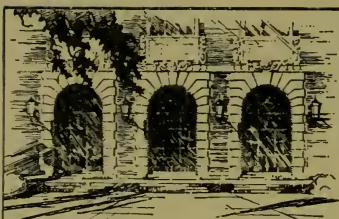


823

R27*gl*

v.2



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

R27gi

v. 2



THE GIRAFFE HUNTERS.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
MILFORD LANE, STRAND, W.C.

THE GIRAFFE HUNTERS.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF

“THE RIFLE RANGERS,” “THE SCALP HUNTERS,”

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET,

1867.

The right of Translation is reserved.

823

R279i

v. 2

THE GIRAFFE HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

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 his young master.

“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 Hendrick.

Congo explained that their captors belonged to a wandering tribe of Zulu 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 people. That alone would lead to their being killed.

He also 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.

Congo's 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 Willem and Hendrick could no longer doubt the truth of his assertion. Yet they 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 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 recognized 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 recognized, 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, Congo?”

“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.

THE GIRAFFE HUNTERS.

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 Hendrick. “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 very 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, Hendrick?" said

Willem, turning to his companion. "It hardly seems possible: tell me, am I dreaming?"

"I can answer for myself," replied Hendrick, "for I was never more awake; the thongs 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 of which they had heard to have been committed by Zulu 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 II.

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 Hendrick, 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’s hope. Think of that, Hendrick. 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 Hendrick, “I dare say he would acknowledge our acquaintance; but never mind. He’s the last that will ever prove ungrateful, since we’re not very 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 told you so,” said Congo. “They take us away to die.”

Willem and Hendrick 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 Hendrick.

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 awakening 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 young hunters recognized the spot where they had been made prisoners.

The chief then delivered a 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 the 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 people, 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 place for executing this just decree.

After Congo had translated this 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 III.

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 Hendrick'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 the only agony he was enduring. The fate Congo at first only conjectured, had now assumed a horrible certainty. Death seemed inevitable; and Hendrick'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.

Hendrick 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 Wilhemina 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 desperately 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 pite-

ously 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 Graaff-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 recognized. They were Hans and Arend!

Their companions were Macora and his Makalolo.

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 the 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 Makalolo chief would have put to death every Zulu upon the ground, and then proceeded to their village to seek further retaliation; and was restrained only by the remonstrances of his white friend.

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 opportune,” said Hendrick, addressing himself to Hans and Arend. “Just in the nick of time; but to me it is inexplicable. 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 ran, 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 Zulu'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 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 which was eagerly accepted.

CHAPTER IV.

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 him-

self to the chances of dying some horrible death.

Guided by this dearly-bought belief, he was contented to amuse himself by joining the Makalolo 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 conveyance a space was to be left open—wide enough to permit of the largest animal to pass through.

Beyond the angle, or where it would

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 should 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 pits were 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 Makalolo, the *hopo* was soon pronounced complete, and ready to receive

the game, and the next day was appointed to carry out the object 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, Hendrick, and Macora led one to the left, while Hans, Arend, and a principal warrior and hunter of the Makalolo 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 Makalolo, 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 greater 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 violently 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 Hendrick. A herd of elephants broke from the bushes but a few yards ahead of them, and were allowed to shamble 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 the side Willem and Hendrick

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 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,—and fortunate for the hunters themselves,—the eyes of Groot Willem were blessed 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 Hendrick, 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 these to escape the inclosure 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 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 rapidly 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 stirring to be the foremost in precipitating themselves into the hopo.

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 Makalolo were all mad with the excitement of the chase.

Uttering discordant, ear-piercing yells, they rushed onward—impatient to witness the struggles of the multitude 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 V.

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 onwards 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 Makalolo.

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 perceptibly 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.

Mingling 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 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 Hendrick 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 struggles 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 it could not be taken to the colony. It could never visit Europe.

The only favour that could be shown the 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 the 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 Makalolo, 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 battue, all that remained of the slaughtered animals was the dried meat and the polished bones.

CHAPTER VI.

DRIVEN AWAY.

FOUR days after the unsuccessful attempt to capture the young giraffes in the hopo, the spoor of others was found on the river bank.

Another herd of camelopards had made a home in the forest of kameel-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 attended with success. And if so, Hendrick 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 their first attempt. He had promised his assistance until the object they desired should be obtained; and, although strong 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 should 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 owned 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 Zulu chief whom 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 Makalolo 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 despatched to capture Macora and his people, or chase them, as Sindo explained it, "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 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 only some five miles off, and might be upon them within an hour.

Hastily springing upon their horses, Arend and Hendrick galloped off in the

direction of the enemy, for the purpose of making a reconnoissance.

During their absence the others were busy packing up the valuables, and making preparations for either "flight" or "fight."

