinet, but through the country of the Bechuanas,—crossing some districts inhabited by the Bushmen. Thence they could turn eastward and homeward.

In this journey Willem promised to cause them no unnecessary delay; and his companions agreed to do their best in aiding him to accomplish his cherished purpose.

In Macora's tribe were four young men who had a strong desire to visit the white settlements, and learn something more of the customs of a civilised people than could be gathered from occasional hunters and traders. These young men were furnished by their friends with an outfit of oxen, and some merchandise in the shape of leopard skins, ostrich-feathers, and ivory. They were instructed by Macora to render all the assistance they could to his friend Willem and his young associates.

On leaving, the hunters were escorted by the chief and other leading men of the tribe for a distance of several miles. At parting with these, our adventurers had every reason to know that they were taking leave of true friends.

The chief and Sindo were nearly disconsolate at the separation, especially from Groot Willem, to whom both declared that they owed their lives. Each promised sometime to pay him a visit in his far-away home. The hunters started forth on their journey under the firm impression that amongst the Makololo were men possessing almost every noble attribute of human nature.

Chapter Forty One.

A Herd of Buffaloes.

When on what might be termed the way back to Graaf Reinet, Hans, Hendrik, and Arend were on very good terms with themselves and everybody else. This was not the case with Groot Willem. He moved on along with the others because there was still a prospect of meeting with giraffes; but the fear of reaching the settlements without taking a pair of young ones back with him was a source of constant annoyance.

He was inclined to linger on the road, and never lost an opportunity of delaying the march in pursuit of different animals, either for amusement or for food.

On the third morning after parting with Macora a large herd of buffaloes was observed. They were pasturing around the base of a hill about half a mile from the line of route on which our travellers were proceeding. In an instant Groot Willem was in his saddle and riding towards them. The others seemed rather reluctant to accompany him.

"Here's a delay of another day," exclaimed Arend. "Willem will kill a buffalo, and insist on our staying to eat it."

"Very likely," said Hendrik; "but I don't see why he should have all the sport to himself."

Leaping into their saddles Hendrik and Arend rode after Willem, and were followed by two of the Makololo mounted on oxen. The patient and philosophical Hans remained behind, to await their return.

Following a course that would place him in advance of the herd, Willem, who did not wish to frighten the buffaloes by charging rapidly upon them, was soon overtaken by the others.

The buffaloes—more than two hundred in number—were all moving in one direction, but very slowly, as they were engaged in grazing.

When the hunters had got within about three hundred yards of them, they all raised their heads, and, after gazing for a moment at the strange creatures who had come to disturb their repast, again lowered them, and continued quietly pasturing.

The leader of the herd had not yet given the signal for flight.

“We must ride farther to the left and get round them,” suggested Willem. “Some of the old bulls may charge upon us, and, if so, we had better retreat up the hill.”

By the time the hunters had reached the sloping ground, and got within a hundred paces of the herd, several of the bulls had placed themselves in an attitude of defiance, and stood fronting the enemy, as if to cover the retreat of the cows and calves, for there were several of them in the drove.

A good shot is seldom made from the back of a horse. Knowing this, the hunters dismounted; and, taking steady aim, fired, each having selected a victim. The three shots were discharged within the same number of seconds; and, on firing, each of the hunters hastened to regain his saddle. On receiving the volley, several bulls broke from the line and charged furiously forward upon their assailants.

At sight of them, the horses, anxious to get out of the way, began to pitch and rear, so that it was difficult to mount them. Hendrik and Arend succeeded in regaining their saddles; but Willem failed.

The horse which had often carried him within a few yards of an enraged elephant, was now struck frantic with fear at the bellowing of the wounded bulls. As they made their impetuous charge, he endeavoured to get loose from his master. The more the hand of Willem strove to restrain him, the more anxious he seemed to be off; and notwithstanding the hunter's great strength, he was dragged on the
bridle



until one of the reins broke; and the other was pulled through his grasp with a velocity that cut his fingers nearly to the bone. By this time one of the bulls was close up to him. Notwithstanding his great size, Groot Willem was neither unwieldy nor awkward in action. On the contrary, he was swift of foot; but, for all this, there was no hope of his being able to outrun an African buffalo.

So sudden had been the charge of the angry animals, that one of the oxen ridden by the Makololo, had not time to be got out of the way, and was abandoned by his owner. As good luck would have it for Willem, the unfortunate ox was the means of saving his life. Charging upon it, the buffalo thrust one of its long horns through the ribs of the ox, lifting the saddle clear from its back, and laying the animal itself along the earth, dead as if struck down by a pole-axe.

The buffalo was itself now attacked by three or four dogs, that served for some time to engage its attention.

For a good while its canine assailants continued to keep clear of both its hoofs and horns; till one of them, essaying to seize it by the snout, was struck down and trampled under foot. The vindictive nature of the African buffalo was now displayed before the eyes of the spectators. Not contented with having killed the dog, it knelt down upon the carcass, crushing it under its knees, as if determined to leave not a bone unbroken! The animal seemed angry with itself for its inability to mangle its victim with hoof and horns, at the same time.

While this scene was transpiring, Groot Willem was given time to reload his roer. A bullet through its body brought the buffalo again to its knees, from which it had just arisen to continue the pursuit. Bellowing in a manner that caused the air to vibrate for a mile around the spot, the creature once more rose to its feet, staggered a pace or two, and then sank back to the earth, to rise no more. It had been severely wounded by the first fire, and the grass for a large space round it was sprinkled with its blood.

Groot Willem was not the only one who had been charged upon. Arend and Hendrik were also obliged to retreat, each pursued by a brace of bulls. Fortunately the hill was close at hand, and against its sloping side they urged their horses both with whip and spur.

The immense weight of the buffalo bull hinders him from running rapidly up hill, although in the contrary direction he will often overtake a horse. As the animals in question soon perceived the hopelessness of the chase, they abandoned it; and trotting back to the drove, now going off over the plain below, they left the young hunters in quiet possession of the spoil they had obtained. This was what the hunters supposed they would do. They soon saw their mistake, as the four bulls, instead of continuing on after the retreating drove, turned suddenly to one side, and rushed towards a wounded bull that was lagging a long way in the rear. A spectacle

was now witnessed which caused astonishment to those who saw it. Instead of trying to protect their injured companion, the four bulls set upon it, flinging it from its feet, and goring it with their horns. This cruel treatment was continued until the unfortunate animal lay still in death. They did not appear to be inspired by any feeling of rage, but only acting under some instinct not understood. There seemed something horrible in this attack upon their disabled companion. But alas! it was not so very unlike what, often occurs among men,—misfortune too frequently turning friends into enemies.

After settling with their wounded comrade, the four bulls continued their retreat, and soon overtook the herd they had tarried to protect.

The buffalo shot by Willem was the largest our hunters had yet killed; and curiosity led them to make a note of its dimensions. It was eight feet in length, and nearly six in height to the summit of the shoulders. The tips of its long horns were five feet three inches asunder. Across one shoulder, and a part of the neck, was a broad scar more than two feet in length. This scar was conspicuous at some distance, notwithstanding the animal's hide was covered with a thick coat of dark brown hair, showing that it was not very far advanced in years. The wound leaving this mark had evidently been given by the claws of a lion. This they knew to be the case, from seeing three scratches parallel with each other, showing where the lion's claws had been drawn transversely across the shoulder.

Some steak and other choice portions, being cut from the brace of bulls, were packed upon the saddle croup to be carried away; and after a short halt, and a feast upon fresh buffalo beef, our adventurers resumed their interrupted journey.

Chapter Forty Two.
The Poisoned Spring.

On the evening of the eighth day after leaving Macora the hunters encamped on the bank of a small stream, which they computed to be about one hundred and twenty miles south of the place from where their return journey commenced.

Within the mind of Groot Willem, there was still a lingering hope that they might again meet with giraffes; and he had never lost an opportunity of looking for them along the route.

The delays caused by his explorations had been a source of constant annoyance to the others; but as Willem had a will of his own,—one, nevertheless, united with a disposition so cheerful as to be proof against any attempts at a controversy,—his companions were compelled to be content with the knowledge that they were slowly progressing towards Graaf Reinet.

In the morning after entering their new camp, they arose to look upon a scene more beautiful than any other they had yet beheld in the extended country over which they had wandered. Near them was a grove of oleander bushes, loaded with beautiful blossoms. Every branch was adorned by the presence of two or more beautiful green sugar-birds,—the *certhia (Nectarinia) famosa*. Nothing in nature can exceed in splendour the plumage of the sugar-bird. The little vale in which the hunters had encamped seemed a paradise, bathed in golden sunlight; and even the cattle appeared to leave it with some reluctance.

On moving down the bed of the watercourse, they found that they were not travelling by the side of a running stream, but by what, in the dry season, was a chain of lakelets or water-holes. After crossing a bar between two of these ponds, they were much annoyed by a horrible stench borne upon the breeze, and coming from the direction they intended to take. As they journeyed on, so offensive grew the smell that a halt was made, and a resolution passed without a

dissenting voice, that they should turn to the east and get to windward of this offensive odour, still unexplained.

While doing this, they observed to the west, a flock of vultures, wheeling high up in the air; and, down upon the plain below, hundreds of jackals and hyenas were seen leaping about. So large an assemblage of these carrion-feeding creatures called for an explanation; and, on riding nearer, the hunters saw a number of dead antelopes lying within a few feet of each other.

As they rode farther along the plain, more dead antelopes were seen, and they began to fear that they had entered some valley of death, from which they might never go out. The mystery—for such it was to them—was readily cleared up by the Makololo and Congo. The antelopes had been drinking water from a pond or spring poisoned by the natives; which proved that our travellers had arrived in the neighbourhood of some tribe of the Bechuanas. Of this method for wantonly destroying animal life, practised by many of the native African tribes, the hunters had often heard. The many stories which they had been told of the wholesale destruction of game by poison, and which they had treated with incredulity, after all, had not been exaggerated. They estimated the number of dead antelopes lying within a circumference of a mile, at not less than two hundred. One of the water-holes of the chain by which they had halted, had been poisoned. A herd of antelopes had quenched their thirst at the place, and had only climbed up the bank to lie down and die.

"We have been very fortunate," remarked Groot Willem, "in not encamping by the poisoned water ourselves. Had we done so, we would all, by this time, have been food for the jackals and hyenas, as these antelopes now are."

To this unqualified surmise, Congo did not wholly give his assent. He believed that men would not be likely to drink a sufficient quantity of the water to cause death; though he further stated that their cattle and horses, had they quenched their thirst at the pond, would have been killed to a certainty.

For the sake of procuring three or four antelopes for food, with the least trouble, the Bechuanas had destroyed a whole herd. This is the usual economy practised by those who live in a land teeming with a too great abundance of animal life.

To get away from the sickening scene thus presented to their view, even Groot Willem was willing to continue the journey; and it was resumed, all being thankful that the distance accomplished on the day before had not been so long, by a mile or two, as it might have been.

Knowing that they were in the neighbourhood of Bechuanas, the Makololo professed some fear for their cattle. They said that these might be stolen or taken from them by force. But the hunters believed such fears too flattering to the Bechuana character. From all they had heard of the people composing that numerous nation, they were under the impression that they were too cowardly and indolent to be regarded with any apprehension.

The next morning, when continuing their journey, Arend, who was riding a little in advance, suddenly reined up, at the same time, calling out—

“I see a kraal and a field of maize.”

Groot Willem and Hendrik rode forward, and became convinced that Arend was in the right. Almost at the same instant, the hunter descried other objects in which he was more interested than in a village of Bechuanas, or anything belonging to them. Two large elephants were seen moving across the plain, in the direction of the maize-field.

“Let us steal upon them silently,” suggested Willem. “We need not all go. Two or three will be enough. Some one must stay with the cattle.”

Saying this, he rode off, followed by Hendrik and Arend.

Hans assented to stay behind, attended by Swartboy; and Congo, with the assistance of the Makololo, halted the cattle and pack-horses; thus tarrying, they were witnesses of what they expected to prove an interesting scene. They saw nothing to prevent the stalkers from obtaining a fine opportunity for a shot; and they knew that a wounded elephant seldom seeks safety in flight. One or both of the animals would be killed; and the violent death of an elephant is, under all circumstances, a spectacle painfully interesting.

"But for us," said Groot Willem, as he rode by the side of Hendrik, "those elephants would destroy that field of maize. The owners of the field could not prevent them, if they were to try. They cannot even frighten them away from their work of devastation."

The young hunter was soon to be undeceived.

Chapter Forty Three.

Excitement for all.

The two elephants were moving along what seemed to be a narrow path leading to the maize-field, or the kraal beyond it. They were in no great haste, but going as though conscious that a favourite article of food was near, and that they were pretty sure of obtaining it.

"When once they get engaged upon the corn," said Hendrik, "they are ours. They won't notice us, and we shall have an opportunity for getting a good shot."

Suddenly one of the elephants—the foremost one—was seen to sink into the earth! The other stopped for a moment, as though endeavouring to comprehend the cause of his companion's

disappearance. It then turned round and commenced carefully treading the back track.

"A pit," exclaimed Hendrik. "One of the elephants has gone down into a pit."

"On, on! let us kill the other," shouted Groot Willem, as he urged his gigantic horse into a gallop. Hendrik and Arend galloped after.

The retreating elephant was apparently in no haste to get out of their way, but moved leisurely along.

When the three youths were within a hundred yards of it, uttering a trumpet-like sound, it turned and charged toward them. Expecting something of the kind, they were not unprepared. Groot Willem instantly brought the roer to his shoulder and fired.

The loud report of the gun was accompanied by the sharp cracks of the two rifles carried by his companions. Hendrik and Arend wheeled their horses to the right; Willem turned to the left, and the huge monster rushed between them.

For a moment it stopped, as if undecided which to pursue first. Had the three gone in the same direction, there probably would not have been an instant's hesitation, and one of them would have risked being overtaken. That moment of indecision gave them time for forming a plan, and gaining a start upon their pursuer.

"The pit! the pit!" shouted Hendrik. "Ride for the pit!"

His command was instantly obeyed.

The elephant turned, and, observing the direction of their retreat, continued to pursue them; but in a slow, leisurely way, as though not wholly decided whether to follow them or not. At that instant was

heard a loud prolonged bellowing,—the voice of an elephant in the agony of despair. It proceeded from the pit.

The pursuer instantly came to a stand. The cry of its companion in distress awoke a feeling more human than that of revenge. It was fear,—a fear that seemed to control its power of reasoning, since it immediately turned tail and retreated from the danger that had befallen its friend. While making its retreat, it appeared to choose the tracks made by the horses in approaching the spot; as though instinct admonished it that by so doing it would avoid any pitfalls that might be constructed on the plain.

“After him! Follow him up,” cried Arend. “Hans is in danger.”

Only a short while was spent in reloading their guns; then, urging their horses to the greatest speed, they galloped after the elephant.

Hans and his dusky companions had not been uninterested spectators of the actions of the others, and now saw that they would soon be called upon to become actors in a similar scene. The elephant was rushing rapidly down upon them, but the thought of flight only arose in their minds to be immediately dismissed. The pack-horses must be defended at all cost; and the young botanist, bidding Swartboy and Congo look after them, rode out in front to meet the advancing foe.

He was mounted on a horse that would not stand quiet for two seconds at a time; and as his life might depend on the correctness of his aim, he dismounted for the purpose of firing. His horse, released, galloped away from his side. The wounded elephant was not more than fifty paces off, and now turned in pursuit of the horse, apparently without seeing the enemy it should have feared most.

This was the opportunity for Hans, and he did not allow it to escape him. Steadily raising the gun to his shoulder, he aimed at the huge creature, just behind its fore leg, as the latter was thrown

forward in the stride. On shambled the enraged monster with a deafening roar.

The other horses had already broken from the control of their keepers, and were galloping in different directions. A few long stretches and the tusks of the elephant were close upon Congo's steed, which chanced to be crossing the line of pursuit at right angles. In another instant the horse was tossed into the air, and, passing six or eight feet high above the monster's back, fell heavily upon the ground behind it. But the Kaffir had slid out of the saddle and stood upon the ground unharmed.

The effort made in destroying the horse was the last the wounded elephant was able to perform. The dogs were clustering upon its heels; and as it reeled wildly about to get at them, it seemed to grow giddy, and at length fell heavily along the earth.

"I do believe," said Hendrik, who at this moment rode up along with Willem and Arend,— "yes, I'm quite certain that the dogs think they have dragged that elephant down!"

"Den they is as big an ole fool as Congo," said Swartboy who was annoyed at the fact that the Kaffir had just performed a feat for which he would receive the approbation of his young masters. Congo only answered with a smile. He had again aroused the jealousy of his rival, and was satisfied.

The elephant, which proved to be a very large bull, expired a few minutes after falling. Its tusks were over five feet in length, and to Swartboy was given the task of extracting them.

The horse ridden by Congo was of course no longer available; and the lading of another had to be distributed amongst the remaining pack-horses, to provide the Kaffir with a mount. The spot was soon deserted.

Hendrik, Groot Willem, and Arend, were anxious to be off to the pit, into which the other elephant had fallen, having never seen one caught in that way before.

"Hans," inquired Hendrik, "will you look after everything here, or will you come along with us?"

"O, I prefer staying," said the quiet Hans. "Perhaps by doing so I may again come in for the lion's share of the sport, as I have just now."

"We must take Congo along with us," suggested Arend. "It is certain there will be some of the natives at the pit. We saw several houses near the maize-field, and there is no doubt a large kraal."

"Yes, come with us, Congo," commanded his master, as he rode off, followed by all the others except the good-natured Hans and his servant Swartboy, who usually came in for the biggest share of the business, while the others appropriated the amusement.

Chapter Forty Four.

The Pit.

We believe there is a different sound expressed by each of the words, roar, shriek, yell, and scream: but the first expression of pain or terror of the elephant in the pit,—the sound that had caused its companion to retreat, seemed a combination of all the above. Since it first shook the surrounding atmosphere, it had been often repeated and the young hunters, familiar with most methods of killing elephants, were under the impression that the one in the pit was being subjected to some torture more horrible than any they had ever heard of.

"They have probably placed a pointed stake in the pit," observed Hendrik, as they approached, "and the animal is impaled upon it."

On coming nearer to the place, they saw that there were people around the pit,—both men and women. One of the men, intensely Ethiopic in appearance, came forward as the hunting party approached, and by signs offered for sale the tusks of the elephant still roaring underneath them.

“We are safe with these people,” remarked Congo. “They are used to traders, and will do us no more harm than to cheat us in a bargain, if they can.”

On arriving at the pit, our adventurers saw that it was not a square hole with an upright stake in the centre, as Hendrik had supposed. It was oval at the top and contracted to a point at the bottom, in the shape of an inverted cone, leaving no level space on which the elephant could stand. Its four feet were jammed together; and, compelled to support the weight of its immense body in this position, the agony it suffered must have been as intense as the creature was capable of enduring.

This pit, the plan of which was devised with devilish ingenuity for producing unnecessary torture, was about nine feet long and apparently seven or eight in depth, and the struggles of the elephant only had the effect of wedging its huge feet more closely together and increasing its tortures.

Two pits had been dug but a short distance from one another; and the wisdom of this plan had a living illustration before their eyes. Although the two had been nicely concealed, and the excavated earth carried away from the place, both had been discovered by the elephant, but one of them too late. Had there been but one, it would not have been caught, for it evidently had placed a foot on the first, detected the hidden danger, and, while in the act of avoiding it, had fallen suddenly and irrecoverably on to the other.

All the men standing around were armed, the most of them with assegais or spears, but they were making no attempt to end the agony of the captured elephant.

Groot Willem stepped in front of it, and was raising the long barrel of his roer to the level of one of the elephant's eyes, when he was stopped by two or three of the blacks, who rushed forward and restrained him from discharging the piece.

Congo, who had professed to understand what they said, told Willem that the elephant was not to be killed at present.

"What can be the reason of that?" exclaimed Arend. "Can they wish the animal to live, merely for the sake of witnessing its sufferings? It cannot be saved. It must die where it is now."

"I'll tell you how it is," said Hendrik. "They have a fine taste for music, and they intend keeping the elephant in that pit, like a bird in its cage, for the purpose of hearing the fine notes it is giving out."

One of the blacks was armed with a gun, all but the lock, which last was wanting! The attention of Groot Willem was particularly directed to this weapon, its owner holding it out before him, and making signs that he wished some powder and a bullet for the purpose of loading it. Willem desired to be informed how the ammunition was to be used, but the black, by a shake of his woolly head, candidly admitted that he did not know.

"Ask him what he brought the gun here for," said Willem, speaking to Congo.

In answer to the question, the man made another confession of ignorance.

A little excitement was now observed amongst the blacks, and another party was seen approaching from the direction of the village. They brought news that the head man of the kraal was coming in person, and that he was to have the honour of killing the elephant. He had lately purchased a new gun from some *smouse* or trader, and

he was about to exhibit his skill in the use of it, before the eyes of his admiring subjects.

On the arrival of the chief, the young hunters saw that the gun in his possession was a common soldier's musket, very much out of order, and one that a sportsman would hesitate about discharging.

"The man will never kill the great brute with that thing," said Hendrik. "He will be far more likely to kill himself, or some of those around him. If the elephant waits till it is despatched in that way, it stands a good chance to die of starvation."

The chief seemed very vain of being the owner of a gun, and anxious to show to his subjects the proper mode of despatching an elephant. Standing about twenty-five paces from the pit, he took aim at the animal's head and fired.

The report of the musket was followed by a roar more expressive of rage than pain, and a small protuberance on the elephant's head showed that the ball had done no more than to cause a slight abrasion of the skin. The operation of reloading the musket was performed in about six minutes and again the chief fired. This time, standing at the distance of fifteen paces. The elephant again astonished the chief and his followers, by continuing to live.

Another six or seven minutes were passed in loading the gun, which was again fired as before. The only acknowledgment the huge beast made of having received the shot, was another loud cry of impotent rage.

The company around the pit was then joined by a party not hitherto on the ground. It consisted of Hans with Swartboy and the other followers of the expedition. They had extracted the tusks of their elephant, lashed them with rheims to the pack-saddles of two horses, and brought them along.

"What is all this about?" asked Hans. "Can't you kill that elephant? I've heard several shots."

"They will not allow us to try," replied Groot Willem. "A chief is trying to kill it with an old musket, and will neither allow me to fire, nor that well-armed gentleman standing near him." Willem pointed to him who carried the gun without a lock.

At this moment, a communication was made to the Kaffir by the native chief. Annoyed at his want of success, he had some doubts as to his weapon being what had been represented by the smouse from whom he had purchased it. He wished to make a comparison of its destructive power with one of their guns, and Groot Willem was invited to take a shot at the elephant.

"But, baas Willem," said Congo, as he finished this communication, "you not do that, you not shoot the elephant."

"Why?" asked Willem, in surprise.

"You kill um with you roer, and then they want from you. They want it, and sure take it."

"Take what—the elephant?"

"No, baas Willem, the roer," answered the Kaffir.

Though not afraid of having his gun taken from him, Groot Willem and his companions were unwilling to have any difficulty with the blacks; and the invitation of the chief was courteously declined. The excuse made was that, after the failure of the great man himself, any similar attempts on their part would certainly be unsuccessful.

