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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HENDRICKS THE HUNTER; OR, THE BORDER FARM: A TALE OF ZULULAND

W.H.G. Kingston

"Hendricks the Hunter"

Chapter One.

The Trader in Zululand.

Zululand is a wild region of mountain ranges, deep valleys and gorges, roaring torrents, rapidly flowing rivers, plains covered with mimosa bushes, meadows where cattle pasture and grow fat, and level plateaux extending for many miles across it, several hundred feet above the level of the ocean; while scattered here and there, in some parts pretty thickly, are to be seen the kraals or villages and the mealy grounds of the natives. Wild as is the country, and although roads, properly speaking, there are none, it is sufficiently practicable for waggons in various directions.

Some few years back, one of these vehicles, drawn by a span of twelve oxen, was seen slowly wending its way to the south-west, in the direction of Natal. It was a loosely yet strongly built machine on four wheels, fourteen feet long and four wide, formed of well-seasoned stink wood, the joints and bolts working all ways, so that, as occasionally happened, as it slowly rumbled and bumped onward, when the front wheel sank into a deep hole, the others remained perfectly upright. It was tilted over with thick canvas impervious to rain, the goods or passengers inside being thus well sheltered from the hardest showers, and even from the hot rays of the sun.

The oxen pulled steadily together, as became animals long accustomed to work in company. On a board in front stood a Hottentot driver, his black visage surmounted by a broad-brimmed straw hat ornamented by a few ostrich feathers twined round the crown, while his hand held a whip of Brobdignagian proportions, the stock being fully fourteen feet, and the lash upwards of twenty-four feet in length, with which he occasionally urged on the leaders, or drew blood from the animals beneath his feet, as well as from those intermediate in the span, whenever a rise in the ground or its unusual roughness required an additional exertion of their strength.

Several black men, of tall sinewy forms and Kaffir features, each carrying a gun at his back, and a long pole in his hand, accompanied the waggon on foot. At some little distance ahead rode a florid, good-looking man, above the middle height, and of strongly built figure, dressed in a grey suit, with a broad-brimmed hat on his head. He also carried a gun at his back and a brace of pistols in a broad belt which he wore round his waist. Though his hair and beard were slightly grizzled, yet, by the expression of his countenance and his easy movements, he appeared to have lost none of the activity of youth, while his firm-set mouth and bright blue eyes betokened courage and energy. Some horses followed the waggon, secured by thongs of a length sufficient to enable them to pick their way. A glance into the interior of the waggon would have shown that it was fully loaded, the chief contents being the skins of wild animals, the huge tusks of elephants, and other spoils of the chase, with which the proprietor was returning after a hunt of many months' duration, to dispose of them at Maritzburg or D'Urban.

The horseman was apparently one of those enterprising traders and hunters who roam over the southern parts of the dark continent to barter European goods for cattle, skins, ivory, and other produce of the country. As he was the owner of the waggon and the master of the men attending it, we will for the present designate him as the Trader. He generally rode on in silence, amusing himself with his own thoughts, but occasionally he turned to address a tall Kaffir by his side, whose leopard-skin robe and head-dress, the long rifle at his back, and the independent air with which he walked, betokened him to be a leading hunter, and the familiar way in which he was addressed and replied, showed that he was held in high esteem by his employer.

"We must look out for a camping-place before long, Umgolo," said the trader. "The beasts have had a rough journey, and will require plenty of time for feeding. Do you go on ahead, and select a spot where grass and water are to be found, and where we may watch them, and defend ourselves, should any of the people hereabouts take a fancy to the beasts or to the contents of our waggon."

"The master shall be obeyed," answered the Kaffir. "It may be as well, as he has said, to be on our guard, for the Zulus in these parts are arrant thieves, and will not scruple to steal if they have the chance."

The Kaffir, who had of course spoken in his native tongue, hurried ahead of the team. In a short time the waggon overtook him at a spot which he had chosen on the slope of a hill forming one side of a valley through which ran a sparkling stream, the ground in the neighbourhood of its banks being covered with rich grass. No more favourable spot could have been selected for the camp, as the stream served as a boundary on one side, and the hill on the other, so that a man stationed at either end could effectually prevent the cattle from straying.

Another valley opened into that along which the waggon was travelling, and on a level space some considerable way from the bottom could be distinguished in the distance a circular palisade forming a kraal, the dome-roofed huts just appearing above the enclosure. It was so far off, however, that the inhabitants were not likely to have discovered the waggon as it passed along.

At that period, it should be understood, the Zulus and their white neighbours were on tolerably good terms, though some of the former might occasionally have carried off a few horses or head of cattle belonging to the settlers, when they could do so without the risk of being caught. Sportsmen and traders therefore penetrated fearlessly into the country, the traders carrying cotton goods, blankets, cutlery, and not unfrequently firearms and powder and shot, which they exchanged for skins and oxen.

However, we will return to our friends. At a short distance from the spot selected by Umgolo for the camp was a wood from which fuel for the fires could be obtained, and which would have afforded materials for throwing up a fortification, had such been considered necessary. But the sturdy owner of the waggon, with his band of expert marksmen, believed himself well able to cope with any natives who might venture to interfere with him.

Having outspanned, or in other words the oxen being unyoked, they hurried of their own accord down to the stream to drink, attended by two of the men, with their guns in hand, in case any lion or other savage beast should be lurking in the neighbourhood. The water was too shallow for crocodiles, which in many parts have to be guarded against. The rest of the men were engaged in collecting fuel for the fire, and cutting stakes and poles to form a temporary enclosure in which the oxen might be penned during the dark hours of night.

Meantime the trader, attended by Umgolo, set off in search of a springboc or a pallah, called also the rooyaboc, or a wild boar or a water-buck, whose flesh might serve the party for supper and breakfast. There was no fear of starving in a country where numberless varieties of animals abounded. They made their way towards a thicket which extended from some distance up the hill, across the valley, almost down to the river. Game of some sort was sure to be found within it, while at the same time they themselves would be concealed by the thick bushes, and be enabled to get sufficiently close to an animal to shoot it with certainty.

It was only, however, in some places that the thicket could be penetrated; for below the large mimosa trees there grew thorny creepers and bushes, among which it was impossible to force a passage without the certainty of having to emerge with garments torn to shreds, and legs bleeding from lacerations innumerable. Here in wild profusion grew the creeper known as the "wait-a-bit," because its hooked thorns will catch the clothes of any person brushing by it, and compel him to wait a bit until he has released himself by drawing them out one by one. The natives give it the still more honourable title of "catch tiger," as they affirm that even that savage creature, who may unwarily leap into it, will find itself trapped in a way from which there is no escape. Then there was the cactus with spikes three inches in length, and the "Come and I'll kiss you," a bush armed with almost equally formidable thorns, and huge nettles, and numerous other vegetable productions, offering impracticable impediments to the progress, not only of human beings, but of every species of animal, with the exception of elephants and rhinoceroses, which might attempt to force a way through them.

The hunters had not gone far, when, as they were skirting the thicket, they came on a small herd of water-buck. The trader, raising his rifle, fired, and one of the graceful animals lay struggling on the grass. The rest bounded off like lightning, to escape the shot which the native discharged. Both hurrying forward, soon put the deer out of its misery. To follow the rest would have been useless, as they were away far out of range of their firearms. They therefore at once applied themselves to the task of cutting up the dead animal, so that they might carry back the best portions of the meat to the camp.

While they were thus employed, a crashing sound was heard coming from the thicket at no great distance, when springing to their feet they saw before them a black rhinoceros, the most formidable inhabitant of those wild regions. It is more dangerous to encounter than even the lion or the elephant, because the only one which will deliberately chase a human being whenever it catches sight of him, and will never give up the pursuit, unless its intended victim can obtain concealment, or it is itself compelled to bite the dust. Its sight is, however, far from keen; so that if there are bushes or rocks near at hand, it can be easily avoided.

Such was, fortunately for the hunters, the case in the present instance. As on it came thundering over the ground, uttering a roar of displeasure, the Kaffir, shouting to his master, sprang behind a bush, near which the deer had fallen. The trader, however, stood firm, his weapon in his hand, ready to fire, although knowing full well that, should he miss, the next instant the savage brute would be upon him, and either gore or trample him to death.

Flight was out of the question with such a pursuer at his heels, while even should he now attempt to take refuge behind a bush, the rhinoceros, close as it was, would probably see him. Notwithstanding this, he remained motionless; not a limb shook, not a nerve quivered. As the ferocious monster, with its formidable horn lowered, came rushing on, the trader, raising his rifle, fired, and then, before the smoke had cleared off, with an agility which could scarcely have been expected in a man of his proportions, sprang on one side. Almost at the same moment a crack was heard from Umgolo's rifle, and the rhinoceros sank to the ground, uttering a loud scream indicative of pain and also of anger at finding itself foiled in its onslaught.

In vain the brute attempted to rise. Umgolo sprang forward and plunged his assegai into its breast. The hunters' sharp knives soon cut through the tough skin, and several slices of the flesh were added to the store of meat with which they set off on their return to the camp. It was the leader's intention to send some of his people to bring in the horn and a further portion of the flesh, should it not in the meantime have been devoured by jackals, hyenas, and other scavengers of the wilds. Their arrival was greeted with a shout of satisfaction by the people. While some eagerly set to work to cook the meat brought to them, others went out to bring in a further supply. On their return, each man loaded with as much as he could carry, they reported that they had been only just in time to drive off a pack of wolves which would soon have left them the bare bones alone for their share.

Although they had performed a long and rough day's journey, they sat up round the fire late into the night, cooking and eating the rhinoceros and water-buck flesh, and relating to each other their oft-told adventures. As soon as darkness came on, the cattle were driven in and secured close to the waggon, and sentries, with muskets in their hands, were placed to watch them, as well as to serve as guards to the rest of the camp.

The trader's accustomed sleeping-place was inside his waggon, where, by the light of a lantern hung from the roof, he could sit and read or write when so disposed. After allowing his followers sufficient time to amuse themselves, he shouted to them to cease their noise and go to sleep. To hear with his well-disciplined hunters and drivers was to obey, and at once rolling themselves up in their blankets or karosses they lay down round the fire, which had previously been made up, so as to last some hours without additional fuel. He then, before turning in himself, took a turn round the camp, stopping occasionally to listen for any sounds which might indicate that a lion was prowling in the neighbourhood. He was just about to return to the waggon, when he observed emerging from behind a clump of trees in the valley below him numerous dark figures moving slowly over the ground. He watched them attentively, and was convinced that they were a party of Zulus bent on a warlike expedition. Others followed, until a large number had assembled in the open. Whether or not their object was to attack his camp he could not tell; but he resolved, should they do so, to defend his property to the last. He at once called up Umgolo, and in a low voice ordered him to arouse his companions, but on no account to allow them to show themselves or to make the slightest noise. These orders were obeyed, and the trader retired to the shade of his waggon, where he could watch what was going forward without himself being seen. The fire, from which a few flames occasionally flickered up, must, he knew, have shown the Zulus the position of the camp.