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 Hendrick. "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," rejoined 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 replied, that he and his men were going to act

according to the desire of his white friend.

“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 Makalolo 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 Hendrick remained a little behind the others, they beheld the enemy approaching the spot that had been relinquished by the Makalolo, 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 spur to their steeds and joined Macora in the retreat.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETREAT.

MACORA and his party were in hopes that the pursuit might not be continued far—that the enemy, satisfied with 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 dominions; 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 Makalolo are, as 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 Makalolo seemed only to contemplate flight.

A little information from Macora con-

cerning Moselekatse was a satisfactory explanation of the mystery.

He informed his white guests that the Matabele, 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 he 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, 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 would be danger of an attack before all could effect the crossing of the stream.

This fear was fully realized.

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 Matabele were coming up in the rear.

So accustomed were Moselekatse's war-

riors 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 Makalolo 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 Matabele 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 protection 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, Hendrick and Arend.

They were foremost to fire on the Matabele, though their example was quickly followed by Willem and Hans, who then 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 three more were shot down the next instant by Macora, Sindo, and

another Makalolo, 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 have soon fallen before their assegais; but this they were prevented from doing by the Makalolo. 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 Matabele 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 pitted 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 Matabele 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.

Whilst Willem and his companions were regretting the misfortunes they had been the means of bringing on 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 six Makalolo killed in the battle ; and these were buried during the night.

On the contrary, the bodies of the

Matabele 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 Matabele ever buried their dead — not even their own kindred; but that sons will drag the bodies of their parents out from the village into the open plain, and then leave them to the tender mercies of the hyenas and vultures.

During the night, the roars, growls, and other evidences of brutal strife heard across the river, convinced the Makalolo guard left there, that by the morning only the bones of their slain enemies would be found upon the field of battle.

This was music to the ears of the Makalolo; while the thought of their having defeated the renowned warriors of Moselekatse almost compensated them for the loss of their homes.

CHAPTER VIII.

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 Makalolo 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 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 Matabele commenced crossing. Urged by the fear of the tyrant's displeasure, in case of 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 gully, or ravine, not more than ten feet in breadth.

To ascend through this gully would be a work of some difficulty, even if unopposed; but with the passage disputed by the spears of the opposing Makalolo, it would be one of desperate danger.

For all that, the Matabele 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 to the gully, 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 Matabele 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 gully were opposed by enemies on both sides of it, and easily speared to death.

Meanwhile the white hunters were con-

stantly loading and firing upon those who could not be reached by the spears of the Makalolo, 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 first 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 Makalolo 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 were 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 Matabele would immediately cross and follow them.

But this very thing had been thought of by Hendrick, 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 assent 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 on the bank, and taking aim at a big Matabele 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 Makalolo 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 Matabele 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 Matabele 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 Makalolo 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 Matabele were discovered hovering upon the flank 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 Matabele 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 Matabele scampering off to a safe 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 encounter 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 guest 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 was but one plan I could think of,” continued the Makalolo 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 Matabele, 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 misunderstand-

ing, Macora had incurred the ill-will of Sebituane, who never forgot or forgave an offence, and were he to return there, he 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.

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 IX.

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 Betjuanas), 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 next 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 Matabele by the break of day; and, encumbered as they

were with women, children, and cattle, their flight was too slow for safety.

Thus augured Macora, and later on in the evening, as if to confirm his ill-bodings, a fire was observed out upon the plain, and shouts were heard within half a mile of their camp.

No one doubted that the enemy had occupied the ground.

In this, however, they were agreeably disappointed, for, when morning dawned, to their delighted astonishment, they discovered two large tilted waggons outspanned upon the plain, and gathered round these were several oxen and horses.

This sight at once raised the hopes of all. It could be nothing else than an encampment of white traders, or hunters.

Our adventurers, one and all, rode hastily

for the camp, and in a few minutes were exchanging salutations with the owners of the waggons. 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 D'Urban.

They were attended by some Kaffirs, who had accompanied them from Natal, and also a number of Betjuanas they had picked up in the North.

While our adventurers were bartering with the traders for a supply of ammunition, and such other necessaries as they stood in need of, their attention was called to Macora, that individual seeming all at once to have taken leave of his senses. Although his people were half a mile away,

he was shouting to them at the topmost pitch of his voice, and, with frenzied gestures, appeared to be giving some communication, followed by commands.

The hunters looked in every direction, and with feelings of apprehension. They expected to see the Matabele 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 imparting to them, that our hunters understood the meaning of his strange conduct.

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 Makalolo nation.

The *impedimenta* which had formed such a barrier to Macora's dearest wish, was at once swept away. He might now return to the centre of his kindred. His only fear now was that the Matabele might come up in such strength as to destroy all chance of his ever revisiting his native land.