A general invitation was now given to the company to join in despatching the elephant; and it was immediately assailed by more than a dozen men armed with assegais and javelins. They succeeded

in killing it in a little less than half an hour; and, during that time, the torture to which the poor beast was subjected aroused the indignation of our adventurers, who, if allowed, could have released it from its agonies in half a score of seconds. They were true hunters, and, although not sparing of animal life, they took no delight in its tortures.

Chapter Forty Five.

On the Karroo.

After killing the elephant, the natives commenced the less difficult task of cutting it up and carrying it off to their kraal. The feet were reserved for the especial use of the chief; and, while waiting for some of his dependents to procure them, he granted our hunters an audience. They were desirous to learn whether the kraal was ever visited by traders,—a class of people they were anxious to meet, though Groot Willem was more anxious to know whether giraffes ever visited the neighbourhood. Congo was called, and for some time he and the chief were heard talking in loud tones, and both at the same time; neither exhibiting the least inclination to listen to one another! Their voices grew louder and louder; and our adventurers saw that they were engaged in a hot dispute, that threatened to end in something more unpleasant than a war of words.

“What does he say, Congo,” asked Willem.

“I don’t know, baas Willem,” answered the Kaffir with a shake of the head, that betrayed some shame at his own ignorance.

“How is that?” demanded his master. “Can’t you understand the language he speaks?”

“No, baas Willem, he talks no Zooloo, no Kaffir of any kind.”

“Then why were you pretending to interpret his language a few minutes ago?” asked Hendrik.

"I was trying to learn it," answered Congo, in a tone conveying the belief that he had given a satisfactory answer.

"We have no time to stop here for you to learn a language," said Hendrik. "And if you can't converse with the man why did you not say so? How came you to tell us what he was saying a few minutes ago?"

The attention of all was now called to Swartboy, who seemed overpowered with joy.

It was some time before he was able to make himself understood; but at last he was heard to mutter:—

"I tole you that Congo was a ole fool. Now you all see for yourselves. Look at 'im! Don't he look four, five, six times fool. I tole ye so."

"Can *you* understand what the chief says?" asked Groot Willem.

"Yaas, baas Willem; any Swartman know dat."

"Then talk to him yourself. You know what we wish to learn from him."

The Bushman's features now assumed a quizzically comical expression; and from this the hunters saw that he had become serious.

Going up to the chief he commenced a conversation, from which Willem learned, after it was translated to him, that no giraffes had been seen in the neighbourhood for many moons. Very few traders visited the tribe; and those who had done so had not left a good name behind them.

The chief lived in the kraal seen not far away; and the hunters were invited to pay him a visit.

This invitation was immediately accepted by Willem, who seemed to have lost all desire to return to Graaf Reinet again.

This attempt on the part of Willem to delay their homeward journey was easily defeated by Hendrik.

"Why should we go to their kraal?" asked he. "We shouldn't be allowed to leave it for two or three days, and we want to go on in search of giraffes. There are none here."

With this argument Willem was well pleased; and they prepared to continue their journey.

Before making a move, they saw most of the elephant's flesh taken away by the Bechuanas. Three oxen were laden with it, and several of the natives staggered under heavy loads,—covered from head to foot with long strips cut from the animal's sides. Some of the blacks carried large square flakes of the flesh with their heads thrust through a hole cut in the centre,—the broad disk descending over the shoulders like the skirts of a Mexican's *serapé*.

The sight of these people apparently clothed with bleeding flesh, and staggering under its weight towards their homes, was, as Hendrik observed, an "antidote against hunger, effectual for at least a month."

After taking leave of the tribe, our travellers continued on towards the south. It was quite dark before they arrived at a suitable camping-place. They had met with no water since leaving the pools passed in the morning, and the cattle were sadly in want of it.

Unable to make much progress in the darkness that came thickly over them, the animals—both oxen and horses—were unladen and a halt was made, with the intention of resuming the march at the first dawn of day. By early morning they were on the move, anxious to reach water as soon as possible.

For several miles they journeyed over a tract of ground, the surface of which resembled that of the ocean lashed by a storm. It was a constantly recurring series of abrupt undulations, like huge billows and the troughs between them.

Now for the first time they noticed the great difference that thirst produces between horses and cow cattle. The latter seemed to think that they could obtain relief by quietly yielding to the enervating effect of thirst, and travelling as slowly as their drivers would permit them. They were urged forward with much difficulty, and the Makololo were constantly wielding their huge *jamboks* to induce them to go quicker. With a rolling gait they crawled unwillingly forward, their tongues protruding from their mouths, each offering as perfect a picture of despair as could well be imagined.

The horses on the contrary seemed eager to get over the ground as quickly as possible. They appeared to act under the guidance of reason, as if knowing that they were still far from the wished-for water, and that the faster they travelled the sooner it would be reached.

Throughout the afternoon Hendrik and Willem rode in advance of the others, anxiously looking out for spring, pool, or stream. The all-sustaining fluid must be found that night, or their cattle would perish. Their knowledge of this filled them with forebodings for the future, and they travelled on almost as despairingly as their oxen. They had made a great mistake in so imprudently parting with the Bechuanas, without making inquiries about the country through which they should have to travel. Had they done so, they might have avoided the difficulty their indiscretion had now brought upon them.

A little before sunset a hill, higher than any they had seen during the day, was descried to the right of their course. At its base they saw growing a grove of stunted trees. Raising their heads and cocking their ears, the horses ridden by Willem and Hendrik started off towards the hill at a brisk pace, each uttering a low whimpering, that their riders interpreted into the word *Water*. Before reaching the

grove they passed a dead lion, part of which had been eaten by some carrion-feeding denizens of the desert. By the side of the carcass were also seen three or four dead jackals, which they supposed the lion to have killed before giving up the ghost himself.

On reaching the grove, they discovered a small pool of muddy water; and with outstretched necks their horses rushed towards it. By its edge lay the dead body of a buffalo; and near by a hyena in the same condition.

"Hold your horse!" exclaimed Hendrik, suddenly reining in his own. "Perhaps the water is poisoned. See that buffalo and hyena,—and we have just passed the other dead animals."

It required all their strength to hinder the horses from plunging into the pool. Only by turning their heads in the opposite direction and driving the spurs into their sides, did they succeed in keeping them away from the water. Even then the suffering animals seemed determined to rear backwards into the pool; and it was not without a struggle that they were forced away from it.

The hunters now rode back to meet their companions and warn them off, till the water in the pool should be tested by Swartboy, Congo, and the Makololo.

Chapter Forty Six.
The Pool of Death.

On coming up with their companions the two pioneers reported the glad tidings that water had been found. But the joy caused by this announcement was at once changed into gloom, when they expressed their doubts as to the purity of the element. Hans and Arend at once dismounted, and, taking Swartboy and two of the Makololo along with them, went on towards the pool.

On reaching it, Swartboy at once pronounced the water to be poisoned. It had been done, he said, with two separate kinds of poison, both of the deadliest nature. A bundle of roots that had been mashed between two stones was seen lying in the water, and floating on its surface was a large quantity of the skins of some poisonous species of berry.

There was no help for it. They must avoid the danger by going another way, or their animals, at scent of the water, could not be restrained from drinking it.

The buffalo had quenched its thirst and then sought the shade of the trees to lie down and die. The strong lion had tasted of the poisoned fluid, but his strength had not saved him. A few paces from the pool, and he had fallen down in his tracks. The jackals had partially devoured the lion, then slaked their thirst with the deadly draught, and returned to their repast only to renew, but never to finish it. After satisfying themselves that the pool had been poisoned, they were about returning to their companions, when they observed a great commotion amongst the cattle and horses of the expedition. The former were lowing, the latter neighing, in an unusual manner. The two horses which had already visited the imperilled spot, seemed especially impatient of control; and, in the efforts made by Hendrik to restrain him, the girth of his saddle got loose and was broken. As he dismounted for the purpose of repairing it, the horse broke away from him and galloped back towards the pool, uttering its shrill neigh, as if a signal for the others to follow.

The invitation was not slighted. The pack-horses immediately swept off in pursuit. The oxen seemed suddenly awakened to new life. Either instinct, or the example of the horses, had admonished them that water was near. The oxen, carrying heavy loads, that for the last few miles had been goaded onward with great difficulty, became suddenly reinvigorated and joined in the general stampede. The whole cavalcade had soon escaped beyond control.

Now occurred a race between the thirsty cattle and their owners, as to which should first reach the pool. Hans, Arend, and the two Makololo formed a line in front of it and strove to check the impetuous charge. Their efforts proved vain. Mad with the agony of thirst, the beasts had no longer any respect for the authority of man; and they who were trying to stay them from self-destruction only saved *themselves* from being trodden under foot, by getting quickly out of the way.

As the pond was not more than ten feet in diameter, and could only be approached on its lower edge, all the animals were unable to reach it. The first horse that approached the water, was instantly pushed into it by two others close following him, and, by the time the three had fairly commenced imbibing the poisoned fluid, they were charged upon by several of the oxen.

Heavy blows with jamboks and the butt-ends of rifles produced no effect in forcing the animals away. Everything was unheeded but the mad raging desire of quenching their thirst.

Fortunately for the hunters, all their cattle could not drink at the same time, as they stood in each others' way. For about ten minutes, there was a scene of indescribable confusion amidst shouts and struggling. The three horses and two of the oxen, jammed tightly together, were unable to get out again,—even had they been so inclined. So firmly had they become wedged against each other and the high bank above, that neither could move a step.

The hole was about three feet in depth and the bodies of the five animals completely filled it up. Some others of the cattle, failing to reach the water from the low bank, scrambled up to the high one; but, on looking down, they could see nothing but the backs of the five animals in occupation. One of the oxen, in a tremendous effort made to get its mouth to the water, was borne down and trampled under the feet of the others.

After more than half an hour of hard work, the hunters, assisted by their black companions succeeded in driving all the animals away, except the five that retained possession of the pool. These five never left it. Three horses and two oxen were the loss that was sustained. They were pack animals that had thus perished; and fortunately they were not laden with powder, or any substance easily injured.

The packs were at once removed from them and placed on the backs of others,—an arrangement that, from that time forth, caused Congo and Swartboy to make their journey on foot. With this, Congo seemed quite satisfied. The loss of his “mount” did not trouble him so much as the fear that he should lose Spoor’em, his favourite hound, whose sufferings, as well as those of the other dogs, were now painful to witness.

By this time they had journeyed a few miles beyond the poisoned pond; the shade of night had again commenced gathering over the plain. They saw they would have to continue their journey throughout the night. The emergency would not admit of the least delay, for every hour was fast taking away what little strength was left either to themselves or their animals. But which way should they go? That was the question that required answering.

They did not think of returning to the north; but there were the east, south, and west for them to choose from. Which of those directions was the likeliest for water? This question the young hunters were wholly unable to answer, and must have left themselves to the guidance of chance, had they not been accompanied by Swartboy.

The Bushman suggested a course, of which, not only the Makololo, but Congo approved. For all this, his proposal was prefaced by the usual complaint against the Kaffir, as the cause of all their misfortunes. Having established this fact to his satisfaction, he proceeded to inform his masters, that he had heard much in his boyhood of the manners and customs of the Bechuanas.

Some weak tribe of that nation, he thought, had sought refuge from an enemy by making their home in the great karroo, or desert, through which the expedition was now passing. They had poisoned the pool for the purpose of preventing their enemies from receiving a supply of water while pursuing them. They who had done so could not be expecting an enemy from the north, nor yet from the south, where other tribes of their kindred dwelt. They could only look for foes from the east, from the land of the Zooloo Kaffirs; whom Swartboy declared to be the curse of the earth. For these reasons, Swartboy believed that a tribe of Bechuanas would be found to the west, and that, by a journey of a few hours in that direction, their kraal might be reached.

No one had any argument against this reasoning of Swartboy; and, yielding to his suggestion, the march was again commenced, with their faces turned westward.

There was one thing that gave the hunters a hope. It was the knowledge that they were not in that part of South Africa, where there is any very extensive *karroo*. They were too far to the south-east to have strayed into the great Kalahari desert. The karroo they were traversing, might be a small one, which could be crossed in a few hours had they been able to travel with any speed. Unfortunately, they were not.

So exhausted were their animals that the use of jamboks and the strongest language, spoken in the Dutch, English, Hottentot, Kaffir, and Makololo tongues could not make them move one step faster than two miles to the hour. This rate of travelling will annihilate a great distance, but only in a great deal of time; and, knowing that their cattle could not hold out much longer, our adventurers began to fear that their hunting expedition would turn out something worst than a failure.

Chapter Forty Seven.

The Water-Root.

Throughout that long and dreary night they toiled on, driving the cattle before them. Guided by the Southern Cross they pursued nearly a straight course. When morning dawned upon the scene, they observed that the surface of the country still continued the same,—presenting that lumpy appearance with which during the last two days they had become so familiar.

Although all were hungry, weary, and suffering grievously from thirst, there was no time for making a stop. The cattle must be taken on as speedily as possible, or abandoned, along with their loads.

Slowly the sun climbed up into the sky, until it was directly over their heads; and yet, judging by the appearance of the country, they had not moved a step from the place where they had first entered upon the karroo. The landscape around them seemed exactly the same!

"We have had about enough of this sort of travelling," remarked Hendrik, "and it's quite time that we began to think of ourselves, and not quite so much of our property."

"What do you wish?" asked Willem. "Abandon the pack-oxen?"

"We shall probably have to do so in the end. It appears as if the time had come. We had better save our horses and ourselves and let the others go."

"You forget, Hendrik," rejoined his brother, "that we are not all mounted. We cannot desert those who are afoot."

"Of course not," answered the young cornet, "but even Swart, who is not a fast traveller, could go two miles to one he is doing now, with all his time engaged in urging forward the animals."

This conversation was interrupted by a shout from Swartboy himself. He was standing over a little plant with narrow leaves, that rose not more than six inches above the surface of the plain. It was the stem of the water-root,—a plant that, on the karroos of South Africa, has saved the lives of thousands of thirsty travellers, that would otherwise have perished. Several stems of the plant were seen growing around the spot, and the Bushman knew that the want from which all had been suffering, would be at least partially supplied. A pick-axe and spade were hastily procured from a pack carried by one of the oxen; and Swartboy commenced digging around the stem of the plant first discovered. The earth, baked by the sun nearly as hard as a burnt brick, was removed in large flakes, and the bulb was soon reached,—at the depth of ten or twelve inches below the surface. When taken out, it was seen to be of an oval shape, about seven inches in its longest diameter, and covered with a thin cuticle of a bright brown colour. The juicy pulp of the water-root was cut into slices, and chewed. It tasted like water itself, that is, it had no taste at all. Assegais and knives were now called into active play; and so abundant was the plant growing near, that in a short time every man, horse, and ox had been refreshed with a bulb.

The first root obtained by Congo was shared with Spoor'em, the hound, which, with his tongue far-extended, had been crawling along with much difficulty.

The young hunters might have passed over miles of karroo covered with the bulb, without knowing that its slender, insignificant stems were the indication of a fountain spread bountifully beneath their feet.

Congo and the Makololo were also ignorant of the character of this curious plant; and all would have gone on without discovering it, had Swartboy not been of the party. For the advantage he had given them, by introducing them to the plant, the Bushman claimed nearly as much credit as though he had created it. As no one was disposed to underrate the service he had done, he obtained what appeared full compensation for all the annoyance he had felt at being so long neglected.

Partly refreshed by the cooling sap of the water-root, the cattle behaved as though they thought there was still something worth living for. They moved forward with renewed animation; and a long march was made in the course of the afternoon.

Just as the sun was setting, several huts were descried to the south; and our travellers continued towards them, quite confident that a full supply of water would be found near the huts, which, as they drew towards them, proved to be a kraal of the Bechuanas. The fear of losing their cattle was no longer felt.

Before arriving at the huts, their owners came forth to meet them. Their first salutation was a statement of their surprise that any travellers could have succeeded in reaching their secluded habitation.

Swartboy replied to this by a request to be conducted to the nearest place where water could be obtained,—of course to the stream, pools, or wells that supplied the kraal. The answer was astounding. It was that they knew of no open water within less than a day's journey! Months had passed since any of them had seen such a thing, and all the inhabitants of the kraal had been living without it!

"What does this mean?" demanded Hendrik. "Surely they are telling lies. They don't want to give us the water and their story is but a subterfuge to conceal it. Tell them, Swart that we don't believe them."

The Bushman did as he was desired, but the Bechuanas only reiterated their previous statement.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Arend. "They take us for such fools as to suppose people can live without water! They have a supply somewhere. We must make a search for it and help ourselves."

"No, baas Arend," interposed Swartboy. "Don't do this. They show us water by an by. We better wait."

Acting under the advice of the Bushman, the oxen were unladen, and a camp established close to the kraal. Although pretending to be satisfied with the statement of the Bechuanas, that they were living without water, our travellers had their eyes on the alert, sending glances of inquiry in every direction, in the hope of discovering where the much-desired element was kept. They saw not the slightest indications of stream or pool, well or water-hole, of any kind. The place all around had the same sterile appearance as that of the country over which they had journeyed for the last two days, and certainly things looked confirmatory of the Bechuanas' statement. After all, they might be telling the truth! It was not very cheering to think so; and our travellers became quite disconsolate.

Swartboy, however, did something to assure them, by counselling them to say nothing, but submit quietly,—trusting to time and patience. They followed his instructions, for the want of knowing what else they could do. They felt that they were in his hands; and, observing his confident manner one and all awaited the end without murmuring.

Chapter Forty Eight.

An odd sort of Suction Pump.

It was not long before all were convinced of the prudent course which Swartboy had counselled them to pursue. Had they insisted on being supplied with water, or made an attempt to take it by force, they would have been disappointed. They would not have been able to find a drop within many miles of the place where more than two hundred people were living. For all this, there was water not far off; and, trusting to that feeling of generosity which rarely fails when relied upon, they were at length supplied with it. Water was brought to them. Not much at first, but in small quantities, and carried in the shells of ostrich-eggs.

They soon had enough to satisfy their own thirst and allow them to turn their attention to the wants of their cattle. After drinking off the contents of an ostrich shell, Groot Willem by signs, directed the attention of the woman who had given it to him, to the suffering condition of his horse. The woman, who could not exactly be called an "ornament to her sex," only shook her wool-covered head and walked thoughtfully away.

"Unless we can get some drink for our horses," said Willem, turning to his companions, "we must keep on. If we stop much longer here the animals will die."

"Wait, baas Willem," said Swartboy; "the heart of the Bechuana grow bigger soon. He like de Bushman."

Swartboy's prophecy proved correct. Not long after it was spoken, one of the Bechuanas came to the camp, and asked to be conducted to the chief. Groot Willem was immediately pointed out by Swartboy as the individual who answered to that appellation, and the black walked up to him. His errand was to say that the horses and cattle could only be watered *one at a time*. This was satisfactory enough. Willem's horse, as belonging to the chief of the party, should be supplied first, and was led away by the man, its owner following at its heels. A short distance from the kraal they came to a well, from which a covering of earth had recently been removed. The well, for some purpose, had been concealed, as if it were a pitfall for the capturing of elephants.

With a bucket made of buffalo hide, water was drawn out, until the horse had as much as he cared to drink. He was then led away and another brought to the place, and then another, and after them the cattle, until all the animals had drunk to their satisfaction.

This method of watering them showed some intelligence on the part of the Bechuanas. It avoided the struggle and confusion which would certainly have taken place, had the thirsty animals been driven to the well at the same time.

That evening the hunters had a long conversation with the head man of the kraal, Swartboy acting as interpreter. The chief said that his tribe had once been large and powerful; but what from desertion, and wars with the Kaffirs, they had become reduced to their present number. In order to live in peace and security, he had sought refuge in the solitary karroo, where the hardships to be encountered in reaching his remote home would deter any enemy from making the attempt. In order to make assurance doubly sure, he admitted having caused several water-holes to be poisoned; and he appeared greatly satisfied at telling them how, on one occasion, his plan had met with a splendid success. A party of his Kaffir enemies had partaken of the water from one of the poisoned pools, and had died upon the spot.

This portion of the narrative, which was interpreted by Swartboy, seemed to give the latter as much satisfaction as it did the chief himself. He grinned with intense delight as he translated the account of this strange episode.

In order to give his guests an exalted idea of his greatness the chief informed them that he was brother to Kalatah. Groot Willem expressed a wish to know who or what the great Kalatah might be. The chief was astonished, not to say chagrined, at the confession of so much ignorance, and the hunters were instantly enlightened. Kalatah was the most noble warrior, the best brother, the most loyal subject, in fact the best man in every way, that ever lived, and his memory was, and ought to be, respected over the whole world. This was news to our adventurers, and they were anxious to learn more of the chief and his wonderful relative. Willing to gratify his guests, he further informed them that the Kaffirs had made another attempt to reach the remote kraal in which he now dwelt. They had entered the karroo with a large force well prepared for crossing it, and would probably have succeeded, had they not been led astray. His brother, Kalatah, had deserted to the enemy for the express purpose of becoming a false guide, and under this pretence he had succeeded in drawing them off the scent. He had conducted them far to the north, and into the heart of the great Kalahari desert. Not one of these befooled foemen lived to return to their own country, all having perished by thirst.

"But Kalatah! what of him?" eagerly inquired the listeners. "How did he escape the same fate?"

"Kalatah did not escape it," coolly answered the chief. "He perished with the rest. He sacrificed his own life for the sake of saving his countrymen!"

This act had endeared him to the memory of his people; and the hunters, on hearing it, became convinced that the Bechuanas, whom they had been taught to regard as a soul-less, degraded people, had still soul enough to respect the performance of a noble action.

Next morning our travellers were made acquainted with the method by which the water was obtained for the daily supply of the kraal. None was allowed to be exposed either to the sun or to view, the well being carefully covered up with a thick stratum of turf. The kraal had been built near a spring, which had of course decided the selection of its site; and over the spring a new surface had been given to the ground, so that the presence of water underneath could not be suspected.

In order to obtain it for daily use, a hollow reed was inserted into a small, inconspicuous aperture, left open for the purpose, and covered by a stone when the reed was not in use. The water was drawn up by suction,—the women performing the operation by applying their lips to the upper end of the reed, filling the mouth with the fluid, and then discharging it into the egg-shells.

The water supplied to the hunters on their first arrival had been "pumped" up in this original fashion!

The well was only uncovered and the bucket called into requisition, upon rare and extraordinary occasions, such as that which had arisen from the necessity of supplying the horses and cattle of their guests.

Our travellers remained for two days in the Karroo village, during which they did not suffer much from *ennui*. They had sufficient employment in mending their travelling equipments; and the delay gave their cattle a chance of recruiting their strength, sadly exhausted by the long toilsome journey just made.

The whites of the party were much interested in observing the habits and customs of the simple people among whom they had strayed. None of the Bechuanas appeared to have the slightest wish to go away from the place they had chosen for a permanent home. To them it afforded tranquillity, and that was all that could be said of it, for it afforded little besides. That was all they required. Not one of them seemed afflicted with ordinary human desires. They had no ambition, no curiosity, no love of wealth,—none of those wants that render wretched the lives of civilised people.

A place less suited for the abode of men could scarce have been found, or even imagined. The soil was sterile, unproductive, and rarely visited by game worthy of being hunted. The few roots and other articles of food they were enabled to raise, furnished but a precarious subsistence.