Though he took these precautions for prudence' sake, he did not consider it likely that the Zulus, who had hitherto been friendly, would venture to attack him. His followers, however, appeared not to be so well satisfied on that point as he was; for each man, as he lay on the ground, examined his arms to be sure that they were ready for instant action.

The dark figures moved slowly on, then halted.

"They are considering whether they shall venture to come against us," whispered Umgolo. "If they do, we will give them a warmer welcome than they expect."

Such might have been the interpretation of his remarks.

"I still doubt whether they will attack us," answered his master. "They know too well the power of the white man's powder and lead."

At that time comparatively few firearms had been introduced among the Zulus, and they had but an imperfect knowledge of their use.

Again the black figures began to move, but instead of drawing nearer the camp, apparently supposing that they had not been observed, they directed their course towards the kraal which had been observed by the travellers on the hillside just before they unspanned.

"They are about to work no good to yonder kraal, or they would not be moving thus silently at this time of night," observed Umgolo. "Before morning dawns, not a man, woman, or child will be left alive, and not a hoof remain inside."

"I would then that we could give the inhabitants notice of their impending doom, or save the unhappy wretches by some means or other," said the trader, more to himself than his follower, well aware that Umgolo would scarcely enter into his feelings on the subject.

"It cannot be done," remarked Umgolo. "Any one approaching the kraal would be discovered by the warriors, and put to death to a certainty."

"Why do you think that the kraal is to be attacked?" asked his master.

"This I know, that yonder kraal is the abode of the brave young chief Mangaleesu, who possesses numerous head of cattle, and has under him a band of devoted followers. Perhaps Panda, the king of the Zulus, or some other great chief, covets Mangaleesu's cattle, or fears his power, and this expedition has been sent out to destroy him and all his people. It may be that one of Panda's wives has been ill, and the doctor, not knowing what else to say, having declared that she was bewitched, was ordered to go and smell out the culprit; the cunning rogue knowing full well how best to please the king; or, as I remarked, some other enemy of Mangaleesu has fixed on him."

"How do you know, Umgolo, that such is the case?" inquired his master.

"I guess it," answered Umgolo. "Perhaps I am wrong. The young chief may be an enemy of Cetchwayo, and he it is who has sent the army to destroy him. He knows the bravery and cleverness of Mangaleesu, who, had he gained an inkling of what is intended, would have made his escape into Natal. There may be some other cause for the intended

attack, but I am not far wrong, master, you may depend upon that.”

“I fear, indeed, that you are right in your conjectures,” said the trader. “I am satisfied that the Zulus do not intend to attack us. Tell the people that they may again go to sleep, and that they will be summoned if they are required.”

While Umgolo went to execute this order, the trader stood leaning on his gun at a spot a short distance from the camp, to which he had made his way the better to watch the proceedings of the Zulu force. He was considering how he could manage to reach the kraal before the Zulu warriors had surrounded it, and were ready to commence their work of slaughter. He might, by following a different direction, and moving more rapidly over the ground, get to the rear of the kraal, and warn the doomed inhabitants to flee while there was yet time. Too probably, however, they would be seen escaping, and would be pursued and slaughtered before they had time to get to any distance. Still his generous feelings prompted him to make the attempt. There would be a considerable amount of risk to himself, though the Zulus at that time held white men in respect, and himself especially as he had so frequently traversed their country, and was known to many of them. Notwithstanding this, if found interfering with their proceedings, they might, in a sudden fit of anger, put him to death. Leaving the camp, therefore, he proceeded with rapid steps along the side of the hill, in the direction the Zulus had taken. Though the kraal was concealed from view by the shades of night, and no lights issued from it, he well knew its position. He soon gained a spot whence in daylight he could clearly have perceived it, when to his grief he saw what might have been mistaken for a dark shadow creeping over the ground and already ascending the hill on which the kraal stood. He was now convinced of the impossibility of getting to it in time to warn the inhabitants of their impending fate. Perfect stillness reigned around, broken occasionally by the distant mutterings of a lion, or the melancholy cry of some beast or bird of prey. Unable to tear himself away from the spot, he waited, moved by a painful curiosity to learn what would happen, as he knew that the dusky warriors must have reached the kraal, though he was unable to see their movements. Still no cry reached his ear. Had the inhabitants got warning of the intended attack, and beaten a timely retreat? He hoped that such might have been the case.

A crescent moon and the bright stars shed a faint light over the scene. He could look far up and down the valley, but the part where the kraal stood was shrouded in gloom. Presently the silence was broken by a chorus of shouts and yells, borne by the night wind from the direction of the kraal, followed by shrieks and cries which continued without intermission for some minutes, and then he saw lights glimmering here and there, increasing in intensity, until a circle of flame burst forth, rising rapidly as the fire caught hold of the combustible material of which the kraal was composed. By this time all sounds had ceased, and he knew that the last of the unhappy inhabitants had been killed.

Wishing to avoid the risk of meeting any of the savage warriors, should they cross the hill, he hastened back to the camp. He found Umgolo, who had discovered his absence, looking out, wondering what had become of him.

The Kaffir had heard the yells and shrieks of the savages as they attacked the kraal, and fearing that his master might have been tempted to interfere, was proportionally glad to see him return safe.

They were still standing just outside the camp, when the sound of approaching footsteps reached their ears.

“Here come some of the savage Zulus. We must drive them back, if they intend to molest us,” said the trader.

“No fear of that,” replied the Kaffir. “There are but two pair of feet. See! there they come up the hill.”

The next instant the figure of a young warrior, with assegais in hand, supporting with his left arm a slight girl, came in sight. The flames from the fire lighted up their figures. Blood streamed from the side and right arm of the man. Both were panting for breath.

“Mangaleesu claims your protection, white chief, for her he loves, and for himself, that he may avenge the death of those he has lost. You will not refuse it?”

“I will gladly conceal you, and afford you all the help I can,” answered the trader. “Come on: there is not a moment to be lost. Your wife can get into the waggon, and you can lie in the hammock beneath it, where, even if your enemies come, they will not think of looking for you.”

This was said as the young chief and the girl were being conducted to the waggon. All was done so rapidly and silently, that none of the sleeping servants were awakened, and only those who had charge of the cattle could have observed what had happened, while the curtain which closed the front of the waggon was allowed to remain open, so as not to excite the suspicion of the Zulus, should they come to the camp.

The trader and Umgolo slowly paced up and down with their rifles in their hands, waiting the arrival of their pursuers. At length they began to hope that Mangaleesu had evaded them, and that they had gone off in a different direction. So satisfied were they that this was the case, that the trader returned to the waggon to see what assistance he could render to the wounded chief. Mangaleesu, however, made light of his hurts, although they were such as any white man would have considered very serious.

He told his white friend that his wife was uninjured, notwithstanding the many assegais thrust at her.

“Have any more of your people escaped from your enemies?” asked the trader.

“No; few even fought for their lives,” answered the Zulu chief. “When I was first awakened out of sleep by the shouting around my kraal, I knew well what was about to happen; but I resolved for Kalinda’s sake, as well as my own, to struggle for life. To fight my way out and to save my wife, I knew was impossible, had I dashed out boldly as I at first thought of doing; but she whispered to me, ‘Let us make a figure; our enemies will stab at that, and we meantime may perchance get clear.’ The idea struck me as good. She brought me a mat, and we rolled it up round a thick stick. We then fastened a shield to it, and on the top a bundle of assegais, as if held in the hand of a warrior. It

was much too dark for our enemies to discover the deceit. When all was ready, I held the figure in one hand, while I grasped my weapons in the other, Kalinda keeping close behind me. I then opened the door, and thrust out the figure in the midst of those standing near, thirsting for my blood. They instantly, as I knew they would, gathered round it, piercing it with their assegais. While they were thus employed, I sprang out, still holding the figure, and in a few bounds reached the inside of the outer fence, against which I placed my back, and kept my assailants at bay. As they drew away from the door to attack me, Kalinda rushed out; and our enemies, who had supposed that there was only one person in the hut, seeing another appear, fancied that there might be more, and became confused, not knowing how to act; for many of them had already felt the point of my assegai. Kalinda, getting close to me without a wound, threw the figure over the fence, among those guarding the outside. They instantly rushed at it, leaving the gate for a few seconds unguarded. This was all I required. Sheltering my wife with my shield, as she clung to my arm, I sprang with her through the opening, over the bodies of my slaughtered followers, and before our enemies knew we had gone we were running like springbocs down the hill. We knew that if our flight should be discovered we should be pursued, but we hoped that we had not been seen at the moment we were rushing out of the kraal. I had been out hunting until late in the evening, and had discovered the tracks of your waggon. I guessed therefore whereabouts you would camp, and determined to place my wife under your protection, knowing that while with you our pursuers would not molest her. For myself, I intended to follow up my enemies, and revenge myself by trying to kill some of them. When morning breaks, and they do not find my dead body, they'll know that I have made my escape."

"You have acted a brave part," said the trader; "but I would advise you to let your enemies go their own way. You have saved your young wife and your own life. You will, I hope, be able to reach Natal in safety, where you will be free from danger. If you attempt to kill your enemies, you will very likely be killed yourself, and there will be no one to protect your wife. You are also now weak from loss of blood, and although your heart is courageous, your strength may fail you."

One of the servants had in the meantime been employed, by command of his master, in making some broth over the fire, which he now brought to the young chief, who notwithstanding his boasting was very glad to obtain it, being much exhausted from the exertions he had made.

The trader then took some to Kalinda, who lay trembling in the waggon, expecting every moment the arrival of their pursuers to kill her and her husband. The trader did his best to soothe her fears by promising that he would not deliver them up to their enemies, even though it should be discovered where they had taken refuge.

The remainder of the night passed quietly by. The glare from the burning kraal could be seen in the distance for some time, but it gradually died out, and all was dark in that direction. No sounds were brought down by the night wind to show whether the Zulus were still surrounding it; but Umgolo, knowing their habits, gave it as his opinion that they had departed as silently as they had come, after executing their fell purpose; and that if they had discovered the flight of the chief and his wife, a party had gone in pursuit of them in the direction it was supposed they had taken. One thing was certain, it could not have been suspected that the fugitives had taken refuge in the camp, or some of their enemies would have arrived before now to demand them.