No delay was admitted in breaking up the camp. 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 body of hostile Matabele.

He expressed his pleasure at the good

fortune that had brought them assistance 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.

And Willem, in his generous fulness of heart, verily believed they could not act otherwise.

His intelligence, however, had a very different effect.

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 "kelking" to the south-east—en route for Port Natal.

They were not the men to endanger their lives and property by engaging in the troubles of others, believing that their own safety lay in escaping from the society of those who had the misfortune to be surrounded by enemies.

Had there been in the mind of our adventurers the slightest inclination to abandon the chief Macora in his hour of need, the conduct of the white traders would at once have destroyed 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 Matabele; 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 Makalolo 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 get together; and they should be in force sufficient to ensure the destruction of him and his tribe.

If unmolested, in two days more he should be able to reach the Makalolo 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.

Hendrick, 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 Matabele suddenly appeared in advance of the route they were pursuing!

It was not large enough to attempt opposing the progress of the Makalolo; and, on seeing the latter, fled.

In the afternoon some scouts, who had been left in the rear, hastened forward 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 X.

BESIEGED.

It wanted but an hour to sundown when the Makalolo reached the river. The enemy could not be far away, and preparations were immediately commenced for receiving them.

Hendrick and Arend, laying claim to more wisdom in military affairs than the others, rode a little in advance, for the purpose of choosing a suitable camping ground.

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 horse-shoe 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 bared of water to the width of about fifty yards, and over this the cattle were driven.

Quickly did the Makalolo secure themselves and their property in a position where they could not be surrounded.

There was but one direction from which an enemy could conveniently 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 Hendrick declared, for the especial purpose of saving them.

The nwana is one of the most remarkable trees of the African forest. Specimens have been found which had attained the almost incredible girth of ninety feet measurement at their base, and were lofty in proportion. The wood of the nwana is as soft as a green cabbage stalk, and has been pronounced "utterly un-serviceable." The hunters did not find it so.

Among other implements brought from

Graaff-Reinet, were two stout axes, which their former experiences of a hunter's life had taught our young adventurers were indispensable on an expedition.

The *nwana* was to be sacrificed. If felled across the bar, it would completely block up the approach to the peninsula, and also 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 the other.

At every blow the axe was buried in the soft, spongy wood.

A grand ginger-bread 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 Matabele.

The latter could not be far off, and every exertion was made to get the fortress ready for receiving their 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 hostile cohort to reach them by a rush. On the contrary, should it fall across the isthmus as they desired, it would form an insurmountable barrier to their enemies.

In silence, and with intense interest, did the Makalolo stand watching for the result.

At length the tree began to move, slowly at first; but as they gazed upon its

trembling top, to their extreme delight 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 finally struck the earth with a crash.

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 Matabele

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.

The chief and his party were now established in a position from which it would have been folly to retire. They could not move without the certainty of defeat. They might be able to maintain this position for several days; and, knowing that the enemy would not raise the siege until compelled to do so, Macora had centered his hopes upon obtaining aid from some neighbouring chief, jealous of the encroachments of the Matabele. And no

time had been lost in putting this design into execution.

Sindo, anxious to become fully reinstated in the good opinion of his chief, was the first who had offered to go upon this perilous mission. The other three being selected, they were despatched in pairs—one couple going an hour in advance of the second.

This division of the embassy was for the purpose of ensuring a greater chance for its success. 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 east 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 Matabele 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 ensued, which lasted for some ten minutes, and at length resulted in the assailants being forced to retire, leaving several of their warriors dead in the gaps.

But this temporary victory was not obtained without loss. Eight of the Makalolo 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 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 Matabele, 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.

Even supposing the embassy sent forth should prove successful in their mission, no assistance could be expected in less than three days.

Could Macora maintain his position 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.

He doubted his ability to check the impetus of his overwhelming foe. Should he be fortunate enough to compel them to retire a second time, he knew full well that their repeated attacks must ultimately overpower his diminished numbers, and end in the total destruction of his people.

These thoughts, notwithstanding his

confidence in the wisdom and strategic prowess of the white hunters, weighed heavily upon his heart. Yet he did not give way to hopeless despair. The great responsibility of his position demanded an equivalent display of the force and energy of his mind; and his activity was equal to the task. No point was left unguarded, nor anything overlooked that could add strength and security to their position.

Two hours had passed since the attack, and the only Matabele in sight were those who had fallen in the encounter: 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 distin-

guished through the darkness. But that signified nothing.

Morning found our adventurers still undisturbed.

To all appearance, Moselekatse's warriors yielding to despair, had retired from the contest, and were on their return to their chief—to suffer the punishment that would certainly follow, from their permitting themselves to be defeated.

This was the conviction of our young 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 of the cunning wiles

of 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, who, in all probability, were watching for them not far away.