So limited was their supply of ordinary utensils, that even the most trifling article was in their eyes valuable, and anything given them by their guests was received with a gratitude scarce conceivable. They had discovered the art of living in peace and happiness, and were making the most of the discovery.

From what they were told by the villagers, our travellers could not expect to get out of the karroo in less than two days, and no water could be obtained along the route. But, as their cattle were now well rested, they were not so apprehensive, and after a friendly leave-taking with the Bechuanas, they once more continued their journey.

The trouble they had given to their simple hosts was remunerated without much cost. A glass bottle that had once contained "Cape Smoke," was thought by the latter to be of greater value than a gun;

and, taking their circumstances into account, they were perhaps not far astray in their estimate.

Chapter Forty Nine.
Scenes seldom visited.

Knowing that the longer they should be in reaching the next watering-place the weaker their cattle would become, our travellers strove to perform more than half the distance in less than half the time. On their first day's journey after leaving the kraal, they went about twenty-five miles; but on starting the next day they saw that not more than half that distance was likely to be accomplished, and that their principal work would consist in plying the jamboks.

Towards noon they came upon a tract of country, the greater portion of which had once been flooded with brackish water, and was now slightly incrustated with salt. The reflection of the sun's rays on this incrustation gave it the appearance of water; and, on seeing it, the cattle, horses, and dogs rushed forward, anticipating a grand pleasure in quenching their thirst. On discovering what it was, the animals gave out their various expressions of disappointment. The horses neighed, the oxen bellowed, and the dogs barked and howled. A constant *mirage* floated over the plain, magnifying and distorting the appearance of everything within view. Where the saline incrustations did not cover the ground, there grew a short, sour herbage, browsed upon by *blesboks*, *wilde beests*, and several other species of antelopes. These animals, as well as some stunted trees, at times appeared suspended in the air, and magnified far beyond natural size. High up in the air could be seen the reflection of animals that were many miles distant from the place they appeared to be occupying. These optical illusions were the cause of much annoyance to the thirsty travellers,—especially to their animals, unable to understand them. Excited with the hope of quenching their thirst, they were with much difficulty prevented from rushing about in pursuit of the phantom that was so terribly tantalising them.

The cattle had been a long time without salt, and had a strong desire to lick up the saline incrustation, that in some places covered the earth to an eighth of an inch in thickness. This increased their thirst, and caused them to hasten forward to the next deceptive show that spread itself before them. In place of meeting water, they only found that which strengthened the desire for it. Our travellers seemed to have reached a land where phantoms and realities were strangely commingled.

They saw spectral illusions of broad lakes, with trees mirrored upon their placid surface. A sun of dazzling brightness seemed shining from the bottom of an unfathomed sea, and a forest appeared suspended in the air!

But along with these fair fancies there were many unpleasant realities. For the first two or three hours after entering amid such scenes, they could not help feeling interested. In time, however, the interest died away as their vision became accustomed to the strange appearances. One yet awaited them, stranger and more extraordinary than any yet witnessed.

About three hours after the sun had passed the meridian, they arrived at a place that resembled a small island in the midst of an ocean. Water was rolling down upon them from every direction, and had their eyes not been so often deceived, they could easily have imagined that the dry earth upon which they stood was about to be instantly submerged. While contemplating this singular scene, their attention was called to another no less singular.

It was that of a gigantic bird moving across the sky, not in flight, but walking with long strides! They might have been alarmed but for their knowledge of what it was.

An ostrich somewhere on the karroo was being reflected by the *mirage*, and magnified to ten times its natural size.

On a former expedition our hunters had seen much of the singular phenomena produced by the *mirage*. They had witnessed many, many spectacles, but the one upon which they were now gazing excited their admiration more than any they had ever encountered. The reflected ostrich was perfect in shape, and his stalk so natural that, but for what they knew, they might have believed that something as extraordinary as anything seen by John the Revelator had descended to the earth from another world. Such a sight, appearing in the sky that overhangs Hampstead Heath, would have converted all London to a belief in the prophecies of the Reverend Doctor Gumming.

As they stood gazing upon it, a cloud came rolling up the heavens, carried along by a breeze that had commenced blowing from the west. By this the *mirage* was destroyed, and the vast spectral image suddenly disappeared. The phantom shapes were seen no more; and soon after the travellers saw before them some real ones, that led them to believe they were approaching the limit of the karroo.

The ground was higher, more uneven, and covered by a more luxuriant vegetation. Water would be found at no great distance. This fact was deduced from the presence of some zebras and pallahs, seen feeding near, as they knew that neither of those animals ever strays far from the neighbourhood of a stream.

Near what may be called the border of the karroo, the hunters came across what to them was a prize of some value. It was an ostrich-nest, containing seventeen fresh eggs, which afforded the raw material for an excellent dinner.

This was soon cooked and eaten; and our travellers continued their march. But Swartboy had a passion either for killing ostriches, or procuring their feathers. Possibly the *penchant* might have been for both; but, be that as it may, he was unwilling to go away from the nest, even after the eggs had been extracted from it.

Knowing that his masters intended to encamp by the first watering-place they should meet, he determined to stay behind for an hour or two and rejoin the travelling party in the evening; and as no one made objection he did so.

His prejudice in favour of poisoned arrows, and against the use of fire-arms, as weapons of offence, had been gradually removed; and he had for some time past been induced to shoulder a double-barrelled gun capable of carrying either bullets or shot.

With this gun the Bushman seated himself upon the edge of the ostrich's nest, and was left in this attitude by the others as they moved away from the spot.

Just as the sun was setting a dark grove of timber loomed up before their eyes; and on reaching it they discovered a stream of water. The impatient oxen would not allow their packs to be taken off till after they had quenched their thirst, after which they went vigorously to work upon the rich herbage that grew upon the banks of the stream.

It was full two hours before Swartboy made his appearance by the camp-fire. Its light illumined a set of features expanded into an expression that spoke of some grand satisfaction. He had evidently gained something by remaining behind. Success had attended his enterprise. In his hands were seen the long white plumes of an ostrich,—the trophies of his hunter skill,—that even in Africa are not so easily obtained. His story was soon told.

He had lain flat along the ground close by the ostrich's nest until the birds had returned. They had come back in company, and Swartboy had secured them both as a reward for his watchful patience. He had brought the plumes with him, not as a mere evidence of his triumph, but intended to be taken on to Graaf Reinet, and there presented to his "Totty."

The Bushman stated that he had seen a large flock of ostriches while waiting for the two he had killed. He had no doubt but what they could be found on the following day; and, as it was necessary that the cattle should have a little time to rest and recover themselves after the toils of the karroo, an ostrich-hunt was at once agreed upon, and for that evening ostriches became the chief topic of conversation around the camp-fire.

Chapter Fifty.
A Talk about Ostriches.

The Ostrich (*Struthio Camelus*) is supposed to be the Benonim, Jaanah, and Joneh, mentioned in the Bible. It is the *Thar Edsjanmel* or camel-bird of the Persians, of which everybody knows something and of which nobody knows all.

With the general appearance of the bird, I presume that my young readers are already acquainted, and shall therefore say little or nothing about it.

The stumpy-footed, two-toed, long-legged, kicking creature has wings that are apparently more useful to man than to itself. In fact, the possession of these apparently superfluous appendages is generally the cause of its being hunted by man and by him destroyed.

It is one of those unfortunate creatures, persecuted to gratify the vanity of other perhaps equally unfortunate creatures, called fashionable ladies. A full-grown ostrich is usually between seven and eight feet in height, but individuals have occasionally been met with measuring more than ten.

Its nest is merely a hole in the sand, about three feet in diameter, and usually contains twenty eggs. Half this number may be seen lying outside the nest, and elsewhere scattered over the plain. These are supposed to be intended as food for the young when they have first

broken the shell. This supposition, however, is not founded upon the observation of any fact to justify a belief in it.

Job (chapter 39), speaking of the ostrich, says, she "Leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear." This account does not altogether correspond with modern observation.

In the heat of the day, when the eggs are under the burning sun, the ostrich can well afford to leave them for a while and go off in quest of food. At night, when it is cool and the eggs need protection, the bird is ever to be found doing its duty, and the male ostrich is often seen in charge of the young brood, and assiduously guarding them. At such times, if molested, the old birds have been known to act in the same way as the partridge or plover, by shamming lame, so as to mislead the intruder.

From much more now known of the ostrich, it cannot be said to be wanting in paternal or maternal instincts; and the idea of its being so has only originated in the fact of their nests being so often found deserted during the hot hours of the day.

The food of the ostrich generally consists of seeds and leaves of various plants. Owing to the nature of the dry desert soil on which it is obtained, the only species it can procure are of a hard, dry texture; and it is supposed to be for the purpose of assisting nature in their digestion that the bird will swallow pebbles, pieces of iron, or other mineral substances. Some have been disembowelled, in whose stomachs was found a collection so varied as to resemble a small curiosity shop or geological museum.

Stones have been taken out of the stomach of an ostrich each weighing more than a pound avoirdupois!

When this great bird is going at full run,—for of course it cannot fly,—its stride is full twelve feet in length, and its rate of speed not less than twenty-five miles to the hour. It cannot be overtaken by a horseman, and its capture is generally the result of some stratagem.

It always feeds on the open plain, where it can obtain an unobstructed view, and be warned in good time of the approach of an enemy. It possesses a sharp vision, and from the manner its eyes are set in its small, disproportioned head, held eight or ten feet above the surface of the ground, it can take in the whole circle of the horizon at a glance. On this account the utmost caution is required in approaching it.

In one respect the author of the book of Job has closely followed nature in his description of this bird; for “God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.”

The ostrich is a stupid creature, and is often captured by taking advantage of its stupidity. Nature seems to have placed in its little head the belief that in running to the leeward it will encounter some impassable barrier, and be overtaken by whatever pursues it. Ostrich-hunters are well acquainted with this peculiarity, and on approaching a flock they always ride to the windward. This manoeuvre is observed by the birds, who believe that an attempt is being made to cut off their retreat in the only direction in which it can be successfully made. They immediately start on a course which, if continued, must cross that taken by the hunters. Owing to the greater distance it has to run, the latter often get near enough to bring the bird down with a shot. Were the silly bird to retreat in the opposite direction, it would be perfectly safe from pursuit.

The feathers of the ostrich are beautifully adapted to the warm climate of the desert country it inhabits. They allow a free circulation of the air around its skin, while giving shade to its body. The white plumes of the male bring the greatest price, and sometimes sell for 12 pounds the pound, Troy weight, of only twelve ounces. The black feathers seldom fetch more than a fourth of the price.

Two species of ostrich are found on the great plains of South America, and one other in Australia. None of these attain the gigantic proportions of the African, nor are their plumes at all comparable in beauty or value to those of the *Struthio Camelus*.

Ostriches were once a favourite article of food with the Romans; and it is stated that the brains of six hundred of these birds were consumed at one feast. The flesh is still eaten, but only by the native Africans. The bird possesses great strength, and can run at a rapid rate with a man mounted on its back.

It was undoubtedly designed by its Creator for some other purpose than that of contributing to the gratification of man's vanity.

Ostriches are easily domesticated. This is done to some extent by the Arabians, who breed and bring them up for the sake of the feathers, as also to procure them as an article of food.

But the more enlightened people of the present day make no other effort to ascertain their utility, than to keep a pair or two of them shut up in a public garden for children and their nurses to gaze at.

Chapter Fifty One.

Another Delay.

Next morning, the hunters were early in the saddle, and off for the karroo. For some distance, they rode along the bank of the stream which was fringed by a growth of willow-trees. This course was taken to get to windward of the ostriches, in the hope of having a shot at them as they ran up the wind. Had their object been to stalk any other species of animal, they would have advanced upon it from the leeward.

Before they had gone a great way over the karroo, five huge bipeds were seen about a mile away. They were ostriches. They were

apparently coming towards them with great speed, and the four hunters extended their line to cut off an advance which the stupid bird mistakes for a retreat. They were moving in long rapid strides; and, as they drew nearer, the hunters saw that, to obtain a good shot, they must gallop farther to the north. The birds were going in a curved line that would carry them away from the place where the hunters expected to have met them. To get within sure range, these saw that they would have a sharp ride for it, and their horses were instantly put to their full speed.

Though the ostriches appeared to be running in a straight line from the place where they had started, such was not the case. They were curving around just sufficiently to avoid the hunters, and yet get to the windward of them. Their pace being much faster than that of the horses, they succeeded in crossing the course pursued by the latter, about three hundred yards in advance of them.

Willem and Hendrik hardly taking time to pull up, dismounted and fired. But not with the desired result. The ostriches were at too great a distance, and ran on untouched. Knowing that a stern chase after them would prove a failure, the hunters came to a stop.

Several other ostriches were afterwards seen; but, as on the open karroo, it was found impossible to approach them; and our adventurers were compelled to return to their camp without taking back a single feather. Their want of success was a source of great gratification to Swartboy. He could kill ostriches afoot, while four white men, although well-armed and mounted on fast horses, had failed to do so. The Bushman could not avoid making an exhibition of his conceit, and he proceeded to inform his masters that if they were very anxious to obtain ostrich-feathers, he could easily put them in the way. As none of the hunters were inclined to put Swartboy's abilities for ostrich-hunting to a further test they acknowledged their defeat and resumed the interrupted journey.

After leaving the karroo, the hunters entered into a very beautiful and fertile country possessed by small tribes of peaceful Bechuanas,

who had long been allowed to remain undisturbed by their warlike neighbours, for the reason that they lived at a great distance from any hostile tribe. It was a country Willem was reluctant to pass rapidly through; for, after leaving it behind, he knew there would be very little hope of again seeing giraffes.

Along the way, little groves of the *cameel-doorn* were occasionally seen; but, for all this, no camelopards.

At a village, passed by them on the route, they were informed that giraffes sometimes visited the neighbourhood, and that there was no time of the year, but that, with a little trouble, some of these animals might be found within a day's distance.

This information, Hendrik, Arend, and Hans heard rather with regret: they knew that it was likely to cause another impediment to their homeward journey.

In this they were not deceived. Willem stoutly declared that he would proceed no further for the present; at the same time, telling the others that, if they were impatient to reach Graaf Reinet, they might go on without him.

This, all three would willingly have done, had they dared. But they knew that, on reaching home, they would be unable to give any satisfactory explanation for deserting their companion. People would inquire why they had not remained to assist the great hunter in his praiseworthy enterprise. What answer could they give?

There was both honour and profit to be derived by delivering two young giraffes to the Dutch consul, and they would not have been unwilling to share in both, if the thing could have been conveniently accomplished. For all that, they would have preferred returning home without further delay, but for the determination of Willem to remain.

The four Makololo were also a little chafed at the delay. They were anxious to see something of the wonders of civilisation, but their impatience was not openly expressed. Before setting out, they had been instructed by Macora in all things to be guided by Willem; and they had no intention of disobeying.

Congo was the only one who was wholly indifferent to the future. His home was with Groot Willem, and he seemed to have no more concern or remembrance for Graaf Reinet than his dog Spoor'em.

Choosing a convenient place for their encampment within a few miles of the Bechuana village, the youths resolved to stop for a while, and make a final effort at capturing the camelopards. Should they succeed in finding these animals, yet fail in taking any of them alive, Groot Willem promised that he would make no further opposition to returning home.

As all knew that the promise would be faithfully kept, they consented to stay for a few days without showing any signs of reluctance.

Crossing the country with a general course to the south-west, ran a stream, along which was a belt of timber, or rather a series of disconnected copses. The trees were mostly mimosas. In every copse could be seen some trees with torn branches, and twigs cut off, an evidence that they had been browsed upon by the camelopards; while the spoor of these animals appeared in many places along the edge of the stream.

As the damage done to the mimosas, and the tracks in the mud, showed signs of having been recently made, our hunters came to the conclusion that giraffes could not be far off.

"Something whispers me," said Willem, "that we shall succeed at last. I left home with the intention of never returning without two young giraffes; and I have not yet relinquished the hope of seeing Graaf Reinet again. We will make no more pits; but let me once more

set my eyes on a giraffe and, mark me, it is mine, if I have to run it down and capture it with my own hands."

"That is not possible," remarked Hendrik. "True, you might catch a wild elephant; but what would you do with it? or, rather, what would it do with you?"

"That question I shall take into serious consideration after I've caught my giraffe," answered Willem. "I can only say now, that, if I meet with one, I'm not going to part with it alive,—not if I have to exchange my horse for it."

Three days were passed in riding about the country; and, during that time, the hunters saw not a single giraffe. In this respect, they were more unfortunate than Swartboy and the Makololo, who remained at the camp. On the evening of the third day which the hunters had spent in beating some groves up the river, Swartboy reported, on their return, that two giraffes had passed within sight of the camp. He described them as an aged couple that had, no doubt, been often hunted. To these ancient inhabitants of the mimosa forest, the Bushman ascribed the spoor and other signs of giraffes that had been seen. He had compared the tracks of the animals that trotted past the camp, with those on the banks of the stream, and he pronounced both to have been made by the same feet.

Swartboy further informed his young masters that he could have captured the two animals he had seen, but did not, because they were old, and not worth the trouble.

If Hendrik, Arend, and Hans were inclined to place but little reliance on this boast of the Bushman, they gave to the rest of his story more than a fair share of credence. To them it was positive evidence that any longer stay in the neighbourhood would be simply a waste of time.

Willem saw that they were once more inclined on defeating his plans, but it only strengthened him in the resolution to continue a little longer in the place.

Each of the four had a cherished project he was anxious to see fulfilled. Willem's wish was to obtain two young giraffes; and his three companions found that there was no chance of his relinquishing his design,—at least, not for many days.

Two more were passed upon the spot, and then our young adventurers, who, although young in years, were old in friendship, came very near parting company. At this crisis, a spectacle was presented to their eyes that had the happy effect of once more uniting them for a common purpose.

Chapter Fifty Two.

A Hopeless Chase.

While the hunters were at breakfast, they were startled by the dull, heavy sound of footfalls, and the yelping of wild dogs. A quarter of a mile to the eastward they saw approaching them a large drove of springboks, accompanied by a band of giraffes. More than a hundred of the antelopes, and between twenty and thirty camelopards were flying before a few *wilde honden*.

The wild hounds of South Africa hunt in packs, and proceed upon a well-organised plan. The whole pack is never engaged in running upon the view. Some remain in reserve, and, guided by the voices of those that are running, frequently save space by cutting off angles. This they can do whenever the chase is not made in a straight line.

In this manner they relieve each other, and the pursuit is continued until the game becomes exhausted and is easily overtaken.

The perseverance, energy, and cunning displayed by these animals is something wonderful.

They do not commence a hunt until driven to it by hunger, and then it is often carried on for many hours, their tenacity of purpose being shown by their continuing the chase till their victim falls down before them. They were in full run after the springboks, and one of those animals was sure to reward their skill and labour by affording them a dinner.

The giraffes were foolish enough to think, or act, as though the *wilde honden* were hunting them; and in place of remaining still and permitting the dogs to pass, or turning to one side, the foolish creatures ran on with the springboks. At the time they came up with the hunters, they were already exhibiting signs of distress. To Groot Willem it was a gratifying sight. A herd of giraffes was at hand. Some of them were evidently young ones. Three of them he observed were apparently but a few weeks old. The very things for which he had travelled so far were now before his eyes, apparently coming to deliver themselves up.

It was not until the springboks swerved to the right to avoid the horsemen, that these little animals became separated from the giraffes. The latter continued on along the edge of the stream, while the former, pursued by the wild dogs, made off towards some hills to the north.

The speed of the camelopard is not quite equal to that of a horse, and the hunters knew that the desired objects could be overtaken; but what then? The giraffes might be shot down, but how were they to be taken alive?

There was no time for reflection. The necessity of commencing the chase, and the excitement of following it up, occupied all the time of the hunters.

After a sharp run of about two miles, the camelopards began to show further signs of distress. Already exhausted by their flight before the hounds, and now pursued by fresh horses, their utmost efforts did not save them from being overtaken; after a two-mile chase our hunters were riding upon their heels.

A portion of the herd, becoming separated from the rest turned away from the bank of the stream. There were but three who went thus,—a male and female followed by a young one,—a beautiful creature. Groot Willem gazed longingly upon it as he galloped by its side, and became nearly mad with the desire to secure it. The pace of the three had now been changed from a gallop to a trot, in which their feet were lifted but a few inches from the ground, and drawn forward in an awkward shambling manner, that proved them exhausted with their long run. Still, they ran on at a pace that kept Willem's horse at a sharp canter.

In a short time he had got out of sight both of the main herd and his comrades. Nothing could be seen of either. He might have reflected that there was some risk of losing himself; but he did not. All his thoughts were given to the capture of the young giraffe.

Slower and more slow became the pace both of pursuer and pursued, the horse streaming with sweat, and nearly ready to drop in his tracks.

"Why should I follow them farther?" thought Willem. "Why should I kill my horse for the sake of gazing a little longer on a creature I cannot take?"

Though conscious of the folly he was committing, Willem could not bring himself to abandon the chase.

By his side trotted the young giraffe, beautiful in colour, graceful in form, and to his mind priceless in value. But how was it to become his? The coveted prize, although apparently but a few weeks old, and

nearly exhausted by its long race, was still able to defy any efforts he might make to check its laboured flight.

He was now more than a mile from the river, and his horse was tottering under him, nearly exhausted by its long exertions. What should he do?

Stop, give his horse a rest, and then return to his companions. This was the command of common sense; but he was not guided by that. For the time, he was insane with excitement, anxiety, and despair. He was mad, and acted like a madman. The hopes and aspirations he had been for months indulging in were concentrated into the hour; and in that hour he could not yield them up. He was too much exasperated to reason calmly or clearly. A little extra exertion on the part of his horse might place him in advance of the three giraffes; and he might drive them back to the river.

"Yes," exclaimed he, nearly frantic with the fear of losing what seemed so nearly gained.

"If I cannot catch this young giraffe, I can drive it. I'll drive it to Graaf Reinet. It shall not escape me!"

Plunging his spurs into the foam-covered flanks of his horse, he sprang forward in advance of the three giraffes; and as he expected, they came to a halt. Pulling up, he wheeled round facing them, while the two old giraffes turned at the same time and made off in the back direction.

As they did so, one of them came in contact with the tottering calf, that for a second or so, seemed to become entangled between its legs; and at their separation, the young one staggered a pace or two and fell heavily upon the earth.

Chapter Fifty Three.

A Weary Watch.

Throwing himself out of his saddle, Willem seized the fallen creature, and hindered it from rising, by keeping its head close pressed against the ground. This was easily done, for the long slender neck of the animal, without much muscular strength, gave him a good chance of holding it down. The weight of the huge hunter's body was sufficient for that, without any exertion of his strength.

Meanwhile the old ones continued their flight, while Willem's horse, relieved of his load, proceeded to refresh himself by browsing upon the dry herbage that grew near. Willem had obtained what he wanted, a young giraffe. It was actually in his possession. He was holding it under perfect control, and yet it appeared to him that he was as far as ever from the realisation of his hopes! Now that he had got the giraffe, all that he could do was to keep it on the spot where it had fallen. The instant its head might be released from his hold it would spring to its feet again and escape in spite of all his efforts to retain it.