The trader had previously determined to spend a day where he was now encamped, in order to rest his cattle from their rough journey, and he thought it prudent to adhere to his intention the better to deceive the Zulus, who would be less likely to suspect that he was sheltering the fugitives should he remain stationary, than were he to be found hurrying away from the neighbourhood.

Chapter Two.

The Foundling of the Kraal.

The trader having selected three of his men to keep watch, lay down, wrapped in a mantle of skin, under his waggon, having given up his usual sleeping-place to his guests.

No one was seen however, nor were any sounds heard to indicate that any persons were approaching the camp, and dawn at length broke.

Rising from his bed under the waggon, the trader walked a few paces beyond the camp, to take a look over the country around, for the purpose of ascertaining as far as his eye could help him, whether any of the Zulus were still in the neighbourhood. The air was deliciously fresh and balmy, the atmosphere was bright and clear, so that the outlines of the distant hills were clearly defined against the sky. There were a few soft, white, fleecy clouds of mist floating here and there, which the breeze, as the sun rose, quickly dispersed; while below, winding through the valley, could be seen the sheen of the river between the clumps of the trees bordering its banks.

It was difficult to believe that a terrible tragedy had been enacted a few short hours before in the midst of so lovely a scene. He proceeded on along the hill to a place whence he could see the spot where the kraal had existed. Looking through his telescope, he could clearly distinguish a large black circle of ashes marking the spot where the habitations of the slaughtered people had lately stood. He could see no human beings moving about in the neighbourhood, though he turned his glass in every direction. He feared the worst.

"Perhaps some of the poor people may have escaped death from the assegais of their enemies, and may be lying hid in the bushes or plantations around," he said to himself; "though I fear those savages do their work too surely to give much hope of that."

He hastened back to the camp, and having taken a hurried breakfast, and advised his guests to remain quiet in their places of concealment, he set out, accompanied by Umgolo, towards the kraal.

The stream was easily forded. As the morning was fresh, he and his companion walked briskly on. They were thus not long in reaching the neighbourhood of the kraal. A dreadful sight met their eyes. Everywhere the ground was strewn with the dead bodies of its late inhabitants. As he had supposed, the assegais of the avengers had been used too well to allow any of them to escape with life. Some lay outside, others within the two circles of ashes where the huts had stood. Still it was possible that some might have crept to a distance. He and his companion searched, however, all round, and although every bush was examined, no one was discovered, nor did they perceive any traces of blood which might have indicated that some wounded person had got thus far from the scene of slaughter.

They were about to return to the camp, when, looking towards the kraal, the trader fancied that he saw some object move in the centre among several dead oxen, which had probably been wounded by the assegais of the attacking



party, and had returned there to die. He accordingly made his way towards the spot, followed by Umgolo, over the still warm ashes. He preferred the risk of burning his boots to going round through the entrance, where the bodies of the slaughtered people lay so thickly that he could scarcely pass without treading upon them.

"Who can this be?" he exclaimed as he got near where the dead oxen lay. "If my eyes do not deceive me, here's a young white boy. Who are you? What brought you here, my child?" he asked in a kind tone.

But the boy did not reply. He had been lying between two of the cattle, partly under one of them, and having apparently been asleep, and just awakened, was endeavouring to get up. Round his waist was a robe of monkey skins, and a cloak of wild cat skins hung over his shoulders. Both were stained with blood, but whether it came from a wound he had received, or was that of the animals whose bodies had sheltered him, it was difficult to say. When the trader lifted him up, he evinced no fear, though he still did not speak.

"Are you English or Dutch?" asked the trader. "A Zulu you cannot be, though dressed like one."

There was no reply. The boy, who seemed to be about eight or nine years old, looked round with an astonished gaze at the circle of ashes to which the kraal had been reduced.

"Why, the poor child is wounded, I fear," said the trader, examining his arm. "Terror probably has deprived him of his wits."

As he said this, taking a handkerchief from his pocket, he bound it round the injured limb, so as to staunch the flow of blood.

"The sooner we get him to the camp the better: he wants both food and water. Although he cannot say anything about himself, I have no doubt that Mangaleesu will be able to give an account of him."

Saying this, the trader, giving his gun to Umgolo to carry, lifted the boy up in his arms, and hurried with him down the hill towards the camp. Had the boy been a Zulu, Umgolo would probably have recommended that he should be left to shift for himself, but observing his white skin he did not venture to interfere.

The child, evidently satisfied that he had found a friend, lay quietly in the strong arms of the trader, who walked on with rapid steps, carrying him as if he had been an infant.

The camp was soon reached, and the trader, placing the boy on some skins in the shade of the waggon, ordered one of his Kaffirs who acted as cook to get some broth ready, while he sent off another to obtain fresh water from the spring.

This done, he examined the wound in the boy's arm, more carefully than he had before been able to do. He first got out of the waggon a salve and some lint, with some linen bandages; for he was too experienced a hunter to travel without articles which might occasionally be of the greatest necessity.

Having taken off the handkerchief and carefully washed the wound in warm water, he dressed it with the skill of a surgeon. The boy looked up gratefully in his new friend's face, but still did not speak. The trader having in vain endeavoured to obtain an answer when addressing him in English or Dutch, he at last spoke to him in Kaffir.

The boy at once said, "I thank you, white stranger, for what you have done for me. I thought at first that you belonged to those who had killed our people, and that you were going to kill me. Now I know that you are my friend."

"You are right, my boy; I wish to be so," said the trader. "But tell me, how comes it that you who are white, cannot speak your native tongue?"

"I have been so long with the Zulus that I have forgotten it," answered the boy. "I once could speak it, and I well remember the white people I lived amongst. For a long time I remembered my native language; but as I always, since I could speak, knew some Kaffir, I soon understood what was said to me. I had a black nurse, but she was assegaid, and I was torn from her arms by the Zulus who carried me off. More than that I cannot tell."

The kind-hearted trader was obliged to be content with this information. He was unwilling indeed, till the poor boy had regained his strength, further to question him, and he hoped to learn more of his history from Mangaleesu and Kalinda, who he had no doubt would be able to afford it.

Having given the boy some of the broth which was now ready, and placed a blanket under his head to serve as a pillow, he left Umgolo to watch over him. He then went and sat down by the side of Mangaleesu, who still lay in the hammock under the waggon, not yet recovered from the exertions he had made on the previous night, and the loss of blood from his wounds.

"I have recovered one of your people, and have brought him to the camp," said the trader.

"Who is he?" asked Mangaleesu eagerly. "I thought that all had been killed."

"Although he has a white skin, he seems by his dress and language to be a Zulu," answered the trader.

"Then he must be little Unozingli," said the chief. "I am glad he has escaped, for he was a favourite with us, and will some day, if he lives, become a great warrior."

"By what chance did he happen to be living among you? Although he is dressed like a Zulu, and speaks the Kaffir tongue alone, he is evidently the child of white parents."

"He was brought to my kraal by a tribe from a distant part of the country, who afterwards joined my people," answered the chief. "They had taken him, they said, from a black woman who had been killed; but the child being white, they had been unwilling to destroy him, and had carried him off with them. He was at once adopted into the tribe, and has lived with us ever since, learning our customs and language, and we gave him the name of Unozingli."

From this answer it was evident that no further satisfactory information could be obtained from Mangaleesu respecting the boy. This was a disappointment to the trader. He had hoped, after rescuing the little fellow, to have had the satisfaction of discovering his parents or friends, and restoring him to them. He was satisfied that the child was either English or Dutch, and from his features he was inclined to think he was the former.

"I don't fancy calling him by his Kaffir name," he said to himself. "I must get one more suited to him." As he looked at the thick auburn hair which hung in curls over the boy's head, his freckled, though otherwise fair countenance, his large blue eyes, and broad, open countenance, he exclaimed, "I have it! I'll call him Lionel; for a young lion he looks, and will, I hope, some day bring down many of the brutes of the forest."

Unwilling to leave the camp himself, lest their enemies might come in search of the young chief and his bride, towards evening the trader sent out Umgolo and another man in search of game to supply his followers with meat, for in that climate what is killed one day is scarcely eatable the next.

He also despatched two others in different directions to ascertain if any of the Zulus were in the neighbourhood, apparently searching for Mangaleesu, as he intended in that case to keep the chief and his bride more carefully concealed until he had carried them safely across the border.

The hunters were the first to return, loaded with the flesh of a couple of antelopes. Soon afterwards, while they were busily employed in cutting up the animals and preparing them for supper, the scouts came in, bringing the information that they had seen a large party who seemed to them coming from the south-west, but who were too far off to enable them to ascertain who they were. As—the intermediate ground being uneven—it would have taken them a long time to get nearer, they deemed it wise to return at once with their report.

"Whether friends or foes, we are ready for them," said the trader. "In case they should be foes, we must keep our guests concealed; but from the direction they come, I think it more likely that they are friends, and we will have some food ready for them."

The cooks therefore spitted according to camp fashion an additional supply of meat to roast, while the trader walked on a short distance in the direction he expected the strangers to appear. He was not mistaken in his surmise. After some time he saw through his glass a waggon very similar to his own, accompanied by two persons on horseback and several on foot. On this, returning to the camp, he ordered his horse to be saddled, and went out to meet them. As he was seen approaching, the two mounted strangers rode forward.

"What, Hendricks the Hunter!" exclaimed the elder, a tall, gaunt man, with a weather-beaten countenance, whose grey twinkling eyes, the form of his features, and his rich brogue showed him to be an Irishman. "Mighty glad to fall in with you, old friend!" and the gentlemen shook hands warmly.

"I'm equally well pleased to meet you, Maloney," answered Mr Hendricks. "You can give me news of the civilised world, of which I have heard nothing for many a long month."

"Faith! as to that, it wags much as usual. Skins are fetching fair prices, which is good news for you; but the Kathlamba bushmen are again becoming troublesome, and have lately carried off several head of cattle and horses from the settlers in that direction, which is a bad matter for them, while the new arrivals are grumbling and complaining as usual because they do not find the colony the Eldorado they expected, before they have had time to dig a spade into the ground or run a plough over it. For my part, I'm mighty glad to get out of their company and find myself in the wilderness."

"So am I generally, after I have been a short time at home, I confess, though I have many friends in Maritzburg, with whom I am glad now and again to spend a few days," replied Hendricks. "Had you, however, waited a little longer, I intended to propose that we should join forces and travel together. I thought it possible indeed that I might fall in with you, although as I did not expect to do so for several days to come I was in hopes that you would be induced to wait for me till I was ready to make a fresh start."