Had he not had reasons for expecting assistance, the case might have been different; but, confident that succour would be immediately sent to him, he decided that it would be folly to run the risk of departure.

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, with-

out stipulations. If within thirty-six hours there was no appearance of either friends or enemies, Macora promised that he would continue to march towards his country.

CHAPTER XI.

NOT QUITE TOO LATE.

THE stipulated time passed, and nothing was seen of the Matabele — 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 Makalolo.

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 Matabele 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, Hendrick 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. 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 Hendrick, 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.

Hendrick 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 Hendrick, as he joined Groot Willem and Hans. “We should not have left the place where we were able to keep these Matabele 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 Matabele was rapidly approaching from the rear.

For a moment, Hans, Hendrick, 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 Makalolo, 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 recognized with a frenzied joy.

The sound of that particular voice was heard at a great distance, and only indistinctly; but on hearing it, the Makalolo 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 Makalolo warriors, who communicated the pleasing intelligence that more were coming up close behind.

Sindo and his companions had been exceedingly fortunate in 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 Matabele, 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 in mortal combat with the overwhelming hosts of their enemies, without even the favourable advantages of a position for defence.

The result was, that instead of encountering a small band of outcast and wearied Makalolo, Moselekatse's creatures found themselves opposed by a body of veteran warriors, fresh and vigorous for any fray—men equally versed in the arts of war, perfected under their noble chief Sebituane, who himself had often led them on to victory.

The Matabele 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 re-

solved 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 Moselekatse's soldiers, our adventurers were introduced at the Court of Ma-Mochisane by Macora, who made a 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 so from his having incurred the resentment of the Matabele.

CHAPTER XII.

A T A L A B O U T H O M E.

“ I HAVE a favour to ask of you, my friends,” said Hendrick, 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 Hendrick ;

“ 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 Hendrick; “ 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 Hendrick. "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 Graaff-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.”

Hendrick and Arend were thinking of the many narrow escapes from death they had met with within the last four 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, Hendrick, or Arend, to return home, and leave him alone; and since he continued, as Hendrick said, "obstinate as a blacke vaike,"

they were reluctantly compelled to remain.

They were told that within one day's journey to the West, there was a large forest of kameel 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 should 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.

Hendrick 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 tranquil scenes of civilized life.

Swartboy was highly delighted at

thought of parting with the Makalolo.

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 upon 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 Swart-boy 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, not 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 showed 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 scuttled 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 XIII.

AMONG THE MIMOSAS.

THE hunters were now intent upon but one object—that of procuring the giraffes. The roar of a lion near their camp could not draw them from it. Even the sight of an elephant, carrying many pounds of ivory, was not an inducement to cause a pursuit.

All had a full appreciation of the task to be accomplished before they could return to their homes, 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 elated. 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 kameel-doorn forest, a drove of giraffes was seen coming out from among the timber, and making their way towards the stream.

The timid animals, totally unaware of their proximity to man, had approached within gun-shot of our hunters' camp before discovering the presence of danger, when, heading suddenly round, they fled with a swift but awkward gait, heading westward across the open plain, and entirely away from the mimosa forest.

Hendrick and Arend were with difficulty restrained from pursuing them. There was an opportunity of 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 Hendrick; "I am sure I saw an arrow sticking in the side of one of them. Some black savage has amused himself by torturing a creature he was not able 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. Nothing more was seen of the giraffes; and on the following

morrow the hunters started off on their spoor.

A second mimosa forest was discovered about fifteen miles farther to the west; and, in 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 but recently 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 move is to send for Macora’s promised assistance, and at once 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,” suggested Hendrick. “We can easily drive the creatures back to the place where we first met with them.”

No plea was advanced against the adoption of this suggestion; and on the following morning two of the Makalolo were despatched for the desired aid. Our hunters returned to the forest they had first visited, and there encamped.

On the day the chief's workmen were expected to arrive, Hendrick and Arend had ridden some few miles up the stream, seeking for something to destroy. Impelled by that incomprehensible desire so natural to the hunter—the taking of life, 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 herbaceous shrubs, and trees of the strelitzia, zamia, and spekboom (Purslane tree), *Portulacaria afra*—when their ears were assailed by the sounds of breaking branches, and the unmistakable rushing of some heavy animals through the thicket.

“Prepare yourself, Arend. We may have some sport here,” cried Hendrick; and both drew rein, to await the *denouement*.

A few seconds only elapsed, when the forms of two full-grown giraffes were observed breaking from the thicket, and striking out at full gallop for the plain beyond.

But the two hunters were wholly unprepared for that other sight which met their eager gaze. A leopard, mounted

upon the back of one of the stately creatures, and seated firmly between its shoulders, was tearing at the animal's neck with all the savage ferocity of its kind.