He could not allow it to go thus. He had hoped too wildly, travelled too far, and waited too long, for that. The fear that he would still have to surrender his prize or destroy it, was to him a painful thought, and it was only relieved by the hope that in time he might be joined by his companions. They might discover the spoor of his horse, and come to him. In that case there would be no difficulty. The giraffe could then be secured with rheims and become their travelling companion for the rest of the journey to Graaf Reinet. About their coming there was much uncertainty,—at least, their coming in time. They would wait for his return perhaps, until the next morning, before starting out in search of him.

Before their arrival, the young giraffe would kill itself with the violent exertions it still continued to make. It was kicking and struggling as if it wanted to leap out of its skin. Such terrible throes could not fail to injure it. Willem was himself suffering from thirst. A long afternoon was before him. It would be followed by a long night,—

one in which the lion, that prowling tyrant of the African plains, would be seeking his supper.

Would the hunter be allowed to retain possession of his prize? His steed, the faithful creature that had carried him through so many perils, was wandering away from his sight. The horse, too, might stray beyond the chance of being found again. He might be devoured by wild beasts. The horse could still be recovered. Would it not be better to abandon the giraffe and endeavour to get back to his companions? By remaining where he was, he might lose all three,—his horse, his prize, and his own life. What was best to be done? The young hunter was never more perplexed in his life. He was in an agony of doubt and uncertainty. Streams of perspiration were pouring down his cheeks, and his throat felt as if on fire. Slowly he saw the horse strolling away, until he was almost beyond the reach of his vision, and yet could not bring himself to a determination as to what should be done. He had travelled fifteen hundred miles to capture two such creatures as the one now underneath him. He had seized upon one, and, if his companions had done their duty, they might have taken another. This thought counselled him to hold on to the captured giraffe; and he saw the horse disappear over a swell of the plain, just as the sun sunk down below the horizon.

For a long time, the giraffe struggled wildly to release itself. Then it remained quiet for a while, not as if it had given up the intention to escape, but as if reflecting on some plan to free itself. Again it would recommence its struggles, and again rest awhile, as though gathering strength for a fresh effort. Gradually it grew resigned to its position, and seemed to breathe more tranquilly, while its exertions were less frequent and more feeble. It had learnt that it could remain in the presence of man without meeting death. It had become familiar with his company, and conscious of its own inability to part from it, while man opposed its efforts.

Night came down and found Willem still seated by the side of the giraffe, with his arms around its neck. He had the satisfaction of thinking that his companions would now be uneasy at his absence. He felt sure that within a few hours Congo and Spoor'em would be

upon his track, with the others following; and, when all should arrive, the young giraffe would be secured. The prospect of such a termination to his adventure did much to make him disregard the agony he was enduring. He soon discovered he was not to be left alone in his vigil; nor was his right to the prize to be left undisputed.

His first visitors were hyenas; but their laughter—apparently put forth at seeing him in his ludicrous position—did not induce him to abandon it; and the fierce brutes circled around him, smiling and showing their teeth to no purpose. They were too cowardly to attempt an attack; and their efforts to frighten him were more amusing than otherwise.

Soon after sunset the night became very dark,—so dark that although the hyenas approached within a few paces, nothing could be seen of them except their shining eyes. It was just such a night as lions select for going in search of prey,—so dark that the king of beasts can move about unseen, and, while thus protected by invisibility, will pounce upon a man with as much confidence as he will upon a springbok.

As Willem was trying to while away the time by hopeful thoughts, the air was shaken around him, by a voice which he knew to be the roar of the lion. One was abroad seeking blood.

The clouds that had been for some time rolling up from the southwest became blacker at the instant, and seemed separated by streams of fire, while the low murmurings of distant thunder could be heard far-off in the sky. They were signs that could not be mistaken. A tropical storm was approaching.

The voice of the lion told that he was doing the same. Every moment it could be heard, nearer, and more intensely terrifying.

Which of them would come first,—the storm or the beast of prey? It seemed a question between them. Already heavy rain-drops were plashing around him. Thirsting as he was, this would have been a

welcome sound, but for that other that proceeded from the throat of the lion.

The hunter's familiarity with the habits of the great cat gave him a good idea of how he might expect the latter to approach him. There would be a simultaneous bound and roar, followed by the mangling of a body and the crunching of bones, which he could hardly doubt would be his own.

Willem was not often tortured with fear, though at that moment he was not free from apprehension. Still, he awaited the event with calmness.

Most people, when frightened, feel an irresistible desire to make a sudden departure from the place where they have been seized with the malady; but this was not the case with Groot Willem. He had the sense to know that by making a move he might run into the jaws of the very danger he wished to avoid; for the roar of the lion gives no guide to the direction the animal may be in. Besides, he was not yet so badly scared as to think of abandoning the prize he had taken such trouble to retain.

The rain now came down, and for some time continued to fall in torrents. Brief periods of darkness were followed by gleams of electric light, dazzling in its brilliancy.

In a few minutes the fiercest of the storm appeared to be over, and then, as a wind-up to it, there came a long continued blaze of lightning, more brilliant than ever, and a peal of thunder louder than any that had preceded it.

By that flash Willem was nearly blinded. The electric shock seemed to strike every nerve in his body, and, had he been standing erect, he certainly would have fallen to the ground. The instant after, so intensely black was all around that he might well have thought for a moment or two that the flash had destroyed his power of vision; but there was another thought on his mind more terrible than this.

When the heavens and earth were illumed by that flash, he had obtained a momentary glimpse of an object that drove from his mind every thought but that of immediate death. There was a lion within ten feet of him, just crouching for a spring! Willem would have rushed out of the way, and, abandoning the giraffe, have fled far from the spot. This was his first instinct, but unfortunately he was unable to yield to it. Prostrated, body and soul, by the electric fluid, that had struck the earth within a few feet of him, for a time he was unable to stir.

The first distinct thought that came into his mind was astonishment at finding the minute after that the claws of the lion were not buried in his flesh! The blow that had stunned him was not from the paw of the lion, but the lightning. It had saved his life, as the king of beasts, scorched and terrified by the shock, had retreated on the same instant.

The storm soon passed over, and a small patch of clear sky appeared opening up on the western horizon. It was soon after occupied by the disk of a silvery moon, under whose soft light Willem continued his vigil, without further molestation from either lion or hyenas.

The giraffe was still alive and lying quietly upon the ground; but, from its long and laboured respiration, Willem began to fear that it might die before he would have the chance to release it from the irksome attitude in which he felt bound to retain it.

Chapter Fifty Four.
Chance better than Skill.

The camelopards followed by Hans, Hendrik, and Arend had continued up the bank of the stream; and, being the main body of the herd, were pursued without the hunters having noticed the defection of Willem.

With such noble game in view, and in hot pursuit of it, these three youths were as much excited as Groot Willem himself. Full of ardour they pressed on. Their horses were spurred to such a speed as soon brought them close upon the heels of the flying game.

It was only then that Willem was observed to have parted from them. He was seen half a mile off, and fast increasing the distance. He was heading northward.

This discovery scarce caused them a thought. Each was too much interested in his own chase to think of the others.

They soon closed in upon the giraffes, that had been driven into a sharp bend of the river.

The hunted animals, on perceiving the obstruction, turned back, but found their retreat cut off. The pursuers were coming on behind them.

Arend, who was to the right of the others, was just in time to prevent the giraffes from escaping with dry hoofs, by riding rapidly in advance of his companions.

The herd was again headed towards the river.

In forcing them round, Arend was placed within a few yards of the largest. The instinctive desire to bring down such a grand creature could not be resisted, and, without bringing his horse to a stand, he placed the barrel of his rifle on a line with the camelopard's head and fired. Skill or chance favoured him, and the giraffe dropped to the shot.

Though a gigantic creature, standing sixteen feet in height the one small bullet, scarce bigger than a pea, was all that was necessary to bring its towering form to the earth. It had been hit on the side of the head, just behind the eye; and, as it received the shot, it raised

its fore feet from the ground, spun around as on a pivot, and then fell heavily on its side. As though desirous of putting a period to its sufferings as soon as possible, as soon as it was down it commenced beating the ground violently with its shattered head.

The remaining giraffes were driven on toward the stream, where, seeing no other way of avoiding the enemy that pursued them, they plunged into the water.

The stream was neither broad nor deep, yet was it one that could not be conveniently crossed at that particular spot. The bank on both sides rose several feet above the water; and, from the way in which the animals were wading across, it was evident they were going upon a soft bottom. Not until several of them had reached the opposite shore and made an ineffectual attempt to get out of the channel, did our hunters have any hope of capturing one of the young giraffes. Hitherto they had not thought of being able to take them alive. They had entered upon the chase solely for its excitement, and for the destroying of animal life; but on seeing the camelopards struggling in the stream, they became animated with the same hope that was inspiring Groot Willem about the same time, but on a far distant part of the plain.

"They can't get up the bank," shouted Hendrik, "and there are two young ones among them. Let us try to get hold of them."

To carry out Hendrik's proposal, but little time was lost in arranging a plan. It was instantly decided that they should separate, and one try to reach the other side of the stream.

This task was assigned to Hendrik. Riding beyond the bend of the river, he reached a place where the bank was shelving and, dashing in, he soon gained the opposite shore.

A part of the equipment of each horse ridden by the hunters was a long rheim made of buffalo hide, and used for the purpose of tethering their animals when upon the grass. At one end of the rheim

Hendrik had a loop, such as is used in the lazos of Spanish America. This was the means he intended to make use of for capturing the young giraffes.

On riding opposite to them he found them still in the water. Wearied by their late run, they were standing quietly, apparently too much exhausted to raise their feet out of the soft ooze in which they were sinking deeper and deeper. Two or three of the stronger ones alone continued their struggle to gain the shore, though not one of the drove seemed to think of making escape by moving up or down the stream. They were deterred from this by the presence of Hans and Arend, who had placed themselves on projecting points of the bank, above and below. The appearance of Hendrik directly in front of them caused a change in their attitude. Led by a large male, they commenced plunging about as if determined to make a break up stream. But Arend, who was in that quarter, had only a few paces to go before again appearing to be directly ahead of them, and this brought them a second time to a stand. After a short pause and a good deal of violent plunging, they now turned down stream, in hopes of escaping that way. So sharp was the bend of the river, that Hans, who guarded there, was able to show himself, as if right in front of them, and by loud shouts he once more brought them to bay. As a further encouragement to the hunters to continue the attempt at capturing the young giraffes, they noticed that these made but slight efforts to escape. The mud at the bottom was too tough for the strength of their slender limbs. In the narrow stream they were unable to get out of reach of the rheims, which all three of the hunters had now detached from their saddles, and were looking out for an opportunity to use.

In their efforts to avoid their enemies, the frightened camelopards now rushed to and fro, wearily dragging their feet from the mud, until they were hardly able to move. Hendrik, who was nearest, after two or three ineffectual trials, at length succeeded in throwing his snare over the head of one of the young ones. As soon as he had done so, he leaped out of his saddle, and made fast the other end of his rheim to a tree. There was no chance for the giraffe to break away after that. However strong it might be in the body, its long slender neck

was too feeble to aid it in a violent effort; and it soon submitted to its confinement.

"Try and catch the other," exclaimed Hendrik to his companions, pointing to the second of the young giraffes. "Make haste, and you will have it. See! it's stuck in the mud. Quick with your rheim, Hans, quick!"

In a second or two, Hans, obeying the call, succeeded in throwing his snare, and the second of the young giraffes became a captive.

As this was all that was wanted, the rest of the herd received no further attention,—the hunters being wholly occupied with the two they had taken.

Left free, the crowd of camelopards once more made a break to get off down stream. In their struggles to escape, one of the young—that captured by Hendrik—was borne down and trampled under the water.

It was not carried off. The rope still retained it; but, although it remained in the hands of its captors, it was only in the shape of a carcass. It was partly drowned by its head being carried under water, and partly choked by the noose having tightened around its neck.

As soon as the herd had gone off, the three hunters turned their attention to the captive that was still alive. It was at first fairly secured, so as to prevent the noose from slipping, and then carefully led out of the stream.

For some time it struggled to get free, but, as if convinced that its efforts would be idle, it soon desisted.

Exhausted with the long race, as well as by its subsequent exertions in the water, it was the more easily subdued.

Our three hunters were in ecstasies. They had now obtained one young giraffe, and there was a possibility of their yet procuring another. The feat of capturing these creatures, that had baffled so many hunters, was proved not to be impossible. After all, Groot Willem had not been like a child crying for the moon. He had hoped for nothing more than might be accomplished. The welfare of their captive was now their greatest care; and, to give it an opportunity of recovering from its fright, as also to get it a little better acquainted with its new companions, they resolved to allow it an hour's rest before returning to the camp.

The young giraffe was too much exhausted to make any further effort at freeing itself.

With the mild and gentle character of the camel, and nothing of the leopard in its nature, the giraffe soon becomes resigned to captivity.

Chapter Fifty Five.
A Reverse of Fortune.

Having given their captive the desired rest, during which it had displayed its good sense by remaining most of the time in quiet, the hunters prepared to drive it to their camp.

Mounted on their horses, Arend and Hans each took the end of a rehm, which was fastened midway to its neck. They intended to ride a little in advance of the captive, keeping also some distance apart from each other. This would hinder it from turning either to the right or left. Hendrik was to come on behind and urge the creature forward, should it show a disposition to try the strength of its neck by hanging back upon the rheims.

This plan worked extremely well. The young captive was compelled to follow the two horsemen in an undeviating line; and every attempt made to remain stationary or go backwards was

rewarded by a blow from Hendrik's jambok. Then the strain on the ropes would instantly be relieved by the animal springing forward. In this manner the creature was conducted along without the slightest trouble; and near the middle of the afternoon, they reached the place from whence they had started out on the hunt.

On the ground they discovered their pack-saddles, cooking utensils, and other impedimenta, but nothing was seen of Congo, Swartboy, the four Makololo, or the cattle! All were away! Moreover, they had hopes of meeting Groot Willem on their return, and were anticipating great pleasure from the encounter. They knew how rejoiced he would be at their success. But where were the camp followers? Where were Swartboy and Congo?

There was a mystery in their absence that none of the three hunters could solve.

Why had the property been left exposed by those placed in charge of it? Could the Makololo have robbed them of their cattle? Had Congo and Swartboy proved traitors? This was very improbable. But why were they not there?

For some time our adventurers could do nothing but wait, in the hope that time would explain all, and bring the absentees back.

Not an ox, horse, or dog was to be seen. The bundles of ivory, enveloped in grass matting, were lying where they had been left in the morning. If a robbery had been committed, why was this valuable property left untouched?

As no one could make answer, the solution had to be left to time.

Evening came on, and the three hunters were still distracted by conflicting hopes, fears, and doubts. The prolonged absence of Willem now began to cause them a serious apprehension. It was time something should be done towards finding him; but what were they

to do? Where should they seek? They knew not; still, they should go somewhere.

As night approached, leaving Hans to take care of the young giraffe, Arend and Hendrik started off in the direction in which Willem had last been seen.

The twilight was fast disappearing before they had proceeded a mile from the camp, but under its dim light they perceived Congo and Swartboy coming towards them. They were only accompanied by the dogs.

The two hunters hastened forward, and soon came up with them. Hendrik commenced hastily questioning the Bushman, while Arend did the same to the Kaffir, in the endeavour to get some information of what had so much mystified them.

The questions "Where is Willem?" "Where are the cattle?" "Why did you leave the camp?" "Where are the Makololo?" were asked in rapid succession, and to all they received but one answer,—the word "Yaas."

"Will you not tell me, you yellow demon?" shouted Hendrik, impatient at not getting the answer he wished.

"Yaas, baas Hendrik," answered Swartboy; "what you want to know first?"

"Where is Willem?"

This was a question that, in the Bushman's way of thinking, required some consideration before he could venture on a reply; but while he was hesitating, Congo answered, "We don't know."

"Ha, ha! Congo is a fool," exclaimed Swartboy. "We saw baas Willem going away this morning with the res of you, after the tootlas."

It was not until the youths were driven nearly wild with impatience that they succeeded in learning what they wished. Willem had not returned, and the two Africans knew less about the cause of his absence than they did themselves. During the day, the cattle, in feeding, had strayed to some distance over the plain. The four Makololo had gone after them, and had not returned. Swartboy and Congo admitted that they had slept awhile in the afternoon, and only on awaking had discovered that the cattle and Makololo were missing. They had then started out in search of both. They had found the ambassadors of Macora in great trouble. A party of Bechuanas had chanced upon them, and taken from them the whole of the cattle!

The Makololo were in great distress about the affair, and, fearing they would be blamed for the loss of the cattle, were afraid to return to the camp of the hunters. They were then halted about two miles down the river, and were talking of going back to their home, quite certain that the white hunters would have nothing more to do with them.

The folly of having left their property unprotected, when in the neighbourhood of African tribes whose honesty could not be relied on, now, for the first time, occurred to our adventurers.

The Bechuanas, who will steal from each other, or from the people of any nation, in all probability would not have taken the cattle, had one of the whites been present to claim ownership in them.

The Bechuana robbers had found them in the possession of only four strange men, Africans, who belonged far north, and had no right to be within Bechuana territory. The opportunity was too good to be lost, and, so tempted, they had driven the animals away.

There could be no help for what had happened,—at all events, not for the present. To discover the whereabouts of Willem was the care that was most pressing, and they one more proceeded in search of him.

As the night had now come on they could have done nothing of themselves, but the presence of Congo, accompanied by his hound Spoor'em, inspired them with fresh hope, and they proceeded onward.

After a time it became so dark that Arend proposed a halt until morning. To this Hendrik objected, Congo taking sides with him.

"Do you remember the night you were under the baobab-tree, dodging the borelé?" asked Hendrik.

"Say no more," answered Arend. "If you wish it I am willing to go on."

Swartboy was sent back to the camp to join Hans, while the Kaffir and Spoor'em led the way. Under the direction of Hendrik they soon came to the place where Willem had been last seen. There were no signs of him anywhere.

The joy with which they had returned to their camp had now departed. Something unusual had happened to their companion,—something disastrous. Their cattle and pack-horses were lost, driven away they knew not whither, by a tribe that might be able to retain them, even should they be found.

Under these circumstances what cared they any longer for the captured giraffe.

Such were the reveries of Hendrik and Arend as they followed their Kaffir guide through the gloom of the night.

Chapter Fifty Six.
The Search for Willem.

To all appearance, Congo had some secret method of communicating to the dog Spoor'em what was required of him. The animal ran to the right and left, keeping a little in the advance, and with its muzzle close down to the surface, as if searching for a spoor. Most of the time it was out of sight, hidden by the darkness, but every now and then it would flit like a shadow across their track, and they could hear an occasional sniff as it lifted the scent from the ground.

They had not proceeded more than half a mile in this manner when Spoor'em expressed a more decided opinion of something that interested him, by giving utterance to a short, sharp bark.

"He's found the spoor," exclaimed Congo, hastening forward. "I told um do that, and I knowed he would."

They were all soon up with the dog, which kept moving forward at a slow trot, occasionally lowering its snout to the grass, as though to make sure against going astray. Unlike most other hounds, Spoor'em would follow a track without rushing forward on the scent, and leaving the hunters behind.

Arend and Hendrik knew this, though still uncertain about being on the traces of Groot Willem.

The night was so dark they could not distinguish footmarks, and they had not the slightest evidence of their own for believing that they were on the tracks of Willem's horse.

"How do you know that we are going right, Cong?" asked Hendrik.

"We follow Spoor'em; he know it," answered the Kaffir. "He find anything that go over the grass."

"But can you be sure that he is following the spoor of Willem's horse?"

"Yaas, Master Hendrik, very sure of it. Spoor'em is no fool. He knows well what we want."

With blind confidence in the sagacity both of the Kaffir and his dog, the two hunters rode on at a gentle trot, taking more than an hour to travel the same distance that Willem had gone over in a few minutes.

There was a prospect that the trail they were following might conduct them back to the camp, and that there would be found the man they were in search of. Willem would be certain not to return over the same ground where he had pursued the giraffes, and they might be spending the night upon his tracks, while he was waiting for them at the camp.

This thought suggested a return.

Another consideration might have counselled them to it. A thunder-storm was threatening, and the difficulties of their search would be greatly increased.

But all inclinations to go back were subdued by the reflection that possibly Willem might be in danger, and in need of their assistance, and with this thought they determined to go on.

The dog was now urged forward at a greater speed. The storm was rapidly approaching; and they knew that, after the ground had been saturated by a fall of rain, the scent would be less easily taken up, and their tracking might be brought to an end.

The elements soon after opened upon them, but still they kept on in the midst of the pelting rain, consoling themselves for what was

disagreeable, by the reflection that they were performing their duty to their lost friend.

It was not until the thunder-shower had passed over, that Spoor'em began to show some doubt as to the course he was pursuing. The heavy rain had not only destroyed the scent but the traces of the footmarks, and the dog was no longer able to make them out. For the last half hour, they had been moving through an atmosphere dark as Erebus itself. They had been unable to see each other, except when the universe seemed illumed by the flashes of lightning.

The night had now become clear. The moon had made her appearance in the western sky; and the search might have been continued with less difficulty than before, but for the obliteration of the spoor. The dog seemed bewildered, and ran about in short broken circles, as though quite frantic at the thought of having lost the use of the most important of his senses.

"We shall have to return at last," said Hendrik, despairingly. "We can do nothing more to-night."

They were about to act according to this advice, when the loud roar of a lion was heard some half mile off, and in the direction from which they had just ridden. In going back that way they might encounter the fierce creature.

"I have kept the lock of my rifle as dry as possible," said Arend, "but it may not be safe to trust it. I think I shall reload."

Drawing the rifle out of the piece of leopard skin with which the lock had been covered, Arend pointed the muzzle upwards and pulled trigger. The gun went off.

As the report faded away in the distance, the far-off sound of a human voice could be heard as if shouted back in answer to the shot. What they heard was the word "Hilloo."

They hastened in the direction from whence the sound seemed to proceed. Even the dog appeared suddenly relieved from its perplexity, and led the way. In less than ten minutes they were standing around Willem, delighted at finding him in safety, and in the possession of a live giraffe.

"How long have you been here?" asked Hendrik, after the first moments of their joyful greeting had passed.

"Ever since noon," was Willem's reply.

"And how much longer would you have stayed, had we not found you?"

"Until either this giraffe or I should have died," answered Willem. "I should not have abandoned it before."

"But supposing you had died first, how would it have been then?" asked Arend.

"No doubt," replied Willem, "something would very soon have taken me away. But why don't you take my place here, one of you? I must stretch my legs, or I shall never be able to stand upright again."

Hendrik placed his hands on the head of the giraffe, and Willem with some difficulty arose, and, after walking around the prostrate animal, declared that he had never been happy until that moment.

It was decided that they should not attempt to stir from the place until morning; and the rest of the night, with the exception of an hour or two devoted to sleep, was passed in asking questions and giving

explanations. Willem was a little woeful about the loss of his riding-horse, and also on learning of the robbery of the cattle; but these misfortunes could not entirely counteract the joy he felt at having taken the young giraffe.

"This creature is quite tame now," said he; "and if I cannot find my horse again, I shall ride it to Graaf Reinet. Before I do that, however, I shall use it in catching another. I must and shall have two, and we can easily find another chance. You and Hans ought to be ashamed of yourselves. The three of you have not done so well as I. You have allowed two or more young giraffes to escape, while I, single-handed, captured all the young that were in the herd I followed."