"I would willingly have delayed my journey or waited for you, had we met closer to the Natal border," answered Mr Maloney; "but as you know, it would not be prudent to remain longer than possible in this part of the country, and even now, as I shall spend some time trading and hunting to the south of the Drakensberg, you will probably overtake me before I get over the mountains."

"It will be from no fault of mine if I do not," said Hendricks. "I shall not be long in transacting my business at Maritzburg. However, we'll talk of that presently; and now come along to my camp, for supper will be ready by the time we get there. By the bye, who is the lad with you? He looks somewhat tired from his journey."

"He is my son Denis, a chip of the old block," answered Mr Maloney. "To say the truth, however, he is just now somewhat sick, and I'd rather see him safe at Maritzburg than travelling with me into the wilderness. I have a favour to ask—it is that you will take charge of him and let him accompany you back to the town. I shall be mighty thankful to you if you will."

"I will do as you wish," said Hendricks, "though the lad, I suspect, would rather be hunting with you than kicking his heels in town with nothing to do."

"He has been too well-trained to dispute my authority," observed Mr Maloney. "I took him from the office of his uncle, my worthy brother-in-law, and he must go back for a few months until I return and am ready to make my next trip. By that time he'll have more muscle and stamina, and be better able to stand the fatigue and hard life we hunters have to endure."

"I'll carry out your wishes with all my heart, and will look after the lad while I remain in the colony," said Hendricks.

This conversation took place while the two leaders were riding on towards the camp, the lad following a short distance behind them.

Mr Hendricks briefly related to his companion the attack on the kraal, and the way in which the Zulu chief, his bride and the little boy had been rescued. "I intend to take the child with me, to leave him in charge of my good sister, Susannah Jansen," he added. "We may some day discover to whom he belongs, but I will, in the meantime, act the part of a guardian to him."

"It is a kind act of yours, but faith! I suppose I should be after doing the same sort of thing myself, though I find one son as much as I can manage. To be sure, all boys are not like Denis here, who boasts that he shot a springboc before he was ten years old, and that he has since killed a lion and a wild boar, his great ambition being now to bring an elephant to the ground."

As his father was speaking, Denis, who had hitherto kept in the rear, hearing his name mentioned rode up.

"I have asked Mr Hendricks to take you back with him to Maritzburg, where you must wait with all the patience you can muster till my next trip," said Mr Maloney. "You are not strong enough for the work before us; and if you knock up, the object of my expedition will be defeated, for I shall have to nurse you instead of being able to hunt or carry on trade."

"I am much obliged to Mr Hendricks, but I don't intend to knock up," said Denis, not looking very well pleased at his father's proposal. "I'm a little sick now, but I shall be all to rights in a day or two, and will be able to continue the journey."

His looks, however, belied his assertion, though he was evidently doing his utmost to appear at his ease.

"Well, well, we'll see about it, my boy; but for your own sake, as well as mine, I wish you to go back. I took you somewhat against my better judgment, in the hopes that the journey would strengthen you, instead of which you look worse than when we started."

Denis still begged to be allowed to go on, until his father, losing patience, told him to say no more about the matter; that he should decide what was best to be done, and should act accordingly.

Hearing his father say this, Denis, not venturing to make any further appeal, again dropped behind.

"You see the boy has a will of his own," observed Mr Maloney. "Though so tall and full of spirit, he is scarcely twelve years of age, and has in truth outgrown his strength. Since he lost his mother he has only had his uncle, Tom Lumly, to look after him when I have been away, and my good brother-in-law being much taken up with business has had little time to attend to him, so that he has been allowed to run rather wild. However, as he is now well able to make himself useful, Tom will give him work to do, and that will help to keep him out of harm's way."

"You are right, my friend; there's nothing like plenty of work to help keep a person out of mischief; but, after all, he must have steadiness and good principles. They alone are to be depended on, and I hope your son has got those as ballast."

The two gentlemen, followed by Denis, soon arrived at the camp. They found the promised repast spread out under the shade cast by the waggon as the sun sank towards the western hills.

The two ciders did ample justice to the venison steaks and other African luxuries placed before them; but though Denis managed to eat a little, he had to acknowledge that he was somewhat off his feed.

Umgolo, who ranked as a chief amongst his followers, and shared his master's board, ate considerably more than the two white men together. Mangaleesu and Kalinda, who had been invited, at first hung back, but overcoming their bashfulness at length came and joined the party, and did ample justice to the food offered them. At last, little Unozingli, the white boy, or Lionel, as his protector determined to call him, crept out from the corner of the waggon, and, tempted by the smell of the viands, came and placed himself by the side of the Zulu chief, of whom he showed no fear.

"The child has been well treated, or he would keep away from our dark-skinned friend there," observed Mr Maloney. "It's mighty curious that he's unable to utter a word of English; but he'll find his tongue soon, when he has stowed away a little food."

The little fellow, unlike the Zulus, ate moderately, and after taking a draught of cold water declared that he was satisfied. His wounded arm, which Hendricks had placed in a sling, did not appear to cause him much pain; at all events, he did not complain as most boys more delicately nurtured than he had been would have done.

The Zulu chief now addressed him in a kind tone. He at once answered, and was soon chattering away either with him or Kalinda, with whom he appeared to be a favourite. After this, as he had recovered his spirits, Hendricks called him to come and sit by his side, and speaking in the Zulu language, questioned him as to his early recollections, when his answers fully confirmed the account given by Mangaleesu.

"Do you wish to return to your white friends?" asked Hendricks.

The boy's countenance brightened. "I am fond of the chief and Kalinda, but I should greatly like to see the white lady who often used to talk to me, and whom I called mother, and a man with hair like mine, who sometimes carried me on his back or in his arms, and let me ride on his knee. Then there was the black woman, but I shall never see her, for I remember well how the Zulus pierced her with their assegais. She fell into the river and was swept away, while one of the warriors carried me off."

"We will try and find your parents if they are still alive, and until they are found I will be a father to you," said Hendricks. "Will you trust me?"

"Indeed I will, for I like your face," answered the boy frankly.

"I suspect the little fellow is the child of some Dutch boers, slaughtered by the Zulus, while travelling in search of a location," observed Hendricks to his guest. "So many of the unfortunate settlers have thus lost their lives, that it is very improbable I shall ever discover to whom he belongs. If not, I will adopt him as my son, as he seems to have been committed to my charge by Providence."

Meantime Mr Maloney's waggon had arrived, and had been drawn up close to that of his friend, in such a position that in case of necessity it might serve to afford additional strength to the camp. Their respective Kaffir and Hottentot servants had assembled round a large fire a little distance off, the necessary guards only remaining to watch the cattle.

As the night was drawing on, and young Denis looked very sleepy, his father ordered him off to his berth in the waggon, which, though pretty well loaded with goods for traffic, had space enough for a couple of sleeping-places.

The lad got up, and wishing his father and Hendricks "good-night," sauntered away to the waggon, while the hunters remained seated near the fire, discussing their plans for the future. The Irishman intended to push forward through Zululand to a region some distance to the northward, where elephants, rhinoceroses, and hippopotami abounded, so that he might obtain a supply of ivory as well as of skins and any other valuable products of the country which he might discover.

Hendricks proposed, after remaining at Maritzburg two or three months, again to set out northward with the same object in view. He however relied less on trading than his own skill as a hunter to load up his waggon.

"If you find my boy well enough, and think fit to bring him along with you, do so; though don't tell him of your intention until the time for starting has arrived, or he will not settle down to his work in the town," said Maloney.

His friend promised to carry out his wishes, and at last, their various plans being arranged, they gave the word to their followers to go to sleep, while they themselves retired to their respective waggons.

A resting-place had been constructed for the young chief and his wife under the waggon, and little Lionel, who did not

occupy much space, crept into his corner on the top of the cargo beneath the tilt.

Before lying down Hendricks took a turn round the camp to ascertain that the guards were properly posted and on the watch. This precaution his friend did not appear to have considered necessary, a single Hottentot alone being left to watch the cattle. The night was calm and clear, enabling him to see a considerable distance both up and down the valley.

No sounds broke the silence, and if there were lions or other wild animals in the neighbourhood, they did not make themselves audible. Satisfied that all was right, he at length got into his usual berth, and was soon fast asleep.

Chapter Three.

Lost and found.

Hendricks was awakened by the voice of Maloney shouting—

“Do you know what has become of my son Denis? The boy is not in his berth, and none of my people can tell where he has gone. They all declare that they did not see him leave the camp, and though I have been shouting to him for the last ten minutes, he has not replied to me.”

The hunter, springing out of the waggon, answered—

“As I have been fast asleep I cannot tell you, but the chances are that he has taken his gun to show his skill as a sportsman, and hopes to bring back a pallah or springboc for breakfast. We must ascertain in what direction he has gone. Perhaps some of my Hottentots who went down with the oxen to the stream may have seen him.”

Neither of the Hottentots, however, could give any account of the missing boy. The men who had been on guard were also questioned, but none of them had seen him, and from the answers they gave it seemed more than probable that they had been nodding at their posts. One of them at last acknowledged that he had caught sight of a figure, just before daybreak, some little distance from the camp, going to the northward.

Further search was made, and Denis not appearing, his father and Hendricks determined to set off in quest of him, in the direction he was supposed to have gone, leaving orders with their followers to get breakfast ready and to prepare for inspanning directly they returned.

“I fancy that my first suspicions are correct, and that your boy wants to prove how able he is to accompany you,” observed the latter. “If he appears loaded with venison, it will be difficult to persuade him to the contrary.”

“Faith! the young rascal has spirit enough, but his strength is not equal to it,” answered Maloney. “If I take him with me, he’ll be getting into mischief; whether, therefore, he appears loaded with venison or empty handed, nolens volens, I’ll send him back with you.”

While they were speaking, the sound of footsteps was heard coming up behind them. They both turned expecting to see Master Denis; but instead, little Unozingli the white boy, or Lionel, as Hendricks called him, came running up to them.

“What brings you after us, boy?” asked Hendricks in Zulu.

“To help the masters find my white brother,” answered the boy. “I know the way he has taken, for I saw his footsteps on the grass, though the master may not have discovered them. We shall find him in time, but he may already be some distance away.”

“I will trust you, boy, and am glad you came,” said Hendricks. “But how is it you are so confident of finding him?”

“Because I have often gone out with my Zulu masters to search for game, and sometimes to follow their enemies, and I know the signs on the ground which guided them. Here the grass pressed, there a twig broken off, or a stone moved, or the mark of feet on the sand or soft earth.”