The leopard, being by nature a cowardly animal, rarely attacks large game, unless impelled by severe hunger; and as this latter contingency was barely probable in a district where its smaller and more favourite prey, the antelope, might be had in abundance, our hunters were somewhat at a loss to account for this singular exhibition of the creature's daring.

Other motive than satisfying the appetite of hunger there must be. The leopard might have young, and in such case, in all probability, the innocent giraffes had come unwarily upon its lair, and thus aroused its fierce instincts for the maternal protec-

tion of its cubs, which it believed were in imminent peril.

Thus reasoned our hunters, as, seated in their saddles, they remained for some seconds the inactive and astonished spectators of the scene.

On reaching the open ground, it was seen that the unencumbered camelopard was rapidly leaving its companion, which was now showing unmistakable signs of exhaustion. Its life blood was flowing from its neck, and streaming down its withers.

The stately animal was about to succumb under the mortal injuries dealt by its lithe and active enemy.

The youths were spectators of an incident, such as had rarely, if ever, come under the eye of man—a leopard killing a giraffe.

Circumstances had favoured the beast of prey; and the huge creature 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 accompanied the hunters, not heeding the voices of their masters, had given chase, following close upon the heels of the enfeebled giraffe, augmenting its sufferings by their distracting yelping; and seeming to vie with each other as to which should be nearest "in at the death."

Stung by the importunities of its merciless enemies, the tottering camelopard gathered in all its remaining strength for one blow at its tormentors. Lifting one of its hoofs, it dashed it backward with un-

erring aim, striking the head of the foremost hound, shattering its skull, and throwing the carcass several yards to the rear, where it lay sprawling in the last convulsive motions of life.

This effort was its last. The impetus evolved in its *chevisance*, caused the feeble, vacillating body of the giraffe to lose its balance; and, jerking its head violently outward, it reeled over on one side and fell heavily to the earth, crushing the frame of its deadly enemy in the fall.

Like Samson, the leopard had brought destruction upon itself!

Till now, Hendrick and Arend had been but spectators. Riding quickly forward, they soon came up to the fallen animals, and perceiving that both still lived, they hastened to relieve further torture by dis-

patch—a ball from Hendrick's rifle silenced the snarling cries of the leopard; while Arend, knife in hand, proceeded to release the bleeding giraffe from all earthly pain.

Standing over the two carcasses, the hunters tried to arrive at some comprehension of the strange scene they had witnessed. They had heard of lions performing remarkable equestrian feats; and had even read of one which had ridden for many miles upon the back of a giraffe; but they had treated the story as a fabrication.

They had now, however, had ocular evidence that a less powerful and much smaller animal, possessed of less daring, had actually accomplished a somewhat similar *coup*. That the leopard had travelled some distance, there could be no

doubt. 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 in strips, that now hung pendant from the shoulders.

The long talons, and sharp incisors of the leopard, had been repeatedly buried in the flesh of the unfortunate giraffe. 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 only.

Several minutes must have supervened between the moment of attack and its final termination ; during which time, the vindictive and ensanguinary foe had been

carried far away from the scene of its savage onslaught.

Blinded by the fierce instincts of its nature, the presence of danger, and the lapse of space and time, had alike passed unheeded.

That the leopard had young, the hunters were now sufficiently convinced. The mother lay dead at their feet; and never more would that maternal guardian show her teeth in the behalf of her offspring.

CHAPTER IV.

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's 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 stakes. 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 sun-rise to sun-set, 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 Graaff-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 Makalolo.

The 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 Makalolo, accompanied by their dogs, and making as much noise as lay in their power, passed through the tract of timber; while Willem and Hendrick 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 Makalolo, 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 Makalolo who professed to be best acquainted with their habits, expressed their belief that they had migrated to some extreme forest far away towards the South, and that no more camelopards might be found in that neighbourhood for the six months to follow.

They (the Makalolo) 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 kameel-doorn were found, but no camelopards could be seen.

They had evidently forsaken that district of country, and might not return for many weeks or months. The Makalolo 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 Hendrick, "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 Hendrick'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 back to Graaff-Reinet.”

Seeing that Swartboy was anxious to give his opinion on this important subject, Hendrick 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 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 species 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 Graaff-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 Graaff-Reinet, but through the country of the Bechuannas — 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 civilized 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 some time to pay him a visit in his far-away home.

The hunters started forth on their journey, under the impression that amongst the Makalolo were men possessing almost every noble attribute of human nature.

CHAPTER XV.

A HERD OF BUFFALOES.

WHEN on what might be termed the way back to Graaff-Reinet, Hans, Hendrick, 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 Hendrick; “but I don’t see why he should have all the sport to himself.”