Arend and Hendrik glanced significantly at one another while Congo stared at both of them. A shake of the head given by Hendrik was understood by the two who were in the secret, for Congo had been told of the capture of the second giraffe, and of course not a word was said to Willem of that affair. His companions preferred giving him a surprise.

Chapter Fifty Seven.

An Encounter between old Acquaintances.

When morning dawned, the first thought of the hunters was to contrive some plan for getting the young giraffe to the camp.

Willem expressed surprise at his companions having come out without their rheims. The reason given by Hendrik for their having done so was that they did not think they would require them; besides, they had left the camp in a hurry.

They did not anticipate much difficulty in taking back the giraffe. It appeared so weak and submissive that their only fear was of its not being able to make the journey.

For all that, without ropes or lines to lead it, there might be difficulty enough. It might take a notion to resist, or get clear out of their clutches.

"I must have a line of some kind," said Willem, "even if I have to cut a thong from the hide of one of your horses. I have been standing, or rather sitting, sentry over this creature too long, and have travelled too far for the sake of finding it, to allow any chance of its escaping now. It is but half what we want; and if any of you had been worthy the name of hunter, you would have taken the other half."

A few hundred yards from the spot grew a copse of young trees,—slender saplings they were, forming a miniature forest, such as one would like to see when in search of a fishing-rod.

Going to this grove, Willem selected out of it two long poles, each having a fork at the end.

One of these was placed on each side of the captive giraffe, in such a manner that the forked ends embraced its neck, and when so tied, by twisting the twigs together, formed a sort of neck halter.

By this means the creature could be led along, one going on each side of it.

Arend grasped the end of one of the poles and Hendrik the other.

So long had the young camelopard been kept in a prostrate position, that it was with some difficulty it managed to get to its feet; and, after doing so, its efforts to escape were feeble, and easily defeated.

At each attempt to turn to one side, its head was instantly hauled to the other, and it soon discovered that it was no less a captive on its feet than when fast confined in the recumbent attitude.

Finding its struggles ineffectual, it soon discontinued them, and resigned itself to the will of its captors.

Mounting their horses, Arend and Hendrik held the poles by which the giraffe was to be guided, while Willem and Congo walked on behind. In this manner the captive was conducted towards the camp.

More than once during their journey Willem reiterated the reproach already made to his companions. If they had only shown as much energy and determination as he had done, they might now have been ready to take the road for Graaf Reinet, with a triumphant prospect before them.

"I would have followed this giraffe," said he, "until my horse dropped dead, and then I would have followed it on foot until it became mine. I had determined not to be defeated and survive the defeat. Ah! had any of you three shown a particle of the same resolution, we might have abandoned our cattle with pleasure, and started on a straight line for home by daybreak to-morrow morning."

Arend and Hendrik allowed the elated hunter to continue his reproaches uninterrupted. They were quite satisfied with their own conduct; and each had the delicacy to refrain from telling Willem, that, without their assistance, his capture of the young giraffe would only have resulted in the misfortune of losing his horse, and suffering many other inconveniences.

They knew that Willem, when free from the intoxication caused by the partial fulfilment of a long-cherished design, would not claim any greater share in the credit of the expedition than he was really entitled to. Moreover, his joy at having captured the giraffe was somewhat damped by the fear that his horse had gone off for good.

He was confident that, should he again get possession of him, another giraffe could be taken. With the herd that had been hunted, he had seen two other young ones. They might be found a second

time; but there would be a difficulty in running them down, unless he was once more on the back of his tried steed.

By noon the camp was reached, when about the first thing that came under the eyes of Groot Willem was a young giraffe standing tied to a tree! Beside it was his own horse!

The horse had been brought back by the Makololo, who found him straying over the plain as they were themselves returning to the camp. The presence both of the horse and the Makololo was at once explained. Their original intention to visit the country of the white men had been abandoned by them on account of the loss of their cattle. Without these, they had no means of making the long journey that still lay before them. There seemed nothing for them but to go back to their home to Macora. But they were unwilling to set off without taking leave of their late travelling-companions; and, as they were at the same time afraid of being blamed for the loss of the white hunters' cattle, as well as their own, they passed the night in great distress, uncertain as to what they should do. Just as morning dawned, they descried Willem's horse grazing close to the spot where they were encamped. They had last seen the great hunter on this horse's back, going in pursuit of the giraffes; and they were anxious to learn why the animal was now separated from its rider. They knew that it was greatly prized by its owner, and they believed that, by taking it back to him, they would be forgiven for their neglect.

In this, they were not mistaken. About the other animal—the young giraffe that stood tied to a tree—Groot Willem neither asked nor received any explanation. He held his tongue about that. He had been over thirty hours without tasting food, and now without uttering another word, he set to work upon a dinner that Swartboy had cooked for him, and, after showing that his discomfiture had not robbed him of his appetite, he stretched himself along the grass and fell into a sound sleep.

The hunters had now but one more task to perform before taking the direct route towards Graaf Reinet. They must make an effort to

recover the horses and cattle of which they had been despoiled. The sooner this work should be commenced, the better the prospect of success; but Groot Willem, on being awakened and consulted, declared that he would do nothing but sleep for the next twelve hours; and, saying this, he once more sank into a snoring slumber. As the others could take no important step without him, they were compelled to leave the matter over, till such time as the great hunter should awake, which was not before breakfast-time of the following day.

Chapter Fifty Eight.
The Lost are found.

After breakfast had been eaten, it was proposed to start off in search of the stolen property; and Groot Willem, not without reluctance, was prevailed upon to accompany the others. He was loath to part even for a few hours from the captives he prized so highly. His wildest dreams had been realised. Two young giraffes had been taken and were gradually getting tamed. He could caress them. They could be conducted with but little trouble to the colony of Graaf Reinet,—thence delivered to the Dutch consul, and both money and fame would be the reward.

Since returning to the camp and seeing the second giraffe, his companions had heard no more boasting about his own prowess, nor reproaches for their negligence. But now came the question of the ivory and other articles still lying in the camp. With such a large quantity of valuable property to transport to the settlements, the pack-horses and cattle were worth making an effort to recover; so, leaving Hans with Swartboy and two of the Makololo to guard the camp, the others started off with the intention to seek and, if possible, find them.

Believing that the tribe of Bechuanas that had taken them would be found living somewhere near a stream of water, they resolved to

first proceed down the river on which they had their camp; and in this direction they set off.

For the first five miles nothing could be seen of the spoor of either horses or cattle. But the ground was hard and dry, and, even if cattle had been driven over it, it would have been impossible to take up their spoor. It had rained heavily, and that would do something to obliterate any tracks that might have been made. Soon they came to a place where the river-bank was low and marshy, and this they examined with care. They saw the hoof-marks of many animals that had quenched their thirst at the stream, all plainly impressed upon the soft earth. To their joy they perceived amongst them the tracks of horses and cattle, and easily recognised them as those of the animals they had lost. Beyond doubt they had been driven over the river at that point. Pleased at such a good beginning, they continued on, more hopefully. They were now sure that they had come in the right direction. The spoor still led down the banks of the stream. Three or four miles farther on, they came within sight of a kraal, containing about forty huts. As they drew near, several men ran forward to meet them, and instantly demanded their business.

Swartboy informed them that they were looking after some stolen horses and cattle.

A tall, naked man, carrying a huge parasol of ostrich-feathers, acted as spokesman for the villagers. In reply to Swartboy, he stated that he knew what cattle were; that he had often seen such animals, but *not lately*. He had never seen any horses and knew not what sort of animals they were. As it chanced, the rain that had fallen upon the preceding night had so softened the ground that all footmarks made since could be distinguished without the slightest difficulty. It was evident the man with the parasol had not thought of this; for our adventurers at once saw that he was telling them a story. They had proofs that he was, by the sight of several horse-tracks with which the ground was indented around the spot where they had halted. They were so fresh as to show that horses must have been there but an hour ago; and it was not likely they could have been on that ground without being seen by the villagers and their chief.

Without saying another word to the natives, our party preceded on to the kraal. As they drew near, the first thing that fixed their attention was the skin of an ox freshly taken from the carcass, and hanging upon one of the huts. Swartboy, who was an acute observer, at once pronounced the hide to have belonged to one of the oxen he had lately assisted in driving; and the two Makololo were of the same opinion. They pointed out to the white hunters the marks of their own pack-saddle. None of the villagers who stood around could give any explanation of the presence of the hide. None of them had ever seen it before; and the features of all were painfully distorted into expressions of astonishment when it was shown them.

Passing out from the kraal the white hunters rode off over a plain that stretched northward. They did so because they saw something there that looked like a herd; and they conjectured it might turn out to belong to themselves. They were not astray. The herd consisted entirely of their own stolen animals. They were guarded only by some women and children, who fled wildly screaming at the approach of the white party.

Riding up to the cattle, Groot Willem and Hendrik galloped on after the frightened women, who, by the efforts they were making to escape, plainly showed that they expected nothing short of being killed if overtaken.

Too glad at recovering their property, the hunters had not the slightest desire to molest the helpless women, and yet, without intending it, they caused the death of one.

As they galloped after the affrighted crowd, one of the women was seen to lag a little behind, and then fall suddenly to the earth. The two horsemen pulled up, and then turned in the direction of the woman who had fallen. On getting near, they noticed that dim, glassy appearance of the eyes that denotes death.

Hendrik dismounted, and placed his hand over her heart. It had ceased to beat. There was no respiration. The woman was dead: she had been frightened to death.

By her side was a child not more than a few months old. And yet it gazed upon Hendrik with eyes flashing defiance. Its animal instinct had not been subdued by the fear of man, and its whole appearance gave evidence of the truth of an assertion often made, that an African child, like a lion's cub, is born with its mental faculties wonderfully developed.

By this time the other women had gone far out of reach, and none of them could be recalled. Hendrik was not inclined to leave the child by the side of its dead mother. Undecided what to do, he appealed to Willem, who, by this, had come up.

"We have frightened the soul out of this woman," said he, as the great hunter drew near. "She has left a child behind her. What shall we do with it? It won't do to leave the poor thing here."

"This is unfortunate, certainly," said Willem; as he gazed at the dead body. "The blacks will think that we killed the woman, and will ever after have an opinion of white men they should not have. We must take the child to the kraal, and give it up to them. We can tell them that the woman died of her own folly, which is only the truth. Hand the piccaninny to me."

As Hendrik attempted to obey this request, the child by loud screams protested against being taken away from its mother. Its resistance was not alone confined to cries. Like a young tiger, it scratched and bit at the hands that held it; thus exhibiting a strange contrast to the conduct of its adult kindred, the Bechuanas, who have an instinctive fear of white men as well as a distaste for hostilities in any way.

Holding the young black under one arm, Willem galloped after the cattle, that, with the aid of the others, in less than an hour, were

driven up to the kraal. The only one missing was the ox whose hide had been seen upon the hut. The child was delivered over to the chief. Swartboy explained to him the circumstances under which it had been found; and at Willem's request advised the Bechuanas never again to molest the property of other people. To the surprise of our adventurers, not only the chief but several of his elders loudly declared that they knew nothing whatever of the cattle, or the women found in charge of them; but, while they were thus talking, the two Makololo pointed out the men who were loudest in declaring their ignorance, as the very ones who had driven the animals away!

To escape from the discordant clamour of their tongues, the hunters turned hastily away, taking their cattle along with them.

Hendrik and Arend felt some inclination to punish the blacks for their treachery, as well as the loss of time and the trouble they had occasioned. This, however, was forbidden by the great-hearted Willem, who could no more blame the natives for what they had done than the bird that picks up a worm upon its path.

"These poor creatures," said he, "know no better. They have never been taught the precepts of religion; and to them right and wrong are almost the same thing. Leave them to learn a lesson from our mercy."

Chapter Fifty Nine.

A Lion Hunt.

Once more our adventurers turned their faces homeward.

Contrary to their expectations, the young camelopards caused them but little trouble. A single rheim attached to the neck of each was sufficient to lead them along.

The manner in which both had been captured, had taught them in their first lesson, that man's will was superior to their own; and they were thenceforth either too cunning or too silly to resist it.

Before driving them far along the road, there would have been little danger of their straying, even if left free to do so. Like tame elephants, they knew neither their own strength nor swiftness, and soon became as easily managed as any of the horses or horned cattle.

For several days no incident worthy of notice occurred, nor did our adventurers much desire that any should. They had obtained all they required; and even Groot Willem, before so enthusiastically fond of hunting, would not have turned aside to kill the finest koodoo that ever trod the plains of Africa, unless its flesh had been absolutely wanted for food.

After a journey of two more weeks, Swartboy found himself in a land inhabited by many of his countrymen,—the Bushmen. It was a land he had long been looking forward to visit, and with pleasant anticipations,—not from any sunny memory of youthful joy, but merely from that prejudice in favour of native land, natural to all mankind. He had ever represented to his young masters that the Bushmen were a race of noble warriors and hunters,—that they were kind, hospitable, intelligent, and in every respect superior to the countrymen of his rival Congo.

They were now in a country inhabited by several wandering tribes of these people, and where opportunities might not be wanting to test the truth of Swartboy's assertions.

One soon presented itself. Early one afternoon they arrived at a settlement of Bushmen,—a kraal of their kind, containing about fifty families. On learning that they would have a long distance to travel, before finding a place to encamp, our adventurers resolved to stay by the Bushmen's village for the night.

The first exhibition given of the hospitality Swartboy had boasted of was by the whole tribe begging for tobacco, spirits, clothing, and everything else the travellers chanced to possess; while the only consideration they could give in return was the permission to draw water from a pool in the neighbourhood of their kraal.

During the night a young heifer, belonging to the headman of the village, was carried off by a lion; and in the morning two of the natives were ordered to follow the beast and destroy it. The hunters had often heard of the manner in which the Bushmen kill lions; and, anxious to see the feat performed, they obtained permission to accompany the two men on their expedition.

The only implements carried by the Bushmen for the destruction of the king of beasts were a buffalo robe, a small bow, and some poisoned arrows, with which each was provided.

The lion was traced to a grove of trees, about a mile and a half from the kraal. To this place our adventurers proceeded, curious to see a lion die under the effects of a wound given by a tiny arrow, as also to learn how the Bushmen would approach such a dangerous creature near enough to use such a weapon.

Gorged with its repast, there was no difficulty in getting near the lion. As the Bushmen anticipated, the fierce brute was enjoying a sound slumber.

Silently the two drew near—so near as almost to touch the sleeping monster.

The spectators, who had stopped at some distance off, dismounted from their horses, and, with rifles ready for instant use, at a few yards behind the Bushmen, followed the latter, whose courage they could not help admiring.

Only one of the Bushmen drew his bow. The other holding his buffalo robe spread out upon both hands, went nearer to the lion than the one who was to inflict the mortal wound.

There was a moment of intense interest. In one second the lion could have tossed the bodies of the two little men, crushed and mangled, to the earth.

In another moment the tiny arrow was seen sticking in the monster's huge side between two of the ribs. Just as the fierce brute was springing to his feet with a loud growl,—just as he had caught a glimpse of the human face,—the buffalo skin was flung over its head.

He ran backwards, turned hastily around, and disengaged himself from the robe; and then, astonished at the incomprehensible encounter, fled without casting another glance behind!

So far as destroying him was concerned, the task of the Bushmen was accomplished. The poisoned arrow had entered the animal's flesh, and they knew he was as sure to die as if a cannon-ball had carried off his head.

But the Bushmen had still something to do. They must carry back to their chief the paws of the lion, as proof that they had accomplished the errand on which they had been despatched. They must follow the lion until he fell; and, curious to witness the result, our adventurers followed them.

Slowly at first, and with an apparent show of unconcern, the lion had moved away, though gradually increasing his speed.

The arrow could not have done much more than penetrate his thick hide; and, fearing that he might not die, Willem expressed some regret that he had not given the brute a bullet from his roer.

"I am very glad you did not," exclaimed Hans, on hearing Willem's remark. "You would have spoilt all our interest in the pursuit. I want to see the effect of their poisoned arrow, and learn with my own eyes if a lion can be so easily killed."

The wounded animal retreated for about a mile, then stopped and commenced roaring loudly. Something was evidently amiss with him, as he was seen turning as upon a pivot, and otherwise acting in a very eccentric manner.

The poison was beginning to do its work, and each moment the agony of the animal seemed to be on the increase. He laid himself down and rolled over and over; he then reared himself upon his hind legs, all the while roaring like mad. Once he appeared to stand upon his head. After a time he attacked a tree growing near, and, tearing the bark both with claws and teeth, left the branches stained with his blood. He seemed as if he wished to rend the whole world!

Never had our adventurers, in all their hunting experience, been witnesses to such terrific death-struggles.

The sufferings of the great beast were frightful to behold, and awakened within the spectators a feeling of pity. They would have released it from its misery by a shot, had they not been desirous to learn all they could of the effects of the poison.

From the time the lion ceased to retreat, till the moment when he ceased to live, about fifteen minutes elapsed. During that time the spectators saw a greater variety of acrobatic feats than they had ever witnessed in one scene before. As soon as the creature was declared dead, the Bushmen cut off its paws and carried them back to the kraal.

Chapter Sixty.
A Sudden Reverse of Fortune.

On the third morning after leaving the Bushmen's kraal, our adventurers were awakened by the loud cries of a troop of black monkeys that appeared in a neighbouring grove.

Something was giving them trouble. This could be told by the cries, which were evidently those of distress.

As breakfast was being prepared, and the cattle laden for a start, Willem and Hendrik strolled towards the grove from whence the cries came. They were now more frightful than ever, and translated from the monkey language seemed to say "Murder!"

In a tree where there were between fifteen and twenty of those quadrumana, each about the size of an ordinary cat, was seen a young leopard, trying to capture a black monkey for his breakfast. To avoid this enemy, the apes had crawled out on the small slender branches, where the leopard dared not follow them, knowing that his weight would precipitate him to the ground.

For some time our adventurers amused themselves by watching the abortive efforts of the leopard to procure the means of breaking its fast. He would pursue a monkey along the limb until the branch became too small to be trusted any farther.

He would get within two or three feet of the screaming ape, and then stretch out one of his paws, while displaying his white teeth in a smile, as though desirous of shaking hands with the creature he was intending to destroy.

Finding his efforts to reach that particular monkey useless, he would then leave it, to go through the same game with another.

One of the apes was at length chased out upon a large dead limb that extended horizontally from the trunk. The top had been broken off, and there being no slender twigs on which the monkey could take refuge, there was nothing to prevent the leopard from following it to the extremity of the branch and seizing it at leisure. There was no other branch to which the monkey could spring; and it was fairly in a dilemma. On perceiving this, it turned to the hunters who stood below, and gazed at them with an expression that seemed to say, "Save me! save me!"

The leopard was so intent on obtaining his breakfast that he did not notice the arrival of the two hunters until they were within twenty yards of the tree, and until he was close pursuing the monkey along the dead limb.

At this point, however, he paused. He had caught sight of "the human face divine," and instinct told him that danger was near. He gazed upon the intruders with flaming eyes, as if very little would induce him to change the nature of his intended repast.

"Reserve your fire, Hendrik!" exclaimed Willem as he brought the roer to his shoulder; "it may be needed."

The leopard answered the report of the gun by making a somersault to the earth. There was no necessity for Hendrik to waste any ammunition upon him. He had fallen in the agonies of death; and, without even waiting for his last kick, Willem took hold of one of his hind legs and commenced dragging the carcass towards the camp.

The camp was not far-away, and they soon came within sight of it. To their surprise they saw that it was in a state of commotion. The horses and cattle were running in all directions, and so too were the men!

What could it mean?

The answer was obtained by their seeing a huge dark form standing in the middle of the camp. They recognised it as the body of a black rhinoceros, one of the largest kind. The fierce brute had taken his stand in the middle of the camping-ground, and seemed undecided as to which of the fugitives he should follow. His ill-humour had arisen from the circumstance that, on seeking the place where he was in the habit of quenching his thirst, he had found it occupied by strange intruders.

A black rhinoceros would not hesitate to charge upon a whole regiment of cavalry; and the manner in which the one in question had introduced himself to the camp was so impetuous as to cause a precipitate retreat both of man and beast,—in short, everything that was free to get off. One of the young giraffes had been too strongly secured to effect its escape. It was struggling on the ground, and by its side was an ox that the borelé had capsized in his first impetuous onset. The second of the giraffes was fleeing over the plain, and had already gone farther from the camp than any of the other animals. It seemed not only inspired by fear, but a renewed love of liberty.

The borelé soon selected an object for his pursuit, which was one of the pack-horses, and then charged right after him.

Meanwhile Willem and Hendrik hastened on to the camp, where they were joined by two of the Makololo. All the others had gone off after the cattle and horses. The giraffe, in its efforts to escape, had thrown itself upon the ground, and was fastened in such a way that it was in danger of being strangled in the rheims around its neck. As though to insure its death, the ox that had been gored by the borelé became entangled in the same fastenings, and tightened them by his violent struggles.

The first care of the returned hunters was to release the young giraffe. This could have been done immediately by setting it free from its fastenings; but then there was the danger of its following the example of its companion, and taking advantage of the liberty thus given to it.

As the ox, whose struggles were nearly breaking its neck, had been gored by the borelé and severely wounded, he saw it would be no use letting him live any longer, and without more ado he received his quietus from Hendrik's rifle. The giraffe was now released, and restored to its proper fastenings. By this time the others had caught up with most of the horses and cattle.

None of them, except the one selected for especial pursuit by the borelé, had gone far, but, turning when out of danger, were easily caught. This was not the case with the camelopard that had got loose and fled among the foremost. Its flight had been continued until it was no longer seen!

It had entered the grove from which Willem and Hendrik had just come, and there were ten chances to one against their ever seeing it again.

Had Willem been on horseback at the time it ran off from the camp, he would have stood a chance of recapturing it, but, as it had now twenty minutes of start, the chances were very slight indeed. Not a moment was to be lost, however, before making the attempt, and, accompanied by Hendrik, Congo, and the dog Spoor'em, Willem started off for the forest, leaving the others to continue the task of collecting the animals still scattered over the plain.

But one brief hour before, Willem Van Wyk was the happiest hunter in existence, and now he was about the most miserable. One of the two captives, for which he had suffered so many hardships, had escaped, and in all probability would never be again seen by the eyes of a white man. The realisation of his fondest hopes was delayed for a time,—perhaps forever.

One camelopard was of but little value to him. He must have two; and fortune might never assist them in obtaining another. He was not sure of being able to keep the one that still remained. Death might take it out of their hands. It had been injured in the struggle; and, before leaving camp he had noticed that the efforts of the Makololo

to get it to its feet had not succeeded. His great undertaking—the chief purpose of the expedition—was as far as ever from being accomplished.

Such were the thoughts that tortured him, as he urged Congo and the dog to greater haste, in following the spoor through the forest.

Chapter Sixty One.

The Lost Found.

The forest which Willem at first feared might be miles in extent, proved to be but a mere strip of timber, through which he soon passed, discovering an open plain on the other side. Nothing could be seen of the camelopard, though its tracks were found leading out upon the plain.

Willem's wishes were very difficult to meet. At first he was afraid the giraffe would be lost in a dense forest, where he would be unable to gallop after it on horseback. Now, when contemplating the vast plain before him, he feared that the flight of the escaped captive might be continued for many miles, and he regretted that it had gone out of the timber.