“You understand what is wanted, I see. Come with us,” said Hendricks. Then turning to his companion, he added, “The boy’s wits have been sharpened by his life with the blacks. I have always noted that when a white man has the same necessity for acquiring knowledge as savages, he always surpasses them. In course of time, had that boy continued with the Zulus, he would have become a great chief among them, and would probably have made himself a terror to the settlers, had any cause of quarrel arisen. It’s an ill wind that blows no one good, and it’s fortunate for him as well as for the settlers, that the kraal was destroyed and that he was liberated.”

The boy, on obtaining permission to accompany his new friends, immediately took the lead, with his eyes fixed on the ground, at a pace with which they found it somewhat difficult at times to keep up. The trail, or as the Dutch call it, the spoor, when an animal is being tracked, must have been remarkably clear to the eyes of the little fellow; for he did not hesitate a moment, though the white men, with all their experience as hunters, were unable to distinguish any of the marks by which he was guided. Several animals were seen as they went along. Now a buffalo would dash out of a thicket, and go rushing at a rapid rate across their path. Now a herd of peewas were caught sight of, making their way towards the stream to take their morning draught. Presently a flock of Guinea fowl would rise from the tangled underwood, and fly hither and thither, filling the air with their discordant notes. Then suddenly a white rhinoceros would appear strolling along, until, seeing the strangers, he would break into a gallop similar to that of a well-bred horse; notwithstanding his heavy body, showing a splendid action, with his head well up, and moving at a pace few horses could rival. But these occurrences did not for a moment draw off the boy’s attention. The heat as the

sun rose became excessive, beating down with a force which only those accustomed to the wilds of Africa could have borne without complaining.

After going a considerable distance the boy stopped and examined the ground. What was the horror of Hendricks and Maloney to see the grass stained with blood! It was too probably that of Denis.

"The poor boy must have been struck down by a lion, and has been carried off into the thicket," exclaimed his father.

"I am not so sure of that," answered Hendricks. "What is it, Unozingli?"

"The white boy shot a pallah, which galloped off away out there, and he followed," answered the little fellow, pointing to the north. "We shall find him before long. He thought to get another shot, but he had little chance of that."

Scarcely had he spoken when a roar was heard coming from the direction towards which he pointed. He looked anxious; it was the voice, undoubtedly, of a lion.

"Come on!" he said; "but be ready to fire."

Presently another roar was heard, but this time there were the voices of two lions—the sound, however, came from a considerable distance. The hunters pressed on. They were too well accustomed to encounter the monarch of the wilds under ordinary circumstances to have any feeling of alarm for themselves, but they became intensely anxious about Denis; still it was not likely that the lions would be roaring had they seized him. They hurried on even faster than before, though they had several times to turn aside to avoid the thorny thickets in their path, through which even their young guide did not attempt to make his way. The sounds grew louder and louder. They were approaching the spot where the lions would be discovered. For their own safety it was necessary to be cautious. Their great hope was that Denis had turned aside, and that the beasts were roaring over the body of the wounded pallah which they had brought down. Still Lionel, though he slackened his pace, did not hesitate, but went on, his eyes peering about in every direction. He seemed to place perfect reliance on the power of his companions' firearms. For some time the roaring ceased. Could the brutes have gone off, or were they watching the approach of the strangers? Suddenly three lion cubs burst out from a thicket. Maloney was instinctively about to fire, but Hendricks stopped him. "Take care! the old ones are not far off. Those little brutes were sent out by the lion and lioness to watch us."

As he said this, the cubs, turning round, galloped off to the left up the hill. Cautiously the hunters advanced. It was well they did so, for scarcely had they gone fifty paces more when a lion and lioness suddenly bounded out with rapid strides, their heads and tails up.

"You take the lioness, I'll take the lion," said Hendricks calmly, while the boy, showing no signs of fear, stepped behind his friends. All at once the lion stopped, then gazing a moment at the intruders, galloped off after the cubs, but the lioness still came bounding on. Hendricks on this refrained from pulling his trigger. Maloney fired, the ball struck the savage animal in the neck, but notwithstanding on she came towards him, and in another instant would probably have laid him low on the ground with a blow from her powerful paw. It was fortunate that Hendricks had not thrown his shot away. He stood as firm as a rock, and raising his rifle aimed at the lioness's chest. She made one bound into the air, and fell close to his feet. She was still not dead, and he, grasping the boy by the arm, sprang to a distance on one side while Maloney leapt to the other. She made several efforts to reach them, crawling along for some distance on the ground, but in vain attempted to rise, and after giving a few convulsive struggles, she fell over on her side dead.

"My poor boy, my poor boy! If he has encountered those brutes, what chance of escape can he have had?" exclaimed Maloney.

"We'll hope for the best. Come on," was the answer. And not stopping, as they would otherwise have done, to skin the lioness, they hurried forward, led by their young guide.

"He's not far off, he has not been killed," he said, in answer to a question Hendricks put to him.

Presently a shout reached their ears, and looking up, there, to their intense relief, they saw Master Denis seated amidst the branches of a tree, well out of reach of the lions. Below it lay his gun.

"Have you settled the brutes?" he shouted out. "I'm glad you have come, for I'm desperately hungry. They seemed inclined to keep me here all day. If I hadn't had to leave my gun on the ground, I should soon have driven them away. I saw the brutes just in time to scramble up here."

"You may thank heaven that you were not torn to pieces by them," said Hendricks.

"Come down, Denis," cried his father, thankful that he had escaped, and too glad to find fault with him just then.

The boy made his way down, but would have fallen on reaching the ground, had not his father caught him. He looked paler even than on the previous evening, but that was not surprising, considering the alarm he had been in, and that he had had no breakfast. It was important that they should get back to the camp as soon as possible, and the two hunters, each taking an arm, helped him along, for by himself it was very evident that he would have been unable to walk even a short distance.

"You have given us a pretty fright, Denis," said his father. "What made you take it into your head to start off alone from the camp, without letting any one know where you were going?"

"Faith! for the sake of showing you what I could do," answered Denis. "Besides, I just honestly confess that I thought you would have inspanned and come along this way, when I hoped you would not have refused to take me with you."

"I thought as much, but you've gained nothing by the move," observed his father. "You have shown me more clearly than before that you are utterly unfit to go through the fatigues of a hunter's life. You'll just take advantage of the kind offer of our friend here, and go back with him to Maritzburg."

Poor Denis looked very crestfallen, but said nothing, for he did not feel just then well able to enter into a controversy with any one. Indeed, he was growing weaker and weaker, and it seemed more than probable that he would be unable to get back to the camp unless he was carried. Little Lionel had picked up his gun, and was staggering ahead with it over his shoulders. He kept his eyes looking about him as if on the watch for something or other. Presently he cried out in Zulu, "Be on your guard, white chief. See, see! there they come!" and Hendricks caught sight of the lion, followed at a distance by the cubs, stealing down the hill towards the spot where the lioness had been shot. He kept his eye on the animal, to watch its movements. Both he and Maloney had loaded with ball, and they now halted until the lion came within range of their weapons.

The brute moved slowly on, and then suddenly sitting up on its haunches, surveyed them at a distance.

"The lion has no stomach for a fight. We may go on," said Hendricks. They walked on supporting Denis, while the boy kept close to their side until they had passed the body of the lioness, the lion all the time retaining its position, conscious probably that its duties were to protect its cubs. They went on and on until they got out of sight of the lion, which, when they last saw it, had not moved from its post. Very frequently, however, Hendricks looked back to ascertain whether the animal was following them. "After all, they are cowardly brutes," he observed. "They will seldom attack a man when they see he is prepared for them, unless hard pressed by hunger. I have never found them otherwise."

A rhinoceros, a panther, and several deer were seen, but they had no further interruptions to their progress, and at length the camp was reached. They found breakfast ready for them. From the appearance of Denis, who scarcely ate a morsel, it was more than ever evident that he would be unable to accompany his father. It was doubtful indeed whether he would be able to start with Hendricks the following morning, unless room could be found for him in the waggon. In the meantime a bed was made up for him in the shade beneath it, consisting of a blanket and kaross, the latter being a robe composed of jackal skins sewn together. Hendricks, although anxious to get to Maritzburg, agreed to wait until the following morning, when it was hoped that Denis would be able to sit his horse, and benefit by the fresh air of the early day.

His father was very grateful to their friend for his kindness.

"Don't talk about it," answered the sturdy hunter. "Our oxen will benefit by having another day's rest and good feeding, which neither yours nor mine are likely to obtain for some time to come; for when once I inspan, I shall let nothing stop me until I get to the end of my journey, and you, of course, will have to traverse the barren country I lately passed over."

The young chief, however, showed great impatience at the delay. He evidently feared that his countrymen would discover him and drag him from the protection of the English. He expressed this idea to Hendricks.

"They will have to fight pretty hard to do that, and you must not be slow to defend yourselves," observed the hunter.

The black chief flourished his assegai with a fierce look. "Mangaleesu has shown what he can do, and he will not yield while life lasts," he exclaimed.

"Those who are ready to fight for themselves merit assistance," observed the hunter. "Rest assured, we will not deliver you up."

During the hot hours of the day the Kaffir and Hottentot servants lay about in whatever shade could be found, some smoking, others spinning interminable yarns, but the larger number passing the time fast asleep, stretched on the ground with a few boughs or pieces of blanket over their heads. Occasionally the Hottentots were roused up to take their turn in watching the cattle, on which, even during the day, it was necessary to keep a bright look-out lest a lion might pounce down upon them, or a black rhinoceros charge into their midst and put them to flight. At length Hendricks called out the hunters, and sent them in search of game. While they took one direction, he himself, with Maloney, accompanied by Umgolo, proceeded higher up the mountain-side, his object being to discover if there was any more practicable route than the one by which the latter had come, as also to ascertain if there were any native kraals in the neighbourhood. The summit of the hill was soon reached.

"It is as I thought," said Maloney, after they had surveyed the country. "You'll not find a better road to the east or west, bad as it is; if you make the attempt, you'll very likely get out of the frying-pan into the fire."

On either side were seen a succession of tree-covered heights, through which no waggon could force its way, unless preceded by a party of pioneers to cut down the trees and bridge the ravines. In the far distance were a few kraals with open spaces marking the mealy grounds of the inhabitants, but in other respects the whole country was a perfect wilderness.