Leaping into their saddles, Hendrick and Arend rode after Willem; and were followed by two of the Makalolo, 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 further 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 these 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.

Hendrick 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 Makalolo, had not time to get 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 around it was sprinkled with its blood.

Groot Willem was not the only one who had been charged upon. Arend and Hendrick 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 a 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 take note of its dimensions. It was eight feet in length, and nearly six in height, to the summit of the shoulder. 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 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 steaks and other choice portions 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 pursued their interrupted journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

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 attempt at a controversy,—his companions were compelled to be content with the knowledge that they were slowly progressing towards Graaff-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 with 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 water-course, 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 loafing 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 further 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 Makalolo 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 Bechuannas.

Of this method for wantonly destroying animal life, practised by many of the 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 the cir-

cumference of a mile, at not less than two hundred.

One of the water-holes of the chain by which they had just 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 should all by this time have been food for the jackals and hyenas—as these antelopes 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 Bechuannas 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 neigh-

bourhood of Bechuannas, the Makalolo 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 Bechuanna 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 Hendrick 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 a village of Bechuannas, 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 Hendrick and Arend.

Hans, seeing he was expected to stay behind, assisted by Swartboy, Congo, and the Makalolo, stopped the cattle and pack-horses, and remained spectators of what they anticipated would 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 Hendrick, “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 XVII.

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 Hendrick, “they are

ours. They won't notice us, and we shall have an opportunity of 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 Hendrick; "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.

Hendrick 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 towards 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.

Hendrick 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 Hendrick; “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 the horses

to their 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 slidden 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 Hendrick, 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 dey 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. His tusks were over five feet in length, and to Swartboy was appropriated 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.

Hendrick, 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 Hendrick, “will you look after everything here, or will you come along with us?”

“Oh, I prefer staying,” said the quiet Hans; “perhaps by so doing 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 XVIII.

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 Hendrick, 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 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 Hendrick 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 animal 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—by 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 into the other.

All the men standing around were

armed,—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 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 Hendrick, “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 melodious 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 wanted 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 shaking 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 among the blacks, and another party was seen approaching from the direction of the village.

They brought news that the headman 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 Hendrick; “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 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 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 reloading 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 it had been represented by the "smouse" from whom he had purchased it.

He wished to compare its destructive power with that of one of their guns; and Groot Willem was invited to take a shot at the elephant.

"But, baas Willem," said Congo, as he finished his communication, "you not do that, you not shoot the elephant."

"Why?" asked Willem, in surprise.

"You kill 'im with your roer, and then they want it 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 or 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 agony 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 XIX.

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 talk no Zulu; no Kaffir of any kind.”

“Then why were you pretending to interpret his language a few minutes ago?” asked Hendrick.

“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 Hendrick; “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 an ole fool, now you all see for yourselves; look at 'im. Don't he look four, five, six times fool?—I tole you 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 learnt, 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 Graaff-Reinet again.

This attempt on the part of Willem to delay their homeward journey, was easily defeated by Hendrick.

“Why should we go to their kraal?” asked he; “we should not be allowed to leave it for two or three days, and we want to go 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 Bechuannas.

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 the heads thrust through a hole cut in

the centre. The broad disc 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 Hendrick 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 suitable camping ground.

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.

He rather seemed to think 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 Makalolo 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 Hendrick 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 Bechuannas, 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 Hendrick 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 Hendrick, suddenly reining in his own. “Perhaps the water is poisoned? See that buffalo and hyena—and we have just passed 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 Makalolo.

CHAPTER XX.

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 Makalolo along with them, went on towards the water.

On reaching it, Swartboy at once pronounced the fluid 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 pool; 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 the scent of the water, would 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 pond 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 effort made by Hendrick to restrain his, the girth of his saddle got loose, or was broken.

As he dismounted for the purpose of

repairing it, the horse broke away from him, and galloped back towards the pool—uttering a 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 invigorated, 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 Makalolo 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.

Fortunate it was for our hunters that all the cattle could not drink at the same time, as, crowding together, they stood in each other's 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 re-

tained possession of the pool. These five never left it.

Three horses and two oxen were lost at this fatal pool.

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 continue 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 the time they had journeyed a few miles beyond the poisoned pond, the shades 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 was 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 entirely to the guidance of chance, had they not been accompanied by Swartboy.

The Bushman suggested a course of which not only the Makalolo, 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 Bechuannas.

Some weak tribe of that nation he thought, sought refuge from an enemy by making their home in the Great

Karoo, or desert, through which the expedition was now passing.

They he believed it was that had poisoned the pool—this 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, where other tribes of their kindred dwelt. They could only look for their foes from the east—from the land of the Zulu Kaffirs, whom Swartboy declared to be the curse of the earth!