The trees would have given it food and shelter, where it might have stayed until overtaken; but it was not likely to make halt on an open plain.

It must now be many miles off, since they could see nothing of it.

The tracks could be followed but very slowly,—not half so fast as the animal itself had made them, while going in search of the kindred from which it had been so rudely separated several days before. The longer they continued to take up the spoor, the farther they would be from the animal that had left it.

All this was fully understood by our adventurers.

"It's no use going farther," remarked Hendrik. "We have lost the creature beyond all hope of recovery. We may as well turn back to camp."

"Not a bit of it," answered Willem. "The giraffe is mine, and I sha'n't part with it so cheaply. I'll follow it as long as I have strength left me sufficient to sit upon my horse. It must stop sometime and somewhere; and, whenever that time comes, I shall be there not long after to have another look at it."

Thinking that an hour or two more of what he considered a hopeless chase, would satisfy even Willem, Hendrik made no further objections, but continued on after Congo, who was leading along the spoor.

The sun had by this crossed the meridian, and commenced descending towards the western horizon.

They had started from camp without eating breakfast; and their sudden departure had prevented them from bringing any food along with them. Thirsty and feeble from the long fast, and the fatigue of tracking under a hot sun, they continued their course in anything but a lively fashion.

"Willem!" at length exclaimed Hendrik, suddenly pulling up his horse, "I am willing to do anything in reason, but I think we have already gone on this worse than wild-goose chase, a good many miles too far. We can scarce get back to the camp before nightfall, and I shall commence returning now."

"All right," answered Willem. "I can't blame you. You are free to do as you please; but I shall go on. I need not expect others to act as foolishly as myself. This is my own affair, and you as well as Congo

had better turn back. Leave me the dog, and I can track up the giraffe without you."

"No! no!! baas Willem," exclaimed the Kaffir. "I go with you and Spoor'em. We no leave you."

Willem, Congo, and the dog moved on, leaving Hendrik gazing after them.

He remained on the spot where he had pulled up his horse. "Now this is interesting," muttered the young cornet, as he saw them go off upon the spoor. "I have been acting without motives,—acting like a fool ever since we have been out on this expedition. Circumstances have driven me to it and will do so again. Yes. I must follow Willem. Why should I desert him when that poor Kaffir remains true? If his friendship worth more than mine?"

Spurring his horse into a gallop, Hendrik was soon once more by the side of his forsaken companion.

Willem had a strong suspicion that he was himself acting without reason, in seeking for an object he could hardly expect to find. This sage reflection did not prevent him from continuing the search. Half distracted by the loss of the camelopard, he was scarce capable of knowing whether he now acted sensibly, or like a fool!

To all appearance Hendrik had only followed him for the purpose of prevailing upon him to return.

Every argument that could be advanced against their proceeding farther was used by the young cornet,—all to no purpose. Willem was determined to proceed, and persisted in his determination.

Evening approached, and still was he unwilling to give up the search.

They could not return that night, for they were now nearly a day's journey from the camp.

"Willem is mad,—hopelessly mad," thought Hendrik, "and I must not leave him alone."

They journey on together, and in silence, Hendrik fast approaching that state of mind in which he had just pronounced Willem to be.

But their journey was approaching its termination. It was nearer than either of them expected to a successful issue.

A clump of trees was seen rising up over the plain. They were willows, and indicated the proximity of water.

Towards these the tracks appeared to lead in a line almost direct. The giraffe, guided by its instinct, had scented water. The horses ridden by the trackers did the same, and hastened forward to the clump of trees.

There was a pool in the centre of the grove, and on its edge an animal, the sight of which drew an exclamation of joy from the lips of Groot Willem. It was the escaped camelopard. A second joyful shout was caused by their perceiving that it was again a captive.

The loose rheim, which it had carried away round its neck, had become entangled among the bushes, and it was now secured so that they had no difficulty in laying hold of it. Had they not come upon the spot, it would have perished either by the suicidal act of half-strangulation, from thirst, or by the teeth of some fierce predatory animal.

The rheim was now unwound from the saplings to which it had attached itself, and the giraffe released from its irksome attitude. No harm had yet befallen it.

"Now, Hendrik," exclaimed Willem, as he gazed upon the captive with an expression of pride and pleasure, "is it not better that we have saved this poor creature than to have left it to die a horrible death?"

"Yes, certainly," answered his companion. "Much good may sometimes result from what may appear a foolish course of conduct."

Satisfied with the result of his perseverance, Willem was quite indifferent as to whether his conduct had been foolish or otherwise.

Congo did not seem the least surprised at the good fortune of his master; probably for the reason that he had the utmost confidence in his wisdom, and never for a moment had doubted that the giraffe would be discovered.

Willem never was without the means of lighting a fire,—he was too fond of a pipe for that,—and near a large blazing heap of wood they remained until the first appearance of day.

The journey back to the camp was a tedious one, but was made with much less heaviness of spirit than they had suffered when leaving it to go in search of the lost giraffe, which fortune had so favoured them in finding.

Chapter Sixty Two.

With the Hottentots.

On reaching the camp, Willem and Hendrik found their companions anxiously awaiting their return.

The horses and cattle had all been recovered, and the borelé that had caused their dispersion had been shot by Hans and Arend.

Its attack had caused a delay of two days, and the loss of an ox.

Again the journey towards Graaf Reinet was resumed, and day by day was prosecuted with all the speed that could be made in safety to their animals.

The return journey was not completed until they had suffered many hardships, and had more than once nearly lost the two young giraffes.

On passing through the Hottentot country, they saw many large plains from which the grass had lately been burnt; and not a morsel could be obtained for the subsistence of their animals. Amid the herbage charred by the fire, they frequently saw the remains of serpents and other reptiles, that had been scorched to death.

During the passage across these burnt tracts, the travellers suffered much from hunger and thirst, as did also their animals. Such hardships Groot Willem seemed not to heed. His only care was for the young giraffes; his only fear



that they might not safely reach their destination. But each hour of the toilsome journey was cheered by the knowledge that they were drawing nearer home; and all that was disagreeable was endured with such patience as sprang from the prospect of a speedy termination to their toils.

The latter part of their route lay through a part of Southern Africa, farther to the west than any they had yet visited. They passed through lands inhabited by certain tribes of natives, of whom they had often heard and read, but had never seen.

Of some of the customs of those unfortunate people classed amongst that variety of the *genus homo* known as the "Hottentot," they one afternoon became fully and painfully acquainted.

Beneath the shade of some stunted trees they found an aged man and a child not more than eighteen months old. The man, who could not have been less than seventy years of age, was totally blind; and by his side was an empty calabash, that had evidently once contained water.

With the assistance of Swartboy, as interpreter, it was ascertained that he had lately lost by death an only son and protector. There was no one now to provide for his wants, and he had been carried far-away from the home of his tribe, and left in the desert to die!

The child had lost its mother, its only parent, and had been "exposed" to death at the same time and for the same reason,—because there was no one to provide for it.

Both old man and infant had been thus left exposed to a death which must certainly ensue, either by thirst, hunger, or hyenas.

This horrid custom of the Hottentots was not entirely unknown to our adventurers. They had heard that the act, of which they now had ocular evidence, was once common among the inhabitants of the country, through which they were passing, but, like thousands of others, they had believed that such a barbarous custom had long ago been discontinued, under the precept and example of European civilisation.

They saw that they were mistaken; and that they were in the neighbourhood of a tribe that had either never heard these precepts of humanity, or had turned a deaf ear to them.

Knowing that a Hottentot kraal could not be many miles away, and unwilling to leave two human beings to such a fearful fate, the travellers determined to take the helpless creatures back to the people who, as Swartboy worded it, had "throwed 'um away."

Strange to say, the old man expressed himself not only willing to die where he sat, but showed a strong disinclination to being returned to his countrymen!

He had the philosophy to believe that he was old and helpless,—a child for the second time,—and that by dying he was but performing his duty to society! To be placed again in a position where he would be an incumbrance to those whom he could not call kindred was, in his opinion, a crime he should not commit!

Our adventurers resolved upon saving him in spite of himself.

It was not until late in the afternoon that they reached the kraal from which the outcasts had been ejected. Not a soul could be found in the whole community who would admit that the old man had ever been seen there before, and no one had the slightest knowledge of the child!

The white men were advised to take the objects of their solicitude to the place where they properly belonged.

"This is interesting," said Hendrik. "We might wander over all Southern Africa without finding a creature that will acknowledge having seen these helpless beings before. They are ours now, and we must provide for them in some way or other."

"I do not see how we can do it," rejoined Arend; "I'm quite sure that they are now with their own tribe, and it is they who should provide for them."

A second effort was made to persuade the villagers to acknowledge some complicity in the attempt to starve two human beings. But they had already learned that their conduct in such a custom was considered by white people as a crime, and, ashamed of what they had done, they stoutly stood to the story they had first told.

Strangest of all, the feeble old man confirmed all their statements, and, as some proof of the truth of what they had said, he informed the travellers that the chief and several others whom he called by name, were men incapable of practising a deception!

This he professed to know from a long acquaintance with them.

The hunters were now within the territory over which the Colonial Government claimed and sometimes enforced dominion, and the Hottentots were threatened with the vengeance of English justice in the event of their not taking care of the old man and child, or should they again expose him as they had already done.

They were told that a messenger should be sent to them within a few weeks, to learn if their orders had been obeyed; and, having delivered up the two helpless beings to the headman of the village, the travellers once more proceeded on their way.

Chapter Sixty Three.
"The Dutchman's Fireside."

A few more days' journey brought them into a neighbourhood inhabited by several Dutch "boers." They were now travelling upon a track dignified by the name of "road," which only benefited them so

far as between the rivers it conducted them without difficulty from one crossing-place to another.

For the first time in several months they saw fields under cultivation by white labour, and were able to procure a substance called "bread."

One evening, as they were preparing to encamp near the habitation of a well-to-do appearing boer, they received an invitation from the proprietor to make his house their home for the night.

A heavy cold rain had been falling most part of the day, and to all appearance the weather would be no better during the night. The invitation was gladly accepted, and the travellers, grouped around the wide hearth of the boer's kitchen fire, were enjoying that sense of happiness we all feel to a greater or less extent when perfectly secure from a storm heard raging without.

The horses and cattle had been driven under large sheds. The young giraffes were secured in a place by themselves. Congo, Swartboy, and the Makololo were in a hut near by, with some Hottentot servants of the baas boer.

Their host was a free-hearted, cheerful sort of fellow, only too thankful that circumstances had given him some guests to entertain him. His tobacco was of the best quality, and the supply of "Cape Smoke"—the native peach brandy—was apparently unlimited.

According to his own account, he had been a great hunter during his youth; and there was nothing he liked better than to relate incidents of his own adventures in the chase, or to listen to the tales of others. The only fault he had to find with our heroes was, that they were too moderate in the use of his "Cape Smoke."

He was a convivial man,—one who knew of nothing better to do after a long day's work than getting what is termed "jolly" in the

company of friends. He did not care to imbibe alone, and he declared that nothing looked worse than that, except to see a man drinking too often in the presence of others, when they refused to do justice to his generosity.

According to his own account, he had been hard at work on his farm throughout all that day, and in the rain. Why, then, should he not cheer himself after such protracted exposure? The "smoke" was the very thing to do it. His guests were welcome to the best his house could afford, and all the compensation he would ask in return for his hospitality would be the satisfaction of seeing them make themselves at home.

On the part of the boer there was a strong determination to make his guests intoxicated; but this was not observed by them. They only believed that his hospitality was pushed a little too far,—so much so as to be rather annoying. But this was a fault they had observed in many, who were only trying to put on their best behaviour, and, considering its unselfishness, it could be readily excused.

Notwithstanding the many hardships Groot Willem and his companions had endured in their various excursions, they had never deemed it necessary to use ardent spirits to excess; and the frequent and earnest entreaties of the boer, backed by his fat and rather good-looking "vrow," could not induce them to depart from their usual practice of abstemiousness. The boer pretended to be sorry at his inability to entertain his youthful guests.

Notwithstanding his assertions to the contrary, however, the hunters passed a long and pleasant evening by his fireside.

The supper provided for them, as well as everything else, except some of their host's hunting stories, was very good. It was so seldom that the man had an opportunity of entertaining guests, that it seemed ingratitude on their part to deprive him of the pleasure he enjoyed; and, yielding to his solicitations, they did not retire until a late hour.

But there had been one chapter in the conversation of the evening to which none of our adventurers listened with much pleasure. It was a statement made by the boer, after he had partaken of several glasses of the "smoke."

"Ish ver shorry you go get the money for the two *cameels*," said he. "Mine two bruders and mine vrow's bruder stand chance to lose it now. Ish ver shorry for them, you know."

On further conversation it was discovered that his two brothers and a brother of his wife had left for the north seven months before, on a hunting excursion, their principal object being to procure the two young giraffes for which the reward of five hundred pounds had been offered. They were to visit the country of the Bakwains, and had taken with them a native servant who belonged to that tribe. Their return was hourly expected, and had been so for more than a month, though nothing had been heard of them since their departure.

It was but natural that the boer should prefer that his own kinsmen might obtain the reward, instead of a party of strangers; and his having so candidly expressed his regrets in that regard was rather a circumstance in his favour. His guests ascribed it to his open, straightforward manner, made a little more free by application of the "smoke."

It was not until an old Dutch clock in a corner of the kitchen had struck two, that the young men—who pleaded their fatigue after a long day's march—were allowed to retire to their beds.

They were shown into a large room, where a good soft couch had been prepared for each of them. Their arduous journeying seemed nearly over; for they had reached a place where people slept with their faces screened from the faint light of the stars, and without depending on the nature of the earth beneath them for the quality of their couch.

Chapter Sixty Four.
"Strayed or Stolen."

It was not until ten o'clock next morning that Hans awoke and then aroused his companions.

"We should be ashamed of ourselves," exclaimed Willem, as he hastily commenced making his toilet. "We have swallowed too much smoke and overslept ourselves!"

"No," answered Hans, who was always anxious to prove himself the philosopher of the company. "We should rather feel pride in the circumstance that the small quantity we drank has produced so great an effect. It is proof that we have not been in the habit of indulging in the use of ardent spirits, and that pride we should ever strive to maintain."

The travellers were soon in the presence of their host and hostess, whom they found waiting to do the honours of a well-appointed breakfast, to which each of the hunters except Willem sat down. Willem could not be contented to eat, until he had looked to the property in which he professed to have a much greater interest than his companions, and he would not sit down to the breakfast-table till he had paid a visit to his darling giraffes.

Walking out of the house he went toward the sheds where the cattle and native servants had been housed for the night. On entering the hut where he had left his black companion the evening before, he had before him a melancholy evidence of the evils of intemperance. The four Makololo were rolling about upon the floor, moaning heavily, as though in the last agonies of death.

Swartboy and Congo, more accustomed to the effects of strong drink, only showed by their heavy breathing that they were endeavouring to recover from their night's debauch by indulging in a sound slumber.

They were quickly roused to consciousness by Willem, who used the toe of his boot for the purpose; though even this rude appliance had no effect on any of the four Makololo.

The Kaffir sprang to his feet, and, as though trying to carry his head in his hands, reeled out of the room. He was followed by his master, who saw that all efforts at inducing the Makololo to resume their journey would be for several hours unavailable.

On moving around to the shed where the two giraffes had been tied, Willem was somewhat alarmed by an indescribable expression seen on the features of Congo.

The eyes seemed as if about to start from the Kaffir's head!

The distance between his chin and nose had alarmingly extended, and his whole appearance formed a frightful picture of astonishment and fear.

To Willem there needed no explanation. One glance was enough.

The camelopards were gone!

The Bushman and Kaffir had promised to watch over them in turns, and had both neglected their duty by getting drunk.

Willem uttered not one word of reproach. Hope, fear, and chagrin kept him for a moment silent.

Within his mind was struggling a faint idea that the giraffes had been removed by some servants of the boer to a place not far-away,—perhaps to a more secure shed.

This hope was dashed with the fear that they had been stolen, or had helped themselves to freedom, and might never again be found.

During the first moments of his agony and despair Groot Willem had the good sense to blame himself. He had been as negligent as either of the two terror-stricken men now standing before him.

He should not have left to others the sole care of what he prized so highly. For the sake of a few hours of better fare than that to which he had lately been accustomed, why had he neglected to look after a prize that had cost so many toils and so much time in obtaining? Why could he not have lived a few days longer, as he had done for so many months, watchful, thoughtful,—on the alert? All would then have been well.

A search of five minutes among the huts and sheds told him that the giraffes were certainly gone.

The task was to recover them. Directing Swartboy and Congo to make all the inquiries they could, as to the time and manner of their disappearance, the great hunter turned despairingly towards the house to communicate to his companions the misfortune that had befallen them.

The news took away every appetite. The grand breakfast prepared by the vrow and her dusky handmaidens was likely to remain uneaten; for all, starting up from their seats, hastened towards the shed where the giraffes had been confined.

The hospitable boer expressed a keen sympathy for their misfortune, and declared his willingness to spend a month, if need be, with all his servants, in the recovery of the lost camelopards.

"All dish comes of dranking do mush smokes," said he. "Mine beoples last night all got more so drunk; put dey must do so no more. I shall spill all de smokes on the ground, and puy no more forever."

One of the giraffes had been tied to a post forming part of the shed in which they had been shut up. The post had not only been torn

out of the earth, but from its fastenings at the top, and was lying on the ground, six or eight paces from where it had formerly stood. Two other posts adjoining had been pushed down, making a breach in the enclosure sufficiently large for the giraffes to have made their exit.

Had they been tied to trees as usual, they could not have escaped. The rheims around their slender necks would have held them.

Perhaps by the weight and strength of their bodies they had pushed down the stockade, and the rheims had slipped over the ends of the posts after they had fallen. In this manner they might have escaped. But, though it seemed simple enough, still there was something strange in it, and our travellers thought so.

The captives had lately shown no disposition to get free, and it was odd they should do so now. Moreover there must have been a premeditated, jointly-contrived plan between them, and this could hardly be supposed to exist.

They were gone, however, and must be sought for and brought back.

For this duty Congo was already making preparations, though with very little prospect of success. Rain had been falling heavily all the night, and had destroyed any chance of the lost animals being tracked, even by Spoor'em.

Within a large enclosure, contiguous to the boer's dwelling, more than five hundred cattle had been penned up during the night. These had been turned out to graze that morning, and, in consequence, the ground was everywhere covered with the hoof-marks of horses and cattle.

A full hour was spent in finding a track that could, with any certainty, be pronounced that of a giraffe, and this had been made

by the animal going in the direction of the sheds. Of course it was the spoor of the camelopards when first led up on the evening before.

"Hendrik," exclaimed Willem, nearly frantic with despair; "what shall we do? Those giraffes are somewhere, and must be found."

"They are just as likely to have gone in one direction as another," answered Hendrik, "and suppose we look for them in the direction of Graaf Reinet."

This remark but increased Willem's despair, for it showed an unwillingness on the part of his comrade to make any farther delay on account of their misfortune.

The boer declared himself willing to furnish horses and men for a search, if the hunters could ascertain, with any certainty, the direction the runaways had taken.

Hans now volunteered a bit of advice, which was listened to by Willem, as being the most sensible yet given.

"Our late captives," said that philosopher, "have made the most of a good opportunity for escaping. It was, no doubt, done under an instinct; and the same instinct will be likely to guide them back toward their native land. If we go in search of them, let the search be made in the direction from whence they came."

"Mine poys," broke in the boer, "dare ish no use lookin' if they good that way. Dey will not wait fast enough for anypoddy to catch up to 'em."

Hendrik and Arend expressed themselves of the same opinion.

"Congo, you black scoundrel!" exclaimed Willem, "where are our giraffes? Which way shall we look for them?"

In answer to this question the bewildered Kaffir could only shake his aching head.

Willem had great faith in Congo's instinct, and was not satisfied with the limited information received from him.

"Do you think, Congo, we had better follow the spoor we made in coming here?" he asked.

Again the Kaffir shook his head.

"You sooty idiot!" exclaimed the distracted questioner, "answer me in some other way. No more wabbling of your head, or I'll break it for you."

"I don't think at all now, baas Willem," said Congo. "My head feel too big for the question you put 'um."

Hendrik was about to observe that there was a vast difference between the Kaffir and his master, but, not wishing to vex the latter any more, he proposed that something should be done besides talking.

"Hans," exclaimed Willem, "you stay here and look after our property. All the others who wish it can come along with me; but whoever does must get into his saddle in the shortest possible time. I'm off this instant in search of the fugitives."

So saying, Groot Willem made a rush towards the shed under which his horse had been stabled, and, putting on the saddle with his own hands, he sprang into it and rode hastily away.

Chapter Sixty Five.
The Last of a Family.

Hendrik and Arend, who had imitated his movements, alone followed Groot Willem from the house. The boer, after promising so much, appeared so dilatory in his preparations that no dependence could be placed on his aid and the three hunters galloped off without waiting for any of the farm, or any of his servants, of whom they had seen several. His excuse for not making more haste to provide help was, that no one could tell the direction in which the runaways had gone, and that to search for them in the north, when the animals might have strayed south, was sheer silliness.

Much to the surprise of all, Congo had stayed behind instead of accompanying Groot Willem, according to universal custom. The Kaffir's solicitude for the safety of his young master had been so great on all former occasions, and he had shown such an unwillingness to be separated from him, that his present behaviour was a surprise to everybody who knew him. He was allowed to have his own will and way, for it was known that any efforts at making him useful, by denying him this privilege, would be of no avail. True and faithful as he had ever shown himself, his actions were seldom controlled by the others.

"As soon as we get a mile or two away from the house," said Hendrik, "we may be able to discover their tracks. It is no use our examining the ground over which so many cattle have passed. But supposing we should learn that we are on the right course, what then, Willem?"

"Then we must follow it till the giraffes are retaken," answered Willem. "I should have but little hope of catching them again," he continued, "did I not know that they are now quite tame. I should as soon think of my own horse absconding, and going a hundred miles into the wilderness, to avoid me. We shall find the giraffes if we persevere; and, once found, they won't hinder us from catching them."

From the quiet behaviour of the giraffes for the last three weeks, Arend and Hendrik could not deny the truth of Willem's assertions; and all three urged their horses forward, more anxious than ever to come upon the spoor of the strays.

After passing beyond the ground tracked by the farm cattle, they once more came out upon the so-called road, along which they had travelled the day before. But for more than a mile, after the most careful examination, no spoor of giraffe, old or young, was to be seen. Even those made by them on the day before could no longer be distinguished in the dust. The rain, with the tracks of other animals coming after, had obliterated them. The state of the ground they were examining was now favourable for receiving a permanent impression; and, as none appeared, they became satisfied that the runaways had not returned that way.

After a long consultation which came near ending in a wrangle, Willem being opposed by his companions, it was decided that they should ride round in a circle of which the dwelling of the boer should be the centre. By so doing, the spoor of the lost animals should be found. It was the only plan for them to take, and slowly they rode on, feeling very uncomfortable at the uncertainty that surrounded them.

The country over which they were riding was a poor pasture with patches of thinly growing grass. A herd of cattle and horses, old and young, had lately gone over the ground, and often would the eye catch sight of tracks so like those made by a giraffe that one of the party would dismount for a closer examination before being able to decide.