As they were descending they caught sight of a graceful animal which at that moment had leapt on a rock not far from them. In colour and appearance it resembled the common roe, but was considerably smaller. On seeing the strangers, it was on the point of turning to escape, when Hendricks, raising his gun in a moment to his shoulder, fired, and the little klipspringer fell from the projecting rock on which it was standing, down on the smooth side of the hill, where it lay motionless. The klipspringer is one of the most active of antelopes, differing from others of its species in having small hoofs and somewhat short legs for its size, thus adapting it to its roaming mountainous life, while the hair is so loose in the skin, that even in the short distance the animal just shot had fallen, a considerable part had been knocked off. Umgolo at once shouldered it, and without difficulty carried it off to the camp. Had it been a load of any other description, he would have declined to demean himself by lifting it on his shoulders. On their way

back, the hunters shot several dassi, or rock rabbits, which thus paid the penalty of their curiosity as they came out of their holes to look at the passers-by. Their flesh, although not so highly flavoured, was more likely to prove tender than that of larger game, and they were thus an acceptable addition to the store of meat.

Poor Denis made his appearance at supper-time, somewhat revived by a long sleep. Although he tried to be cheerful, and declared that he was fit for anything, it was still very evident that he would be unable to accompany his father.

Except that there was a continual serenade of hyenas and jackals, with the occasional low mutterings of lions in the distance, the night passed quietly by. Before dawn the next morning both camps were astir. After a hurried breakfast the oxen were inspanned, and Denis was placed in the homeward-bound waggon. His father having taken leave of him, and parted from Hendricks with a hearty shake of the hand, the two vehicles commenced their journeys in opposite directions. Mangaleesu and Kalinda walked together close to the waggon, and it had been arranged that should any natives appear, she was to get inside, while the young chief, who had put off the insignia of his rank, and was dressed like one of the other natives, would then, it was hoped, pass without discovery. Little Lionel, whose wound was slighter than at first supposed, and who seemed to look upon it as a mere scratch, some times trotted alongside them, and at others clambered up by the side of the driver, to whom he took an especial fancy. Denis frequently called him to sit in the corner at the other end of the waggon, and amused himself by trying to teach him English, which the boy acquired with wonderful rapidity, it being scarcely ever necessary to tell him twice the name of a thing.

"I'm sure the little chap is English," said Denis to Hendricks, when they outspanned for the night. "Had his parents been Dutch, he would not have recollected the names of things so uncommonly fast as he does. When I put my hand to my head, and said head, he immediately repeated the word after me, and when I asked him again ten minutes afterwards he had not forgotten it. When I touched my cap, without telling him the name, he at once said 'cap.' If he goes on at that rate, he'll be able to talk English before we get to Maritzburg, and I shouldn't be surprised if he will then be able to give us a more clear account of himself than he has hitherto done."

"That's right, Denis; go on and try to make him talk as much as you can. I have got some books, and you may be able to teach him his letters, and perhaps even to read before the journey is over," said Hendricks. "He is a sharp little fellow, no doubt about that, and will do credit to your instruction."

Denis looked well pleased at this remark. He was flattered at the confidence placed in him, and was thus reconciled to sitting quietly in the waggon all day, instead of mounting his horse. He was really unfit for hard exercise, though, had he not found this employment, he would probably have been restless and discontented, and would have insisted on mounting his horse, and exposing himself to the hot sun.

Day after day the waggon moved on, generally only ten miles were accomplished, frequently even less, and seldom much more, except when the ground was level and hard. Occasionally the men had to put their shoulders to the wheels to help on the oxen where the ground was unusually steep. On these occasions the young chief made himself useful, not disdaining to labour with the other men. He appeared desirous, indeed, of showing his gratitude to Hendricks for the protection afforded him. He still, however, did not seem to be at his ease. Whenever a height was reached, his eye ranged anxiously over the country, as if he expected his enemies to be coming in search of him. Hendricks inquired one day who he supposed was the leader of the attack against the kraal. Was it Cetchwayo? he asked. "No, but Mapeetu, another chief, a great friend of his. He had seen Kalinda, and wished to make her his wife, but she ran from him because she loved me, and she became mine. He knew that he could not get her back, because I kept too strict a watch over her, and would never allow her to go out of the kraal without going myself, with a strong party; so in revenge, when one of the king's wives fell ill, he bribed the doctor to declare that I had bewitched her. I heard of this, and so, when the king sent for me, knowing that I should be murdered on the way, I refused to go. Mapeetu was cunning, and appeared to have forgotten all about the matter. This threw me off my guard, or I should have moved with my people and cattle, as soon as our crops had been gathered in, to another part of the country. Thinking that all was secure, I kept no watch at the kraal that night, but the moment I heard the sounds outside, I knew what was about to happen, and resolved to fight, not so much to preserve my own life, as to prevent Kalinda from falling into the power of Mapeetu. Had she been killed, I would have sought him out, and followed him through the country until I had satisfied my revenge."

"I am glad that you both escaped. And now tell me; how are you going to support yourself in Natal?" asked Hendricks.

"Where game is abundant one need never be anxious on that score," answered Mangaleesu. "When I have provided for my wife, I intend to return to Zululand and punish Mapeetu for the slaughter of my people. Cetchwayo will not dare to kill me, for it will be acknowledged that a chief so brave as I have proved myself could not have been guilty of witchcraft. Then, when I have gathered some people round me, and have built another kraal, I will go back for my Kalinda."

Hendricks, though suspecting that the young chief would probably lose his life in endeavouring to carry out his plan, was well aware that to attempt dissuading him from it would be useless; he therefore simply observed, "You have a good many things to do first, and perhaps you will not find it as easy as you suppose to obtain a livelihood in Natal."

The chief looked somewhat disconcerted at this remark, but the next moment drawing himself up proudly, he answered—

"Mangaleesu's strong arm and rifle will supply him and his wife with all their wants. The Zulus are not like you white men, they can live where you would starve."

"You are a brave young man, but you have no rifle and ammunition to begin with," said Hendricks. "However, I will supply you, and will purchase the skins you bring me at a fair price. In that way, if you hunt diligently, you will be

able to support yourself and your wife."

The chief appeared well pleased with this arrangement, and did not for the remainder of the journey again talk of returning to Zululand to revenge himself on his enemies. When the waggon was passing in the neighbourhood of kraals, the natives on several occasions paid Hendricks a visit, supposing that he had come to trade with them; but, as his goods were exhausted, and his waggon already fully loaded, he told them that he could do no business, and they soon again took their departure. None of them appeared to recognise Mangaleesu, and as Kalinda always cautiously crept inside she was not seen. It was therefore hoped that Mapeetu had no suspicion of how the young chief and his bride had escaped, and that the party ran no risk of being molested. Several not very important adventures were met with. Game, which was everywhere abundant, was killed to supply the travellers with food, and at length descending from the high ground they reached the colony. They had a considerable distance to travel, but all danger from hostile Zulus was over. A journey of about ten days brought them in sight of the high black hills, devoid of a single tree, which bound Maritzburg on the north and north-west. Soon afterwards the town itself appeared, situated on a large knoll or plateau, rising out of a natural basin, and almost surrounded by "little Bushmans" river. Crossing the stream, the waggon passed along a broad road bounded by green hedges of pomegranate, enclosing nicely kept gardens, in which stood neat little whitewashed cottages with verandahs in front, round whose posts were twined beautiful and luxurious creepers. By the side of the water-courses by which the gardens were irrigated, coming from the main stream, grew weeping willows and lilac trees, with several other water-loving and rapidly growing shrubs. The streets of the town were at right angles; the houses uniformly white, few of them being of more than one story, but all looking very neat and clean, as did the streets themselves, with channels of clear water flowing on either side, affording the inhabitants an abundant supply for all their wants. Indeed, it could not but be acknowledged that the site of Pieter Maritzburg had been admirably chosen for a colonial town.

Hendricks having outspanned in an open place at the entrance of the town, left Umgolo to look after the waggon, and took Denis and Lionel to dispose of them as he had arranged. Denis was kindly received by his uncle, who, thanking Hendricks for having brought him back, promised to give him employment until his father should come or send for him. Denis seemed very sorry to part from Lionel, who had been so long his pupil.

"Don't you be after forgetting all I have taught you, Lionel," he said.

"No fear, me no forget," answered Lionel, laughing. "Soon talkee English well as Den 'self."

The little fellow, as he walked alongside his tall friend, gazed with astonishment at all he saw, and when he came near the public buildings—which though unpretending edifices enough, were of gigantic size compared with any structures he had seen—he opened his eyes and inquired how men could ever manage to put them together.

Mr Hendricks led him through the town, until they reached a neat little cottage standing in a nicely kept garden surrounded by a pomegranate hedge, and full of gay flowers. In front of the house was a porch, round the posts of which were trained several luxuriant creepers, so as to hang in festoons from the roof. The floor was paved with Dutch tiles, kept as polished and clean as a dinner-table.

As they entered through the wicket gate, a fair, portly-looking dame, of a comely and cheerful countenance, her white cap concealing her smooth light hair, appeared at the door.

"What, do my eyes deceive me? or do I really see my dear brother safe and sound in limb and body?" she exclaimed, sticking her knitting-needles and balls of cotton into one of her ample pockets, ready for the affectionate embrace she was prepared to give and receive.

"Yes, indeed, you see me as strong and hearty as ever, and richer than I have been since I first started off from home as a younker, with a pack at my back and a rifle in my hand. Never have I made a more successful trip; for I have returned with the waggon so loaded that I sometimes feared the stout wheels would give way under the weight they carried."

"What young stranger have you brought here?" asked the dame, after the first salutations were over. "A fine little child, by my troth!"

Hendricks briefly described how Lionel had come into his hands. "And I want you, my good sister, to take charge of him, and bring him up, until by some means we may discover his parents. He will repay your trouble if I judge rightly of his disposition; and although he has no large amount of English at his command at present, he will soon chatter away fast enough to afford you plenty of amusement."

Kind Mistress Jansen, taking the boy by the hand, and drawing him towards her, answered, "That I'll do with all my heart, and we shall be good friends at once, shall we not, my boy?"

The little fellow did not answer, but looked up at Hendricks as if asking him to reply. The hunter spoke a few words in Zulu, on hearing which the child's eye brightened.

"I have told him that you will be a mother to him Susannah, and he seems well pleased at the thought."

That matter being settled, the hunter having taken a cup of tea with his good sister, and enjoyed a little further conversation, left his young *protégé* with her, and returned to where his waggon and followers were encamped to make arrangements for the disposal of his cargo. Finding, however, that it would be well worth his while to proceed to D'Urban, he the following day set off for that town, to dispose of the produce of his hunting, and to procure fresh goods for his next journey. According to his promise, he made a present of a good rifle and stock of ammunition to the young chief Mangaleesu, giving him authority to procure a further supply of powder and shot when that was exhausted.