For these reasons Swartboy believed that the tribe of Bechuannas 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 Makalolo tongues,

could not make them move one step faster than two miles to the hour.

Even 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 hunntig expedition would turn out something worse than a failure.

CHAPTER XXI.

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 presented exactly the same appearance!

“We have had about enough of this sort of travelling,” remarked Hendrick; “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, Hendrick,” 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 being hastily procured from a pack carried by one of the oxen, 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 light-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 Makalolo 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 Bechuannas. The fear of losing their cattle was no longer felt.

Before arriving at the kraal, the dwellers came forth to meet them. Their first salutation was a statement of their surprise that any travellers could have succeeded in reaching their secluded habitations.

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 Hendrick. “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 Bechuannas only reiterated their previous statement.

“What nonsense!” exclaimed Arend; “do 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 Swart-boy. “Don’t do that. They show us water by-and-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 Bechuannas, 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 indication 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 Bechuannas' 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 XXII.

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 that, 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 Bechuanna grow bigger soon. He like de Bushman.”

Swartboy’s prophecy proved correct. Not long after it was spoken, one of the Bechuanna 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 pit-fall 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

Bechuannas. 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 the 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 throwing 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 Bechuannas, whom they had been taught to regard as a soulless, 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 their mouths with the fluid, and then discharging it into the eggshells.

The water supplied to the hunters on their 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 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 Bechuannas 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 civilized 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 their 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 Bechuannas, 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 XXIII.

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 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 the real truth, 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 delusions 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 tantalizing 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 the 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 yet 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 the 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 one 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 spectacles, but the one on 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 revealed by the prophets 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 Rev. Dr. Cumming!

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 real ones, that led them to believe

that they were approaching the limits 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 these 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. Be that, however, 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

in 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.

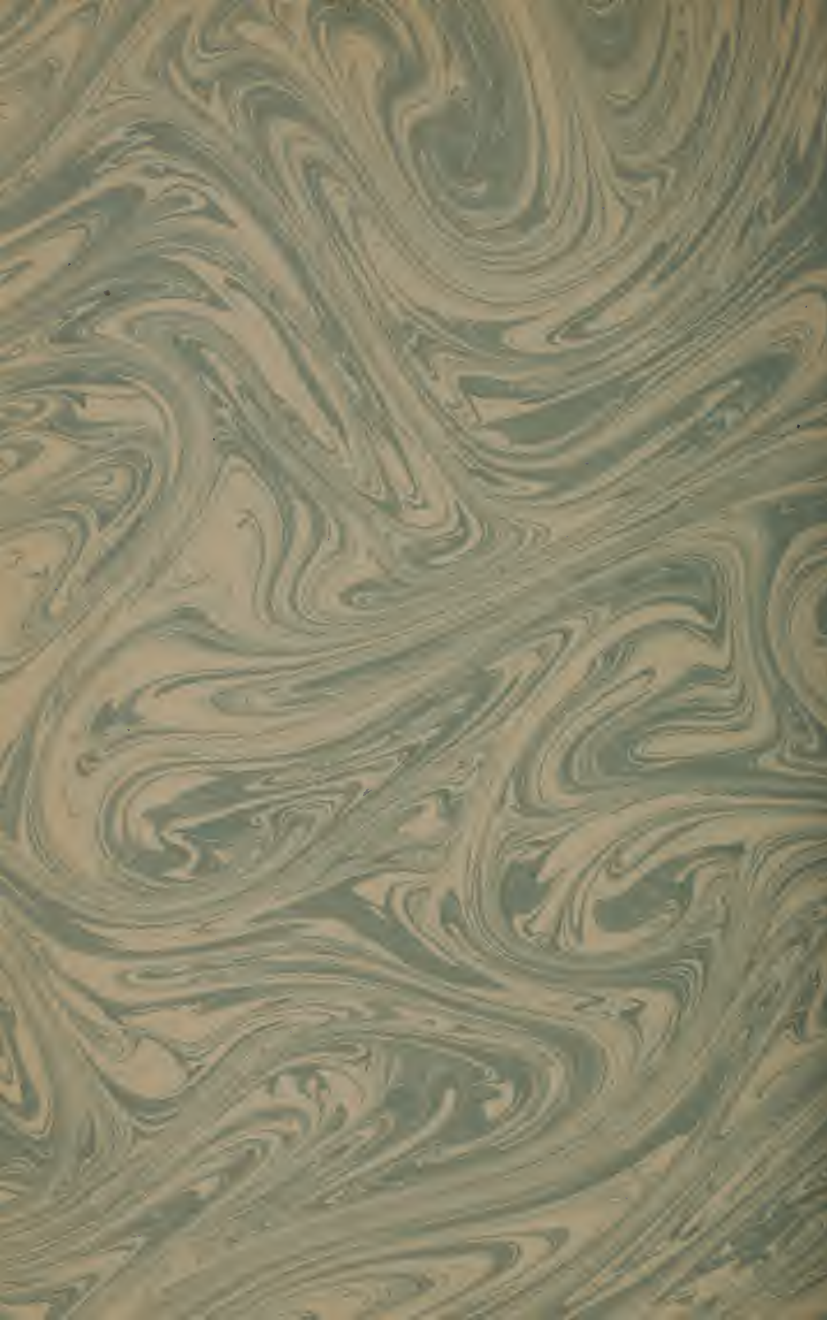
He had lain flat along the ground, close by the ostrich's nest, until the birds had returned. They had come back in company, and Swartboy had secured them both, as a reward for his watchful patience. He had brought the plumes with him, not as a mere evidence of his triumph, but intended to be taken on to Graaff-Reinet, and there presented to his "Totty."