To Groot Willem this slow process was torturing in the extreme. He believed that the giraffes were each moment moving farther away from the place.

After the search had been continued for nearly two hours, a spoor was at length found that was unmistakably that of a camelopard. With

a shout of joy Willem turned his horse and commenced taking it up. It was fresh,—made but a few hours before.

Under the excitement of extreme fortune, whether it be good or bad, people do not act with much wisdom.

So thought Hendrik as he called the attention of Willem to the fact that they had started out for the purpose of finding the spoor but not following it; that they would require the help of Congo and Spoor'em; that they must provide themselves with food and other articles necessary for a two or three days' journey.

Believing that, by the time they could go back to the house and return, the giraffes would gain a distance of not less than ten or fifteen miles, Hendrik's suggestions seemed absurd, and his companion, without heeding them, kept on along the trail.

Hendrik and Arend could do nothing but follow. Before they had gone very far, Arend made the observation that the tracks they were now following appeared too large to have been made by the young giraffes.

"That's all a fancy of yours," rejoined Willem, as he hurried on.

"There appears to have been only one that went this way," said Hendrik, after they had gone a little farther.

"Never mind," answered Willem, "we have no time to look for the other. It won't be far away from its companion, and we shall probably find them together."

Notwithstanding what Willem said, his comrades were convinced that they were following the track of only one giraffe, and that larger than either of those that had been lost. They again ventured to give their opinion about it.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Willem. "There has not been a giraffe in this part of the country for the last ten years, except the two we ourselves brought here."

This statement would have been indorsed by every settler for a hundred miles around. For all that, it was a wrong one, as our adventurers soon had reason to be convinced.

Before they had gone another mile, the large body and lofty head of a giraffe loomed up before their eyes! On seeing it, they put spurs to their horses and rode straight toward it. They got within about three hundred yards of it before their approach was discovered.

For the first ten minutes of the chase that then ensued, the distance between the hunters and the retreating giraffe remained about the same.

Gradually it began to diminish. The giraffe appeared to become exhausted with only a slight exertion; and on reaching a piece of marshy ground, where its feet sunk into the mud, it made a violent struggle and then fell over on its side.

On riding forward to the spot, the hunters had an explanation of why the chase was so soon over. They were only surprised that the creature had been able to run at all.

It proved to be an ancient male of which but little was left but the skin and bones.

It looked as though it was the last of its race, about to become extinct.

On its back and other parts of its body were lumps as large as walnuts, the scars of old wounds, where musket-bullets had been lodged in its body several years before!

The rusty head of an arrow was also seen protruding from its side.

It had the appearance of having been hunted for a score of years, and hundreds of times to have been within an inch of losing its life.

Its enemy, man, had overtaken it at last, and was gazing upon its struggling not with exultation, but rather with pity and regret.

They felt no triumph in having run down and captured a thing that had been so long struggling with death. Groot Willem, who had been for a time highly elated with the prospect of recovering the lost giraffes, was again in great despondence. Much time had been squandered in this purposeless pursuit.

He was not one to yield easily to despair; and yet despair was now upon him. There was every symptom of a dark night coming down, and it was now near. Inspired either by pity or revenge, he sent a bullet from his roer into the head of the struggling skeleton; and, throwing himself into the saddle, he turned the head of his horse once more towards the house.

An attempt had been made to recover the lost giraffes. It had failed. Night was close at hand. Nothing more could be done for that day, and Willem now declared his willingness to return to Graaf Reinet and die.

Hope had departed from his heart, and he no longer felt a desire to live.

Hendrik and Arend, although sympathising with him in their common misfortune, exchanged looks of congratulation. They would now be permitted to go home.

Chapter Sixty Six.
News of the Lost.

The sky had been overclouded all day, and continued so as the sun went down. Over them descended a night as dark as Erebus.

Perceiving the impracticability of getting that night to the house of the boer,—a distance of ten or fifteen miles,—the disappointed trackers dismounted, and staked their horses upon the grass, determined to wait for the return of another day.

The night was passed in fitful slumbers around a camp-fire, where they were only visited by a flight of large moths, and some laughing hyenas, that by their harsh cachinations seemed to mock them in their misery.

They were in a district of country from which the most noble of its denizens seemed to have been driven, and the most despicable only remained. When morning dawned they again climbed into their saddles and continued on towards the kraal of the boer.

When, as they supposed, within about five miles of the house, they met two strange horsemen coming in the opposite direction.

"Goot morgen, shentlemens!" saluted one of the strangers as they drew near. "I'm glat to meet some ones coming your ways. Hash you seen anything of our horses?"

"Do you mean those you are now riding?" asked Hendrik.

"No, not these, but five other horses,—no, three horses and two mares,—all mitout either saddles or pridles; one red horse mit one eye and a white poot on the left behind leg, one mare mit a star on the front of his head, und—"

"No," interrupted Hendrik, "we have been out since yesterday morning, but have seen no stray horses of any description; not a horse except those we are riding ourselves."

"Then we need not look in the direction you have been," said the other horseman, who spoke English with a proper accent. "Will you please tell us whence you have come?"

Hendrik gave them a brief history of their course during the last twenty-four hours; and, in doing so, mentioned the object of their expedition,—the search after the giraffes.

"If that's what you've been after," said the man who spoke proper English, "perhaps we can assist you a little. From what you tell me, I presume you must have been staying at the kraal of Mynheer Van Ormon. Yesterday morning we were looking for our horses about ten miles south of his place, when we saw two giraffes, the first I had ever seen in my life. We were badly mounted, and unprepared for hunting anything except our strayed horses, else we should have given chase."

"Ten miles to the south of the kraal!" exclaimed Willem, "and we seeking for them twenty to the north. What fools we have been. What were the giraffes doing?" he asked earnestly, turning towards the man who had one more awakened within him the sweet sentiment of hope. "Were they grazing or going on?"

"They were travelling southward at a gentle trot, but increased their speed on seeing us. We were not within a quarter of a mile of them."

Our adventurers were too impatient to stay longer on the spot; and, after getting a few further directions, they bade the strangers good day and hastened on towards the house.

On entering its enclosure the first person they encountered was the boer Mynheer Van Ormon.

"I see pat luck mit you, mine poys," said the Dutchman, as they rode up to him. "I knowed it would pe so. The cameels have goed too far for you."

"Yes, too far to the south," answered Willem. "We have heard of them, and must be off immediately. Where are our companions?"

"They goed away yester morgen to live where the oxen get grass. They now waiting for you at the south."

"That's all right," said Hendrik. "We must hasten to join them; but I think we'd be better of something to eat first. I'm starving. Mynheer Van Ormon, we must again trespass on your hospitality."

"So you shall, mine poys, mit pleasure all around; put who told you I vas Mynheer Van Ormon?"

"The same two men who told us about the giraffes. They were looking for some stray horses."

"Dat mush be mine neighbour Cloots, who live fifteen miles to the east of thish place. They say they see the cameels. Where an' when they see 'em?"

"Yesterday morning, about ten miles south of this place, they said."

"May be dey be gone to Graaf Reinet to say you are coming. Ha, he, hi! Dat ish ver' goot."

The boer then conducted his guests towards the dwelling. On passing a hut by the way, the hunters were surprised at seeing Congo suddenly disappear around a corner!

On the part of the Kaffir, the encounter appeared both unexpected and undesired, as he had started back apparently to avoid them.

This was a new mystery.

"Ho Congo! come back here," shouted Willem. "Why are you here? Why are you not with the others?"

The Kaffir did not condescend to make answer, but skulked into the hut.

The boer now proceeded to explain that the Kaffir had expressed a wish to be employed at his place, and had declared that he would proceed no further with his former masters, who had cruelly ill-treated him for allowing the giraffes to escape. He denied having done anything to influence this strange decision.

"This cannot be," said Willem. "There must be some mistake. He is not telling the truth if he says that we beat him. I may have spoken to him somewhat harshly; I admit having done so, but I did not know he was so sensitive. I'm sorry, if I have offended him, and am willing to apologise."

Mynheer Van Ormon stepped up to the door of the hut and commanded the Kaffir to come forth.

When Congo showed himself at the entrance, Willem apologised to him for the harsh language he had used, and, in the same manner as one friend should speak to another, entreated him to forget and forgive, and return with them to Graaf Reinet.

During this colloquy the sharp eyes of the boer were glancing from master to servant, as though he knew what the result would be. They showed a gleam of satisfaction as the Kaffir declared that he preferred remaining with his new master; and the only favour he now asked of Willem was some compensation for his past services.

Had Congo been one of the brothers, Hans or Hendrik Von Bloom, Willem could not have done more towards effecting a reconciliation. At length, becoming indignant at the unaccountable conduct of his old servitor, he turned scornfully away, and, along with Hendrik and Arend, entered the house.

After seeing a joint of cold boiled beef, a loaf of brown bread, and a bottle of Cape wine placed before his guests, the boer went out again.

Hastily repairing to one of the sheds, he there found a Hottentot servant at hard work in saddling one of his horse.

"Piet," said he, speaking in great haste, "quick, mine poy! chump into your saddle, and ride out to the north till you meet mine bruder and Shames. Tell them not to come more so near as half a mile to the house for one hour. Make haste an' pe off!"

Two minutes more and the Hottentot was on the horse, galloping away in the direction given to him.

Having satisfied their hunger, thanked their host and his fat vrow for their hospitality, and bidden them farewell, our adventurers started off for the South, anxious to rejoin Hans, and continue the search after the giraffes.

Chapter Sixty Seven.
Why Congo turned Traitor.

Unwilling to trespass any longer on the hospitality of Mynheer Van Ormon, Hans had left the house with the intention to encamp somewhere near it, and wait for the return of his companions.

To this the boer had made but little opposition, and his guest proceeded to prepare the Makololo for a removal. They were still suffering all the horrors of a recovery from their first spell of intoxication, and, on entering the hut where they had passed the night, Hans found them full of that species of repentance that leads to strong resolutions of future reformation.

On being informed of the loss of the giraffes, their remorse seemed as if it would tempt them to suicide, and one of them, while tearing his wool-covered head, kept repeating the word *kombi, kombi!*

Hans knew that this was the name of a virulent poison much in use amongst the Makololo.

The four unfortunate men were willing to take upon themselves the whole blame of allowing the giraffes to escape, and seemed grateful for the mercy of being allowed to live any longer!

After the cattle and horses had been loaded, and all got ready for a start, Congo expressed his determination to stay behind.

"What does this mean, Congo?" asked Hans. "Are you angry at what your master said to you? You must forget that. He meant no harm. What do you intend doing?"

"Don't know, baas Hans," gruffly answered Congo; "don't know nuffin'."

Believing that the Kaffir was only displeased with himself for his conduct on the night before, and that he would soon recover from his "miff," Hans made no attempt to dissuade him. Accompanied by Swartboy and the Makololo he moved away, driving the cattle before them, and leaving Congo and his dog behind.

He went in a southerly course, as the grass looked more tempting in that direction. When about three miles from the house he came upon a grove of trees, through which ran a little rivulet. On its bank he determined to make camp, and await the return of his companion.

The manner in which he had left the boer had been rather sudden and unceremonious, and, if called upon to give an explanation of it, only some half-developed reasons would have presented themselves to his mind. Of these, however, there were several. One was the desire of removing the Makololo, now under his sole care, from the temptation of swallowing any more "Cape Smoke."

This apprehension, however, was altogether groundless, and not even a relief from aching heads and self-condemnation could have induced the subjects of Macora to drink any more for the present.

Hans possessed a philosophic spirit, and, under most circumstances, could wait patiently. Swartboy and the Makololo were in want of rest, to enable them to recover from their last night's debauch. The cattle and horses were in need of the grass that grew luxuriantly on the banks of the stream. All, therefore, could pass the day with but little inconvenience arising from the absence of the others.

As the night came on, the cattle were collected; and, availing themselves of the habits to which they had been long since trained, they lay down close to the large fire that had been kindled by the edge of the grove.

The night passed without any incidents to disturb them; but, just as day broke, they were awakened by the barking of a dog, and soon after greeted by a familiar voice.

It was that of Congo.

"I thought you would think better of us and return," said Hans, pleased once more to see the face of the faithful Kaffir.

"Yaas, I come," answered Congo, "but not to stay. I go back again."

"Why! What's brought you, then?"

"To see baas Willem; but he no here. Tell him when he come back to wait for Congo. Tell him wait two days, four days,—tell him always wait till Congo come."

"But Willem will go to the house before he comes here, and you can see him yourself."

"No; may be I off with the boer oxen. I work there now. Tell baas Willem to wait for Congo."

"Certainly I shall do so," answered Hans; "but you are keeping something hid from me. Why do you wish to see your master, if you are so offended as to have forsaken him. What is your reason for staying behind?"

"Don't know," vaguely responded the Kaffir. "Dis fool Congo don't know nuffin'."

"Der's one thing I mus say for Congo," said Swartboy, "he mos allers tell the troof. He jus done so now."

The Kaffir smiled as though satisfied with Swartboy's remark.

After again requesting that Willem should be told to wait his return, he hastened away, followed by the dog Spoor'em.

There was a mystery in the conduct of the man that Hans could not comprehend in any other way than by taking the explanation he had himself given. Congo seemed certainly either to be a fool or acting in a very foolish way.

As the morning advanced, Hans began to believe that the trackers had proved successful in their search. The spoor of the giraffes must have been found and followed, or they would have been back before then.

From his knowledge of Willem, Hans was certain that once on the spoor he would never leave it as long as he had strength to continue. The giraffes had become tame, and there was no reason why they should not be easily retaken. But just as the sun had mounted up to the meridian, this hope was dispelled by the appearance of Willem and his comrade coming back empty-handed.

"You have been unsuccessful," said Hans, as they rode up. "Well, never mind; there is still a hope left us, and that is, to get safely home."

"We have another hope besides that," replied Willem. "We have heard of the giraffes. They were seen yesterday morning about seven miles to the southward of this spot. They are between us and our home, and we are not hunters if we don't recover them yet. We must be off after them immediately."

Swartboy and the Makololo were directed to drive in the cattle, and all commenced making preparations for a departure.

"We shall miss Congo and Spoor'em," said Willem, while the cattle were being loaded. "We shall want them badly now."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hans, "I had nearly forgotten to tell you that Congo was here this morning, and wished me to say you were to wait until he came to you. He was very anxious to see you, and said you were to wait for him four days, or longer, if he did not see you in that time."

"Fortunately there will be no need for that delay," rejoined Willem. "I have just seen the ungrateful rascal,—not half an hour ago."

"Indeed. And what did he want?"

"Only to dun me for the wages due him for the last year of his services. I have never been more deceived about a man in my life. I could not have believed it possible that Congo would thus turn traitor and desert me."

The conversation was discontinued, as all became busy in making ready for a start.

Chapter Sixty Eight.

Light out of Darkness.

In half an hour afterwards the hunters had broken up their camp.

"I feel sorry about having to leave Congo behind," said Willem, as the cattle were being driven across the stream. "Not that I care a straw for him, the ungrateful wretch, but that we may be unable to find the spoor of the giraffes, not having him with us. He and Spoor'em would be worth everything now."

"I think," rejoined his brother, "there's not much chance of our recovering them. We are now in a settled country where they will find

but little rest. They will either be driven out of it or killed by whoever comes across them."

"I have thought of all that," replied Willem; "still, I shall hope for a day or two longer. I can better survive the loss, if nobody else succeeds in obtaining the reward offered for them; but should that brother of whom the boer spoke, as being gone on a similar expedition to ours,—should he perform the feat we have failed to accomplish, then I shouldn't care to live much longer."

Before they had gone very far, all noticed that there was something wrong with Swartboy, who seemed also inclined to turn back, and was muttering some gibberish to himself, as was his habit when in any way perplexed or annoyed. The excitement in his mind at last became too strong to be restrained, and, drawing near Willem, he asked:—

"What was that, baas Willem, you said jus now 'bout the bruder of dat Dutchman?"

"I hardly remember, Swart," answered Willem. "Some thing about his going after giraffes and getting the reward instead of ourselves. Why do you ask?"

"But did they gone nort same as we been a doin'?"

"Yes, so the boer told us."

"How long was dat ago?"

"Seven months, I think he said."

"Why for you no tell me afore?"

This question Willem did not think worth answering, and Swartboy for a few minutes was left to his thoughts.

Presently he recommenced the conversation. "Baas Willem," said he. "I think we bess stop, and talk a bit. Congo no fool, but Swartboy. Swartboy a fool, and no mistake 'bout dat."

"Well, what has that to do with our stopping for a talk?" asked Willem.

"The boer's bruder, he come back from the nort without catch any giraffe," replied the Bushman. "I tink he got some now."

A light suddenly dawned on the mind of Hans, who stood listening to this dialect. The mysterious conduct of Congo appeared better than half explained.

A halt was immediately ordered, and all gathered around Swartboy.

Nearly twenty minutes was taken up in obtaining from the Bushman the information he had to give. From the answers made to about a hundred questions, the hunters learned that, in the hut where he, Congo, and the Makololo had been so freely entertained, they had seen a Hottentot who had lately returned from a journey to the north.

This Swartboy had understood from a few words the man had muttered while under the influence of the "smoke."

During the evening, the Hottentot had been called away from the hut, and Swartboy had seen no more of him, nor thought anything of what he had said.

Now, however, on hearing that the boer had a brother who had gone northward on a giraffe hunt, Swartboy conceived the idea that the drunken Hottentot had not been there alone. In all likelihood he

had accompanied the expedition. It had returned unsuccessful; and the boer's brothers had stolen the two giraffes that were now missing.

The more this conjecture was discussed, the more probable it appeared.

No doubt Congo had some suspicion that there was something wrong, and he was keeping it to himself lest he might be mistaken.

Had he stayed behind in the hope of ascertaining the truth? His rude behaviour to his former master in the presence of the boer might have been only a ruse to mislead the latter, and give an opportunity for carrying out some detective contrivance. It was all in keeping with the Kaffir character, and Willem was but too delighted to think that such was the explanation.

"I thought at the time I last saw him," said Willem, "that there was something in his behaviour unlike what would be shown by a traitor. It seemed to contradict his words. I believe that we have all been very stupid. I hope so. I shall go back and see Congo immediately. I shall demand an explanation. He will tell me all, if I can only get the boer out of the way."

"I have another idea," said Hendrik. "The two men we saw hunting for horses, and who told us they had seen our giraffes to the south, were a couple of liars. They did not speak like men telling the truth. I can see it now: we were simpletons to have been so easily deceived. They were the boer's own brothers,—the very men who have robbed us!"

"Yes," said Hans; "and they had the assistance of Mynheer Van Ormon in doing it. How easy it is to understand his profuse hospitality now. We have indeed been duped."

The belief that the giraffes had been stolen was now universal, and our adventurers were only too glad to think so. They much

preferred that this should be the case than to think the animals had strayed. There would be a far better chance of recovering them.

It is easy to believe what we most desire, and all agreed that the property had been surreptitiously taken from the shed.

Without saying another word, Groot Willem turned his horse upon his tracks, and rode back towards the kraal of Mynheer Van Ormon.

The boer met him outside the enclosures, apparently surprised to see him return. The moment Willem set eyes upon the man's face, he saw that there was something amiss. He observed a strong expression of displeasure, accompanied with a glance of uneasiness.

"I have come back to have a chat with my old servant," said Willem. "He has been with me for so many years that I don't like to part with him on slight grounds."

"Ver goot," answered Van Ormon. "You can see him when he come home. He hash goed after the oxen. If you pleash, take him along mit you when you leave."

As the sun was now about setting, Willem knew that the Kaffir must soon be coming in with the cattle, and he rode off from the house in the hope of meeting him. Soon a large herd was seen approaching from the plain, and, riding around it, Willem found Congo in company with two Hottentots.

While in the presence of his companions, the Kaffir would not speak to him, but was apparently devoting every thought to the task of directing the movements of the herd. His old master seemed unworthy of his notice.

"We have been all wrong in our conjectures," thought Willem: "Congo has really deserted me. No man could keep up such an appearance as he is doing. I may go back again."

He was about to turn away, when Congo, observing that both the Hottentots had gone a few yards ahead, and were busy talking to one another, muttered in a low tone: "Go back, baas Willem, and wait at you camp. I come dar to-morrow mornin'."

Willem was not only satisfied, but overjoyed. Those words were enough to tell him that his Kaffir was still faithful,—that he was acting for the best, and that all would yet be well. He returned to his companions as cheerful and happy as he had been two nights before, while sitting by the Dutchman's fireside and, under the exhilarating influence of the Schiedam.

Chapter Sixty Nine.

The Kaffir discovers too much.

When Congo was made aware that the giraffes were missing, he believed himself more to blame than any one else. Conscience told him that he had neglected his duty. His regret for what had happened inspired him with a strong resolve to do all in his power towards recovering the lost animals. On examining the broken stockade through which they had escaped, he had doubts as to its being their work. In crushing out the posts with the weight of their bodies they must have made a noise that he should have heard; for the giraffes had been tied within ten yards of where he had passed the night. The posts to which they had been attached had not been dragged away, as would have been the case had the animals drawn them out with their rheim fastenings. He had a suspicion that they had been taken down by human hands; but, as the others did not appear to think so, he fancied there might be a possibility of his being wrong. He therefore kept his suspicions to himself. Had he said that the giraffes could not have knocked down the stockade without his hearing them, he would have been told that he was too drunk to hear anything, and his testimony discredited. He knew that he was not.

He had observed something else to confirm his suspicion. He remembered the Hottentot, who in his cups declared that he had

lately been to the north, where he had seen giraffes hunted and killed. He had heard the Hottentot called out from among the company, and by a man who spoke "boerish English." The voice was not that of the proprietor of the place, whom he had seen early in the evening; and yet he had observed no other white man about the establishment.

Moreover, some saddled horses he had seen in the stables the night before were also gone. It was these things that had determined him to stay at the house and watch. On pretence of hiring himself to the boer he was permitted to remain.

Every day something turned up to confirm his suspicions. He had seen the Hottentot sent off, while Willem, Arend, and Hendrik were eating their breakfast inside; and, soon after their departure, he had witnessed the arrival of two white men, who appeared to consider the place their home. Those men, he believed, had been there on the night when the giraffes were missed, and Congo suspected them to be the thieves. He saw them go off again in the direction they had come, equipped as for a hunting expedition, or for some distant journey. He would have followed them, but dared not, lest his doing so might be observed and excite the suspicion of the boer.

Believing that they would not go far that night, he made up his mind to track them on the following morning. Stealing away from the shed, where he slept, he took up their spoor as soon as the first light of day would allow of it, and, following this, he soon saw enough to assure him that his suspicions were correct.

A journey of ten miles brought him amongst some ranges of steep hills, separated from each other by deep, narrow gorges. On ascending to the top of one of these, he perceived a small column of smoke rising from a ravine below.

Throwing his hat upon the ground, and commanding the dog Spoor'em to keep a watch upon it, he stalked forward and soon obtained a view of what was causing the smoke. It was a fire kindled

under the shadow of some *cameel-doorn* trees, as if for the bivouac of hunters.

Judging by two animals that stood tied to the trees, Congo knew that they who had kindled the fire were not hunters, but thieves. The animals in question were giraffes,—young ones,—the same that Congo had been driving before him for some hundreds of miles.