Lionel was soon perfectly at home with Mistress Jansen. He showed an amiable disposition, and willingly obeyed her, but at the same time she discovered that he had several savage habits and customs to be cured of. Young as he was, he showed a fearless and independent spirit, but she endeavoured by kind and judicious treatment to keep him in good order. He paid almost a daily visit to Denis Maloney to be taught his lessons; but Mistress Jansen took upon herself to give him instruction in religious truth, of which very naturally he was totally ignorant. He had no idea that there was a God in heaven, or how the world had been formed, or of a future state, and it was some time before he could comprehend the plan of salvation, while he exhibited a woeful ignorance of what was right and wrong. Had he been older, the task of instructing him would have been more difficult, but as it was, his mind in most respects was a perfect blank. He was ready enough, however, to receive the impression his kind instructress endeavoured to make. As he gained knowledge himself, he felt very anxious to impart it to Mangaleesu, who had built a hut on the nearest piece of wild land he could find to the town. Here he lived with the independence of a Zulu chief and gentleman, his wife attending to household affairs of a very primitive description, while he, gun in hand, hunted through the neighbourhood, and never failed to obtain an ample supply of food. The agent of Hendricks also was always ready to make advances on the skins of the animals and the feathers of the birds he shot, which afforded him and his wife all the other necessaries of life. Though he listened to what Lionel had to say, he had always a ready answer to excuse himself for not following his advice. At the same time he assured the boy that he should be very glad to see him whenever he would come to pay him a visit. By this means Lionel kept up his knowledge of the Zulu language, which there would have been a risk of his forgetting while he was acquiring that of English.

When his guardian returned from D'Urban, he was greatly surprised at his proficiency, not only in speaking, but in general knowledge.

"If you continue as you have begun, Lionel, you will soon be able to accompany me on my journeys, and make yourself very useful in a variety of ways," he said.

"Then I'll make great haste," answered Lionel. "I'll go with you as soon as you will take me, and learn how to shoot lions and elephants, and Zulus too, if they try to treat us as they did the people in Mangaleesu's kraal."

Lionel had still need of further religious instruction, as his last remark showed, and good Mistress Jansen endeavoured to give it by teaching him "to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us."

Chapter Four.

A journey northward.

What the camel is in Northern Africa—the ship of the desert—so may be considered the waggon in the southern part of the dark continent. It may be likened indeed to a huge, deeply laden merchantman, steadily making her way amid the rolling waves of the ocean.

Some time had passed, not reckoned by months only, but by years, since the events narrated in the previous chapters occurred, when one of those lumbering vehicles, dragged by a span of fourteen sturdy oxen, was rolling along through the eastern part of Natal towards the Zulu border.

A short distance ahead rode our old friend Hendricks the hunter, scarcely changed since we first knew him, except that his beard might have become slightly more grizzled, and that here and there a wrinkle had deepened on his open countenance. Occasionally a shade of melancholy passed over it, as he spoke to a companion who rode at his side on a light, active little horse.

"It was His will who rules all things, Lionel, to take her; but I would rather you had remained some time longer under her fostering care, instead of commencing the rough life you will have to lead with me. But she has done you justice. You are better fitted morally and physically for what you may have to go through, than I might have ventured to hope. You will be of great service to me, as I can rely on you in a way I cannot even on Umgolo, or certainly on the rest of our Kaffir and Hottentot servants."

"Thank you, uncle, for your good opinion of me," answered Lionel, who had learnt to call his kind protectress, Mrs Jansen, by the name of aunt, and very naturally in consequence addressed her brother, the hunter, as uncle. "I will do my best to show my gratitude to you, and to Aunt Susannah for all her kindness to me. Though I shall never see her again, I cannot help fancying that she will know what I am about. It was a sad day when she was taken from us so suddenly, and I thought I should have broken my heart if you had not arrived. I was so happy with her, that I never wished to be away, though I used to like going out with Mangaleesu, and shooting with the little fowling-piece you gave me, as long as he lived in the neighbourhood. Did you know that a short time ago he and his wife disappeared without saying where they were going? When I last went to see them, what was my dismay to find their hut burnt to the ground! At first I was afraid that they had been murdered; but Denis Maloney, who accompanied me the next morning, and I could discover no remains of anything belonging to them, and he is of opinion that they had some reason for going off. If they hadn't been in a desperate hurry, they would, I am sure, have come to bid us good-bye."

"I have no doubt that Mangaleesu was summoned by a superior chief to whom he owes allegiance for some special object—probably to take part in an attack on another chief. We shall hear about it when we get into Zululand," replied Hendricks. "You were speaking just now of young Maloney. I am glad to hear so good an account of him; he appears to have acted the part of a true friend to you."

"Indeed he has, and I am much obliged to him. It was fortunate for me that he remained in Maritzburg so long, for he taught me a great many of the things I know. Still he declares that he hates books, and would a hundred times rather be shooting elephants and lions than studying. Poor fellow! he has become very anxious about his father. Still he

does not give him up, though everybody else in the town thinks he is dead.”

“I do not agree with them, though I confess that I am very anxious about my old friend,” answered Hendricks; “I still hope that he pushed, as I know he intended doing, far away to the northward, and that though he may probably have got into difficulties, he has escaped with his life. I think it very likely, however, that he has lost his waggon and servants, or he would have managed to communicate with me during my last long trip. I made every possible inquiry, and sent out messengers in all directions; but could hear nothing of him. It is strange that he should have so totally disappeared, without leaving any trace to show the direction he took. I am inclined to believe that he was entrapped by some treacherous chief or by some rebel boers who have often vowed that they would allow no Englishman to come near the territory they claim.”

While Hendricks was speaking, Denis Maloney, now a well-grown lad, rode up. He had previously been forming one of a party of three following the waggon at a little distance. All traces of sickness had disappeared, his muscles were well knit, and his countenance bronzed by the heat of the sun to which he had been exposed during a trading expedition dispatched by his uncle into Zululand. He had gone in the capacity of clerk or accountant to the leader of the expedition, his duties being similar to those of a supercargo on board ship. He had acquitted himself in the most satisfactory manner, and had thus gained experience both as a hunter and a trader. His uncle was so much pleased that he promised before long to fit him out with a waggon and team on his own account, that he might try his fortune in trading, chiefly for cattle, among the Zulus.

“Mr Crawford and young Broderick asked me to come on and inquire when we are likely to outspan, for they complain that they are both hungry and tired, as they are not well accustomed to our style of travelling,” he said, addressing their leader.

“Tell them we shall camp in an hour or in less time perhaps; and if they can’t hold out, do you get some biscuits from a box in the hinder part of the waggon,” answered Hendricks.

Young Lionel was inclined to feel something like contempt for those so much older than himself, who were not ashamed to acknowledge that they were hungry and tired after travelling somewhat under twenty miles in a broiling sun. Denis, who had, it must be confessed, spoken one word for them and two for himself, soon got out the biscuits, and keeping a portion, distributed the rest between his two companions. One of them, Percy Broderick, was a lad about his own age, fair and good-looking, and well-grown, not having the appearance, however, of a person particularly well fitted for a life in the wilderness. The other, Harry Crawford, though much older, looked at the first glance still less fitted for roughing it. Not that he wanted breadth of shoulders, strong muscles, or stout limbs; but that his countenance betokened intellect and refinement, rather than firmness, resolution, and the other qualities requisite for a person who has to go through the hardships of a settler’s existence.

“Faith! I wonder what brought you two fellows out here, and I doubt much whether you’ll like the country now you have come. It’s a mighty fine one, there’s no doubt about that, for those who have a fancy for a wild life, and shooting rhinoceroses and buffaloes, not to speak of elephants and lions,” exclaimed Denis. He had as yet had but little conversation with his fellow-travellers, they having only that morning joined the waggon party from a farm at which they had been staying. All Denis knew was that they had come out together from England, and were now bound in the same direction.

“As to that, I was born in the colony, and have only come back to my native land,” answered Percy. “Haven’t you heard of my father, Captain Broderick, who is settled at Falls Farm on the borders of the Transvaal country? I suppose I can endure what my father and mother, and my brothers and sisters have to go through, and I shall soon get accustomed to it. I can’t say I know much about it at present, as I was sent to school in the old country, when I was a very little chap under the charge of an uncle, with whom I spent my holidays, and who looked after me all the time I was in England; but he died some months ago, and as my father could not send money to pay for my schooling, I was shipped off to return home, and Mr Piatt, the owner of the Cloof Farm, where we were staying, was good enough to ask your friend Mr Hendricks to let us accompany him as far as we were going, as he said that he expected to pass close to my father’s house.”

“You are very fortunate to find so good a man to travel with,” said Denis. “He is the most noted hunter in the whole colony, and a capital fellow besides.”

“I was much pleased with him,” remarked Crawford, “and should greatly like to accompany him throughout the whole of the expedition; but as I came out to farm, I must lose no time in endeavouring to learn. Half a year ago I had no notion of doing such a thing. I was at Oxford, intending to become a barrister; but the small fortune I expected to inherit disappeared, and as it might be several years before I could obtain a brief, I thought the wisest thing I could do with the remainder of my possessions was to come out to this country, of which I had heard glowing accounts. I cannot say exactly that I am disappointed; but were I to purchase a farm, and attempt to commence operations by myself, I should feel remarkably like a fish out of water, for I confess I have not the slightest idea what I should do.”

“Faith! there are a good many young gentlemen like you, Mr Crawford,” observed Denis, “only they haven’t the wisdom to keep their money in a bank while they are learning something about the business they wish to engage in. In most instances they are so eager to begin, that they buy land, and very soon find all their money gone, long before their crops have grown, or what they have laid out in other ways has given them any return. When I was in the office of my uncle, Mr Walker, in Maritzburg, numbers of young gentlemen used to come and ask for employment, just for their food and lodging. Those who have friends at home who can pay their passage money return, others have to turn their hands to digging and delving, or road making, though a few occasionally get to the surface. Now if they, as I was saying, had kept their money, and begun by working on a farm, either for wages or even for nothing, they would have been able in time to set up for themselves.”

“As to that, I must not boast too much of my wisdom,” answered Crawford. “My capital hasn’t yet been sent out to

the colony, so that I could not invest it even if I wished to do so. Percy assures me that I shall receive a warm welcome from his family, and that I may besides have an opportunity of seeing how farming operations are carried on. He tells me also that I shall obtain an easy introduction to every description of wild beast: elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, gnus, black and brindled, blesbocks, hartebeests, reitbocks, not to speak of others of smaller size, and birds innumerable."