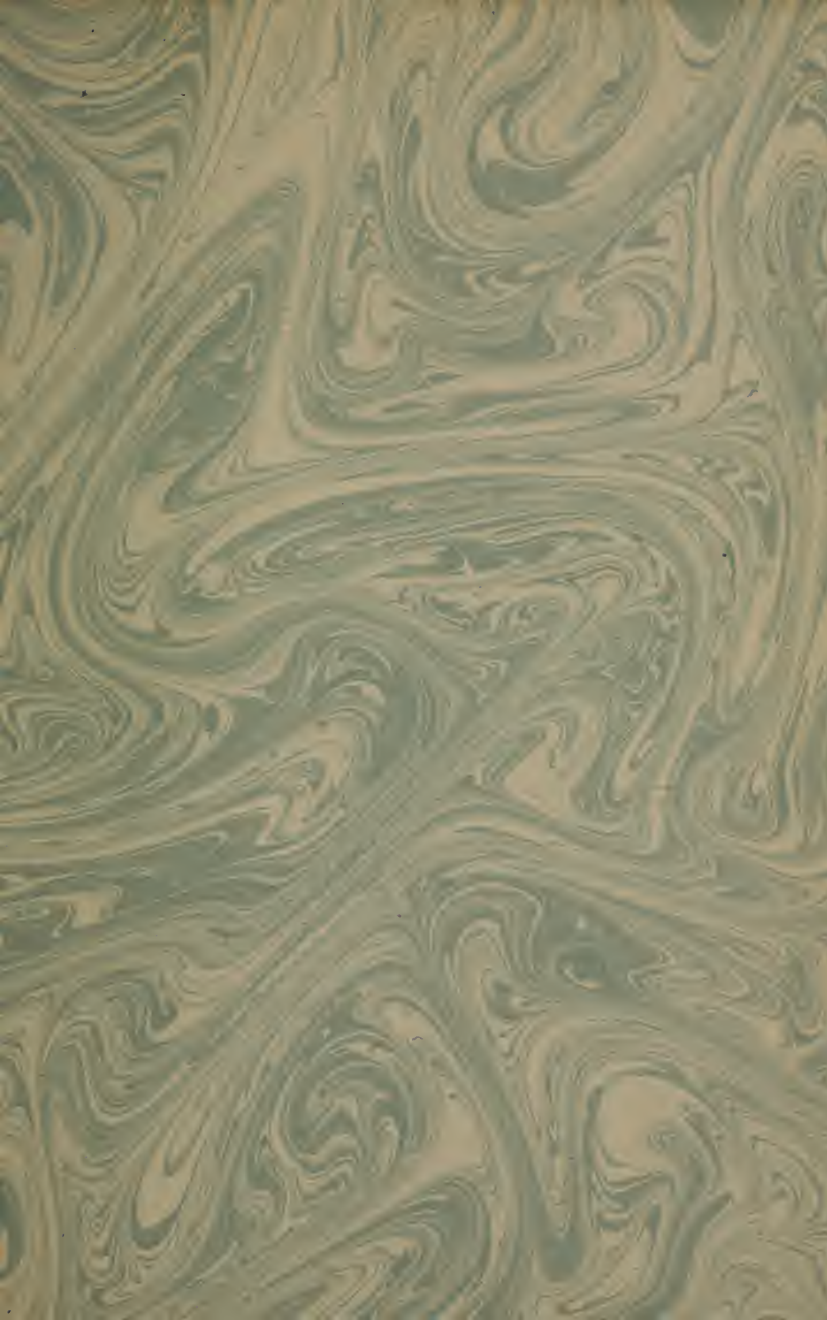
The Bushman stated that he had seen

a large flock of ostriches, while waiting for the two he had killed. He had no doubt but that 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.

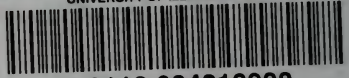
END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.







UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 084218988