Contrary to his expectations, there appeared to be but one man in charge of them; and that, neither of the two he had seen the evening before at Van Ormon's. The men he had been tracking must have visited the camp and gone off again. Their absence was but of little consequence. The giraffes were there, and that was all he wanted. He could now go back and guide the real owners to the spot, who would then be able to reclaim their property. Had the two men he had traced to the camp been seated by the fire, he would no doubt have succeeded in accomplishing his plans. But unfortunately they were not.

After noting the topography of the place, so that he might easily recognise it, he turned to depart.

Before proceeding twenty paces on his way, he was startled by the report of a gun. The sound was followed by a howl of pain, which he knew came from the hound Spoor'em. At the same instant, trotting out from some bushes on the brow of the hill, he saw two mounted men. One glance told him they were the men he had seen the evening before at the house of Van Ormon. They were those on whose track he had come. Crouching among the bushes, he endeavoured to avoid being seen; but in this he was unsuccessful.

A shout from one of the men told him that he was discovered, and soon after the hoof-strokes of the galloping horse told that they were rapidly approaching his hiding-place. Though swift of foot, there was no chance for him to escape; for all that, instinct led him to take to his heels. For some distance down hill, which was very steep, he was able to keep in advance of his mounted pursuers. But once on the

level ground, the horsemen soon closed upon him, and the chase was brought to an abrupt termination by one of them striking him from behind with the butt of his gun, and rolling him flat upon his face.

Chapter Seventy.
Congo a Captive.

The horsemen pulled up with a shout of exultation.

"What did you stop for?" asked the one who had struck the blow. "Why didn't you keep on running?" he added with a fiendish laugh, as he leaned over the prostrate body of the Kaffir.

"Yaas, why don't yer go on to tell where der two cameels be, to der fools whom found um?" asked the other. "Why don't yer do datch?"

The two men who were addressing the half-unconscious Congo were the same two Willem, Arend, and Hendrik had met the day before,—the men who had directed them to search to the south. One was the brother of Mynheer Van Ormon, the other was his brother-in-law. They were men who had for many years been living on the borders of the colony,—part of their time engaged in fighting Kaffirs and Griquas, and robbing them of their cattle, the other part in trading with the natives for ostrich-feathers and ivory. They had lately returned from an unsuccessful expedition to the north, the object of which had been to procure two young giraffes, in order to obtain the reward or price offered for them by the consul of the Netherlands. On seeing within the kraal of their kinsman Mynheer Van Ormon, the very animals they had sacrificed so much time in vainly searching for, they could not resist the opportunity of appropriating them. Their idea was, to conceal the animals for a few weeks among the hills, until those to whom they properly belonged, giving them up as lost, should return to their homes. The giraffes might then be taken to Cape Town, and disposed of, without the original owners ever knowing anything of the trick that had been played upon them.

Unfortunately for Congo, they had that morning been in search of something for food, and had returned just in time to see him playing spy upon their camp.

"This is the villain who pretended to quarrel with his master and leave him," said the man who had knocked the Kaffir down. "I told Van Ormon to send him off with the others, but he was sure the fellow did not wish to assist them, and could not if he would. By his folly our game has been nearly lost. We've just been in time; but what are we to do with the black brute, now that we've caught him?"

"Kill him!" replied the other, who was the brother of Van Ormon. "He mus never got to de white mens. Dey would come and rob us all."

"Very likely. Some people are bad enough to do anything; but I have half killed this fellow already,—you may do your share, and finish him, if you like."

"No Shames; as you pegins this little job, it is besh you finish it yourself."

Bad as were the two ruffians into whose hands Congo had fallen, neither of them liked to give him the *coup de grace*, and, undecided what else to do with him, they tied his hands behind his back.

He was then assisted to his feet, and, reeling like a drunken man, was led towards their camp.

Congo soon began to recover from the effects of the blow, and became sensible of the danger he was in. By their talk, he could tell that they intended putting him out of the way. From their savage looks and gestures he could see there was but little hope of his life being spared. His captors would not dare to let him escape. He had learned too much to be allowed to live. No assistance could be

expected from his master and companions. They were waiting for him far-away.

"Is this the game you have brought back?" exclaimed the man sitting over the camp-fire, as the others came up dragging their captive after them.

"Yes, and as you are the cook, you must dress it for our dinners," replied he who answered to the name of "Shames."

"Well, why don't you tell me what this means?" interrogated the first.

"Only this: we have caught a spy. We have been tracked by him to this place. But there's no great harm done yet. We're in luck, and nothing can go wrong with us. Our catching this fellow is a proof of it."

A long consultation was now carried on between the ruffians, in which they all agreed in the necessity of putting the prisoner to death.

It would never do to let him live. He would in the end bring them into trouble, even if kept a prisoner for years. His tongue must be silenced forever. There was but one way of silencing it. That was, never to allow him to leave the place alive.

There was a point upon which his captors were a little in doubt. Had the Kaffir undertaken the task of tracking them upon his own responsibility, or with the knowledge and at the instigation of his masters? In the former case only, would they be safe in destroying him. In the latter, the act might be attended with danger. To make sure of this, one of the three men—Van Ormon's brother it was—proposed going back to the house, there, if possible, to ascertain how the case stood. To this the other two readily consented; and, mounting his horse, he rode off for the kraal of his kinsman.

As soon as he was gone, the others tied Congo to a tree, and then seating themselves under the shade of the *cameel-doorn*, they proceeded to amuse themselves with a game of cards.

Four hours passed,—hours that to the Kaffir seemed days. He was in a state of indescribable agony. The thongs of hide that bound his wrists to the branches were cutting into the flesh, and besides, there was before his mind the positive certainty that he had not much longer to live.

The fear of death, however, scarce gave him so much mental pain as his anxiety to know something of the fate of his companions, and his wish that Groot Willem should recover the giraffes. He now regretted that he had not revealed his suspicions at the last interview with his young master. This might have saved the hunters from their loss and himself from the fate that now threatened him. It was too late. He had acted for the best, but acted wrongly.

In the afternoon Van Ormon's brother came riding back to the camp.

"Well! what news?" asked James, as he came within speaking distance.

"It ish all right. Dey don't know nothing of what's up. Mine bruder have constant watch over their camp. They be in von quandary, and will soon go home."

"Is Van Ormon sure that they hadn't any communication with this Kaffir?" asked James.

"Yesh! they had. One of them came to the house, and saw this fella yesterday. But for all that, blackee never said von leetle word to him. They were well watch while they wash togedder."

"Then perhaps it is not all right, as you say. They may have the same suspicion that led him here. Why the deuce don't they go off home? I don't like their hanging about so long."

"I tell you, Shames, it ish all right. We have only to get rid of the spy. He must never see the fools who own him, again. What ish we to do with him?"

"Send a bullet through his body," said the man who had been left in charge of the giraffes.

"Yes; he must be killed in that way or some other, certainly," said James; "but which of us is to do it? It's a pity we did not shoot him down while he was running. Then was the time. I don't like the thing, now that I've cooled down."



Bad as the ruffians were, none of them liked to commit a murder in cold blood. They had determined that Congo must die, yet none of them wished to act as the executioner.

After a good deal of discussion and some wrangling, a bright idea flashed across the brain of Van Ormon's brother. He proposed that

their prisoner should be taken to a pool that was some distance down the gorge; that he be tied to a tree by the side of the pool, and left there for the night.

"I see de spoor of lion dare every mornin'," said he, grinning horribly as he spoke. "I'll bet mine life we find no more of dis black fella ash a few red spots."

This plan was agreeable to all; and at sundown the Kaffir was released from his fastenings, conducted down the narrow valley, and firmly spliced to a sapling that stood close to the edge of the pool.

To provide against any chance of his being heard and released by a stray traveller, a stick was stuck crosswise in his mouth, the bight of a string made fast over each end of it, and then securely knotted at the back of his head.

After taking a survey of his fastenings, to see that there was no danger of their coming undone, his cruel captors made him a mocking salute; and, bidding him "good bye," strode off towards their camp.

Chapter Seventy One.

A Fight by Firelight.

Anxiously did Groot Willem wait for the next morning and the promised visit from Congo.

But the morning came and passed without any Congo, Willem became impatient, and could not content himself any longer in the camp.

"This will not do," he exclaimed, as he saw that the sun was again going down in the sky. "We must not remain here. Perhaps Congo *cannot* come. Of course he cannot, or he would have been

here before now. We must look for him, but it will not do for all of us to go together. Hendrik, will you come with me?"

Hendrik readily responded to the invitation. The two mounted their horses and rode off towards the residence of Van Ormon.

From the behaviour of Congo when Willem had last seen him, the latter was quite certain that his visits at the kraal were not desired. The Kaffir probably supposed that they might interfere with his plans, by bringing suspicion upon himself.

This, however, did not prevent Willem from going to see him once more.

Congo had broken his promise; and that was a proof that something must be wrong.

On their new visit to Mynheer Van Ormon, this gentleman did not take the slightest trouble to show them civility.

"Dat plack villen you call Congo," said he, "goed away last night. We thought he vash mit you. When you fints him again take him to der tuyfel, if you likes, and keep him dare."

"Do you think he has gone away from this place?" asked Willem of Hendrik, as they rode out from Van Ormon's enclosures.

"Yes," answered Hendrik; "I see no reason to doubt it."

"But why did he not come to me, as he promised?"

"There's some good reason for his not having done so."

"I wish I knew in what direction he has gone."

"That difficulty may soon be removed," said Hendrik. "I fancy I can tell it to a point of the compass. It will be found a little to east of north."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it was in that quarter we encountered the two men on the day after the giraffes were missing. Moreover, we know they are not south, for that is the way those false guides wanted us to take."

Too excited to return to camp without doing something, Willem proposed that they should ride out on the plain towards the north-east, and see whether anything could be learned about Congo. To this Hendrik agreed; and, after going southward about a mile from Van Ormon's house, they turned, rode circuitously around it, and then struck off for the north-east.

They had no great hope of finding the object of their search, but it was necessary for them to do something; and, as Hendrik's surmise was not without some probability, they kept on.

After making about five miles across the plain, they came within sight of some hills that began to loom up on the horizon to the north-east. They were still, to all appearance, about four miles distant.

"Just the place where our property might be concealed," suggested Hendrik. "No one would hide giraffes on a plain. If we do not find them yonder, and this very night, we deserve to lose them."

The sun was just setting as they reached the crest of the first range of hills. Looking back over the road they had just travelled, a horseman was seen coming across the plain, a mile distant from the spot where they had halted.

"If we watch that man," said Hendrik, "and not let him see us, we shall probably find what we're in search of. If not one of the thieves

themselves, he looks to me very like a messenger going to them from Van Ormon's. From the behaviour of the boer, I'm now convinced that our giraffes have been stolen, and Van Ormon himself is the thief."

Riding in among some trees, they dismounted, and, securing their horses in the cover, watched the man who was approaching from the plain.

In the twilight, they saw him toil slowly up the slope, a little to the east of them, and then continue his course over the summit of the ridge, going on toward the next.

The night was now so dark that he could not be kept in sight without their riding very near to him. In this there would be danger. The hoof-strokes of their horses might be heard. To avoid this they permitted him to keep far in the advance, and rode slowly and noiselessly after, trusting to chance to conduct them upon his track.

Fortune favoured them.

On mounting a hill about half a mile from the place where they had last seen the lone horseman, they came in sight of a camp-fire that appeared burning in the bottom of the ravine below. Both dismounted, tied their horses to the trees, and silently stole towards the light.

It grew larger and brighter as they advanced upon it. Without the slightest danger of being themselves seen, they drew nearer and nearer, until they could make out the figures of three men seated around the fire. These appeared engaged in an earnest confabulation.

But for the messenger who had gone back to the house of Mynheer Van Ormon, Willem and Hendrik might have long wandered amongst the hills without seeing anything to reward them for their journey. As it was, they saw that which caused Willem a thrill of joy,—so intense he could scarce restrain himself from crying out.

Congo's suspicions, whether based upon instinct or reason had not been idle fancies. Tied to a tree under the glare of the camp-fire stood two young giraffes,—the animals that had not strayed but been stolen.

A hurried consultation took place between the two hunters. They must obtain possession of their property, but how? They did not wish to be killed in the endeavour to right themselves, and they did not wish to kill those who had robbed them, if they could avoid doing so.

"Let us give them a chance," said Willem. "If they will surrender the stolen giraffes peaceably, we shall let them off. If not, then I mean to shoot them down without mercy. We must take the law into our own hands. There is not a court or magistrate within one hundred miles of us."

While they were thus hastily arranging upon a plan of action, the three men seated around the fire commenced cooking their suppers.

Only a few words more were interchanged between Willem and Hendrik, who had come to an understanding as to how they should act. Carrying their guns at full cock, they stepped silently forward side by side and close together. Under cover of the timber they advanced within ten paces of the unsuspecting thieves, and then boldly stepped out into the light.

"Keep your seats," cried Groot Willem in a loud, commanding voice. "The first of you that stirs shall die like a dog!"

The man known as "Shames," showed signs of an intention to spring to his feet and seize hold of a gun that lay near.

"Don't! for your soul's sake, don't!" shouted the great hunter.

The warning was not heeded; and the man rushed toward the gun, took it up and at once brought it to the level. But before he could

touch his trigger, Willem's roer delivered its loud report, and the thief fell forward on to the fire.

Van Ormon's brother, not heeding the fate of his companion, made some show of resistance; but this was instantly ended by a blow from the butt of Groot Willem's gun, which he now held clenched in his hand. The third of the thieves did not stay for similar treatment, but bolted from the camp at a pace that would have left most horses behind him.

The guns of all three were picked up, discharged, and then smashed against a tree. The giraffes were untied and taken up to the place where the horses had been left. After which, Willem and Hendrik mounted into their saddles, and, leading the camelopards behind them, commenced a backward march toward camp, where they had left their companions.

The fate of the two men left by the fire remained from that moment unknown to our adventurers. Nor did they care to inquire about it. Before leaving the spot, it was seen that neither of them had received a mortal wound; and, as there was still one unharmed to take care of them, in all probability they recovered. *That*, at least, was the hope and belief of the hunters.

Chapter Seventy Two.

All right once more.

On finding himself tied to a tree, gagged, and abandoned Congo could see but one chance of his being released from his confinement, and that was by some beast of prey.

He was quite sure that those who had left him there would never return to relieve him. His reflections were anything but pleasant. They bore some resemblance to those of a sick man, who has been assured by his physician that there is *No* chance for him to recover.

The Kaffir was not one to give way to a cowardly fear of death, but there was another thought in his mind almost as disagreeable, and that was the chagrin he felt of not being able to see his beloved master again, and make known his discovery of the giraffes.

He even thought, while waiting for his approaching fate, that, if by any means he could let Groot Willem know where his property was concealed, he could then die content.

An hour passed, and a heavy darkness gathered around him. It was the shades of night. A few small animals of the antelope kind came trotting up to the pool, and quenched their thirst.

They were followed by some jackals. Other visitors might soon be expected,—visitors that might not depart without rudely releasing him from his confinement.

Half an hour later, and his eyes, piercing through the gloom of the night, became fixed upon a quadruped, whose species he could not well make out. It appeared about the size of a leopard. It was crawling slowly and silently towards him.

It drew nearer; and just as he thought it was about to spring upon him, it uttered a low, moaning noise. Congo recognised the dog Spoor'em.

For a moment there was joy in the African's soul. The faithful dog was still living, and had not forsaken him. If he was to die, it would be in company of the most affectionate friend a man can have among the brute creation. Groot Willem and the giraffes were for a while forgotten.

As the dog crawled close up to him, Congo saw that it carried one leg raised up from the ground, and that the hair from the shoulder downwards was clotted with blood.

Spoor'em appeared to forget the pain of his wound, in the joy of again meeting his master, and never had Congo felt so strongly the wish to be able to speak. Gagged as he was, he could not. Not one kind word of encouragement could he give to the creature that, despite its own sufferings, had not forsaken him. He knew that the dog was listening for the familiar tones of his voice, and looked reproachful that he was not allowed to hear them.

Congo did not wish even a brute to think him ungrateful, and yet there was no way by which he could let Spoor'em know that such was the case.

Not long after the arrival of the dog, Congo heard the report of a gun. To the sharp ears of the Kaffir it seemed to have a familiar sound. It was very loud, and like the report of a *roer*. It sounded like Groot Willem's gun, but how could the hunter be there? Congo could not hope it was he. Some minutes of profound silence succeeded the shot, which was then followed by three others, and once more all was still. A quarter of an hour passed, and hoof-strokes were heard on the hill above; a party of horsemen were riding along the crest of the ridge. Congo could hear their voices, mingling with the heavy footfall of the horses.

They were about to pass by the spot. "The thieves," thought Congo. "They are shifting their quarters."

They were not more than a hundred yards from the tree where he was tied; and, as they came opposite, and just as he became satisfied that they were going on without chance of seeing him, he heard a sort of struggle, followed by the words: "Hold up a minute, Hendrik; my horse has got on one side of a tree, and Tootla the other."

The voice was Willem's, and "Tootla" was the name of one of the young giraffes!

Congo made a desperate effort to free his hands from their fastenings, as well as to remove the stick that was distending his jaws. The struggle was in vain.

There appeared no way by which he could sound an alarm and let his friends know that he was near. He could think of none.

They were leaving him. They would return to Graaf Reinet, and he should be left to die at the foot of the tree, or be torn from it by wild beasts. He was almost frantic with despair, when an idea suddenly occurred to him.

He could not speak himself, but why could not the dog do so for him.

His feet were still free, and, raising one of them, he gave Spoor'em a kick,—a cruel kick.

The poor animal crouched at his feet and uttered a low whine. It could not have been heard thirty paces away.

Again the foot was lifted, and dashed against the ribs of the unfortunate dog, that neither made an effort to avoid the blow nor any complaint at receiving it.

The only answer vouchsafed was but a low, querulous whine, that seemed to say, "Why is this, master? In what have I offended you?"

Just as the foot was lifted for the third time, the air reverberated to a long, loud roar. It was the voice of a hungry lion, that appeared to be only a few paces from the spot.

Spoor'em instantly sprang to his feet, and answered the King of beasts by a loud defiant bark.

The faithful animal that would not resist its master's ill-treatment, was but too ready to defend that master from the attack of a third party.

In the bark of Spoor'em there was an idiosyncrasy. It was heard and instantly recognised.

The moment after Congo had the pleasure of hearing the tramp of horses, as they came trotting down the hill; and the voice of Willem calling out to him!

When released from the tree, and the gag taken from his mouth, the first words he uttered were those of apology to Spoor'em, for the kicks he had just administered!

From the demonstrations made by the dumb creature, there was every reason to believe that he accepted the apology in the spirit in which it was given!

Willem compelled Congo, who had now been thirty-six hours without food, to mount upon his own horse; but this the Kaffir would consent to do only on the condition that he would be allowed to take Spoor'em up along with him.

They at once started away from the spot, and by an early hour of the following morning reached the camp, where Hans, Arend, and the others had remained.

Swartboy, in the joy of seeing them again, increased by the sight of the giraffes, declared that he would never more call Congo a fool.

This promise he has never been known to break.

In the afternoon, the journey towards Graaf Reinet was resumed. Spoor'em being carried for two or three days on the back of one of

the oxen, snugly ensconced in a large willow basket, woven by Congo for that express purpose.

Chapter Seventy Three.

Conclusion.

One evening, after a long day's journey, our adventurers found themselves within a few miles of home. A gallop of an hour or two, would place them in the society of the relatives and friends from whom they had been so long absent. Arend and Hendrik were impatient to ride forward, in advance of their companions. But each refrained from making the proposition to the other.

Greatly to their annoyance, they saw Hans and Willem halt at the house of a boer, and commence making arrangements for passing the night.

This the two did with as little unconcern as though they were still hundreds of miles from home.

Both Willem and Hans possessed a fair share of old-fashioned Dutch philosophy, that told them no circumstances should hinder them from being merciful to the animals that had served them so long and so well.

Early next morning, as the hunters passed through Graaf Reinet, on the way to their own homes, all the inhabitants of the village turned out to bid them welcome.

By most of the people dwelling in the place, the young giraffes were looked upon with as much astonishment as the four Makololo felt while gazing upon the spire of the village church.

There was not an inhabitant of the place over ten years of age who had not heard something of the expedition on which our

adventurers had set forth some months before. All knew the objects for which it had been undertaken; and course the majority had prophesied another failure in the accomplishment of what so many experienced hunters had already failed to effect.

"We are now returning home in a respectable manner," remarked Hendrik to the others, as he observed the enthusiastic spirit in which they were welcomed by the people.

"Yes," answered Arend, "and it is to Willem's perseverance that we owe all this."

"I don't know that I've displayed any great perseverance as you call it," said Willem. "I was as anxious as any of you to return home, but I did not like to come back without a couple of young giraffes. That was all the difference between us." The others made no reply, but rode on silently, thinking of the generosity of their gigantic companion.

On former expeditions our adventurers had been absent even a longer time, but never did home seem so dear to them as now, and never did they find on their return so warm a welcome as that extended to them now.

The two young ladies, Trüey Von Bloom and Wilhelmina Van Wyk, were delighted at again meeting with their lovers, and, what is more, were honest enough to admit that such was the case.

Congo and Swartboy endeavoured to repay themselves for the hardships of the past, by assuming grand airs over the other servants, domestics belonging to their masters, as also by an unusual indulgence in eating, drinking, and sleeping.

Groot Willem had still another journey to accomplish. It was to accompany Hans to Cape Town on his intended trip to Europe, and to deliver to the Dutch consul the captured camelopards. This journey,

however, was not undertaken until he had given himself, his horses, and giraffes a month's rest.

During this time, the Makololo were treated with the greatest kindness by all the household of the two families to which their young friends belonged. Before returning to the north, each was presented with a horse, a gun, and a suit of clothes; and several useful presents were sent by Groot Willem to his generous friend and protector, Macora.

Previous to his departure for Europe, Hans desired to be present at two important ceremonies that must sooner or later take place, and in which the families of Von Bloom and Van Wyk were both more or less interested. But Hans was impatient to set out on his intended tour, and Hendrik and Arend were much pleased that such was the case. Under these circumstances, Miss Trüey and Miss Wilhelmina were prevailed upon to appoint an early day for making the two cornets the happiest of men.

The day after the double marriage, Willem and Hans started for Cape Town,—taking with them the giraffes and the ivory they had brought from the north.

The animals that had cost so much time and toil in procuring were delivered to the consul, and the bounty money handed over. The camelopards became fellow-passengers of the young philosopher in his voyage to Europe.

Willem parted with them and Hans as the ship was getting “under way,” and, on the same day, started back to his distant home in Graaf Reinet. There he still dwells, endeavouring to pass his time in peaceful pursuits; but this endeavour he finds great difficulty in carrying out,—partly through his own restless desire to seek new adventures, and partly through the solicitations of young Jan and Klaas, who, stimulated by the tales told by their elder brothers, are now keenly anxious to relinquish the pursuit of knowledge for that of game.

Hendrik and Arend have no longer a desire to go in quest of such sport. Home is now too dear to them; and both are satisfied to leave to their younger brothers the pleasure of spending a few months on the far frontier, and earning, as they so nobly did, the title of Giraffe Hunters.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GIRAFFE HUNTERS ***

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