"Faith! you'll not find any want of them, but you'll remember it's not always pleasant to meet a lion or a black rhinoceros in a morning's ramble, and you will have reason to be thankful if you don't, for I can assure you that they're rather troublesome acquaintances. I came to that opinion not many years ago, when I had to spend some hours up a tree, waiting for my breakfast, while a couple of lions and their cubs were watching below, eager to breakfast off me;" and Denis told, with much *naïveté*, his adventure on his first journey with his father.

Besides the white persons who have been mentioned, the waggon party consisted of three Hottentots, whose duty was to drive and attend especially to the cattle; and six Kaffir hunters, among whom Umgolo was the chief. Hendricks intended to obtain others who had before served under him on the way. There were three spare horses, which followed the waggon, fastened by riems or thongs of hide, the general substitute for rope in the colony. Five dogs may also be counted as forming part of the expedition, rejoicing in the names of Spout, Growl, Pincher, Fangs, and Raff. The latter belonged to Denis, who so called the animal after the name of a countryman, Paddy Rafferty, who had given it to him. The "baste," he boasted, did credit to the "ould country:" for although no beauty, he was the cleverest and bravest of all the dogs, and much attached to him.

Each of the fourteen oxen had a Dutch name, to which it answered, well knowing when the driver shouted out, that if it did not exert itself, it would presently feel the effects of his long whip on its hide.

Travelling in Africa needs the exercise of a large amount of patience. Even when the ground is level, the huge machine moves leisurely along; but when rough hills have to be surmounted, the progress is still slower.

The "trek," as the day's journey is called, had been far from a pleasant one. A dry scorching wind blew in the faces of the travellers, while the country presented a vast stony plain, burned and arid, with here and there a few small round hills breaking the line of the horizon. Harry Crawford and Percy looked about them with dismay.

"I hope the country ahead is not all to be like this," said the former.

"No fear of that," answered Denis. "We shall have, to be sure, a few stony mountains to climb over, and now and then, in parts, it's hard to find a tree, but that's only here and there; for there are forests, and grassy meadows, and streams, and beautiful valleys, such as are to be found in no other part of the world, or, at all events, none superior to them, in my opinion. Look out there ahead, you'll see, just rising above the plain, what I daresay you took to be a cloud, but it is a range of mountains; when we get over them, we shall have fine scenery enough to satisfy you. We shall then meet also with what you fellows from the old country call adventures, but which we out here are so accustomed to that we do not think much about them."

Dreary as was the scenery in other respects, it was enlivened by numberless gorgeous flowers, the beauty of which Harry Crawford was well able to appreciate, although ignorant of the names of most of them.

"We should value these in our hot-houses at home," he said.

"For my part I'd sooner have plenty of green grass," observed Denis, "and so would the cattle, I've a notion. To say the truth, I've seen so many of these things that I no longer pay any attention to them, although they are mighty fine, I'll acknowledge, now that I come to examine them more particularly."

Percy, who admired the flowers as much as his friend did, every now and then got off his horse to pick some of them, until he had collected a large bouquet, greatly to the amusement of Denis.

"Take care, my boy, not to catch hold of the tail of a puff adder," he exclaimed, as Percy again dismounted. "They are pretty numerous hereabouts, and you may chance to put your hand close to one of their holes while you are picking those flowers."

Percy, without making any remark, threw himself into his saddle again, satisfied with the collection he had already made.

As they advanced the country improved. They passed the ruins of several farms, the owners of which had "trekked" to the Transvaal republic.

Hour after hour the waggon proceeded on through the same monotonous style of country, until towards evening, no other more convenient spot being found, a halt was called near one of the mounds which have been described, and close by which ran a small "spruit," or stream, affording the weary oxen sufficient water to quench their thirst. As no trees or shrubs grew near, a quantity of dry dung was collected to serve as fuel. This, when once lighted, threw out an intense heat, quickly boiling all the pots placed over it; but as it produced little or no flame, it was not so well calculated to serve as a watch fire to scare away wild beasts as one formed of wood. It was necessary, therefore, to keep a stricter watch than usual at night, lest a lion might visit the camp with the intention of making a feast off one of the oxen or horses.

While the party were seated at supper, Denis amused himself by telling all sorts of terrible tales of the way a lion had occasionally leapt into a camp and carried off a man before his companions had time to rescue him.

"Come, Denis, don't be trying to frighten our young friends with your wonderful stories, and to make them wish that they were out of the country again," said Hendricks. "The lion is not so very formidable a beast, after all. I've never

been troubled by one in my camp, although I have not unfrequently had half a dozen roaring round it at night; but then I have always kept up a good fire, and had men on the watch, ready to shoot the brutes, should they come near; so their instinct, I fancy, has told them that it would be prudent to keep at a distance."

The horses had been knee-haltered, the usual way of securing them from straying, and had been turned out with the cattle to pick up as much sustenance as they could obtain from the withered grass, with one of the Hottentot boys, old Dos, to watch them. The Hottentots, like postillions, are always boys to the end of their days. Dos, though near sixty, was so small and wiry, that at a little distance he might have been mistaken for a boy.

As Hendricks intended to start at daylight, he ordered all hands to lie down at an early hour, and obtain as much rest as they could, with the hard ground for their beds, and the starry heavens overhead. A piece of canvas let down from the side of the waggon served somewhat to screen the young Englishmen—who were supposed to be more luxuriously inclined than the rest of the party—from the chilly night air, while the mound also contributed to protect the camp.

Denis and Lionel did not disdain to creep in beside them, while Hendricks occupied his usual berth inside his waggon. In a few minutes all voices were hushed, but though Crawford and Percy did not speak, the strangeness of the scene prevented them from going to sleep. Some time had passed, and they were at length beginning to get a little drowsy, when they were startled by a terrific roar, which seemed to come almost from above them. Starting up, and knocking their heads against the bottom of the waggon as they did so, in a very unpleasant fashion, they scrambled out from their sleeping-place, their impulse being to meet the danger, whatever it might be, on their feet, and to look about them. They were followed by Denis and Lionel, who had naturally been awakened by the roaring.

"What is it? Where is it?" asked Percy Broderick.

"Look there," answered Denis, pointing to the top of the mound, where, in the dim light, the outlines could be seen clearly defined against the sky, of two lions. The monsters, placing their heads to the ground, again sent forth a roar, which sounded fearfully loud in the silent night air. The hideous uproar they made at length aroused Hendricks, who, turning out of his berth, seized his gun, ever ready at hand, and stepped a few paces from the camp towards them. The rest of the men in camp had sprung to their feet, and held their rifles ready for instant action, while the dogs, rushing to the front, continued barking in varied tones, though they showed no inclination to venture beyond the protection of their masters. The lions, however, did not advance, but continued standing in the position in which they had at first been seen, contenting themselves with uttering an occasional roar, as if to terrify the occupants before making a final rush into their midst. The hunters, however, were too well accustomed to encounters with lions to be alarmed, let them roar ever so loudly; still a fight with a couple at night would not be free of danger, should either of them be wounded and not killed outright. It would indeed be no easy matter to bring them down at the distance they were off.

"We must send these brutes away, or they'll give us no time for sleep," said Hendricks, and he summoned Umgolo and another experienced hunter to his side. Ordering the other men to keep back the dogs, he slowly advanced with his two companions towards the foot of the mound. Denis and Lionel, who was well able to use the small rifle his friend had procured for him, with Percy and Crawford, kept behind as a reserve, but Hendricks had ordered them on no account to fire, unless by chance the lions should break through and come down upon them.

Slowly the hunters advanced up the mound: the lions, however, not appearing to have noticed them, continued roaring as loudly as before, till suddenly they seemed to become aware that enemies were at hand, when, instead of springing boldly forward, Percy and his companions, to their astonishment, saw them retiring as cowardly dogs are apt to do after barking, then finally turning round, they trotted off until they were lost to sight at the other side of the mound.

"The brutes often prove poltroons, if courageously met, and so these have shown themselves," exclaimed Denis. "We shall not be troubled again to-night by their sweet voices, though we may hear them in the distance growling and muttering over their disappointment."

In a short time the camp was again quiet, and Denis and Lionel, accustomed to such adventures, quickly went to sleep, but Percy and Crawford could not, as before, close their eyes. Every now and then, as they listened, they heard a low muttering sound coming from a distance.

"What can that curious noise be?" asked Crawford. "I should fancy it was made by deer; I have heard something like it in England."

"I don't fancy any deer would remain in the neighbourhood with a couple of hungry lions roaming about," answered Percy. "Perhaps it is made by monkeys. I'll ask Denis. He was awake a few minutes ago. I say, Denis, what creatures are making those curious sounds? Just listen for a minute." Denis was asleep, but on hearing himself called, awoke in an instant, fancying that something was the matter.

"What curious sounds?" he asked. "Sure I only hear a couple of lions muttering away as the beasts have a fancy for doing at night when they want their suppers, and haven't yet found anything to eat. There now go to sleep, and don't be bothering a fellow by waking him out of his first nap; you'll soon get accustomed to stranger noises than those." And Denis covered his head up again with his blanket.

The rest of the night passed quietly by, but at early dawn there was a great hubbub among the Hottentots and Kaffirs. The horses had disappeared; either the lions had put them to flight in spite of their being knee-haltered, or they had gone in search of greener pastures. Old Dos had not seen them go. He had been herding the cattle, and had taken little note of them, thinking that they could take care of themselves. The consequence was, he and another Hottentot boy, Tan, were sent off in search of them as soon as daylight had increased sufficiently to enable their spoor to be seen. The party had therefore to remain encamped until they were brought back.

"I should have preferred more picturesque scenery to spend the day in. I wonder our leader takes the matter so coolly," observed Crawford.

"It's just this, that he's accustomed to it," answered Denis. "A man who travels in this country must have a vast amount of patience. He must not value time as you do in the old country."

Hendricks, however, did not let his people remain idle. They were employed in repairing or strengthening the harness, cutting thongs, collecting fuel, and doing other odd jobs, while he and Umgolo went out with their guns in search of a pallah or other game. Crawford and his younger companions amused themselves in camp, for the heat was too great to enjoy exercise. Before noon the horses were brought back, and the hunters returning with a springboc, no time was lost in inspanning, and the waggon proceeded on at a faster pace than usual, to make up for lost time. A drift or stream was forded, the waggon sticking as it reached the opposite bank, and much more time was lost in dragging it up, as the oxen obstinately refused to pull all together. In vain the Hottentot boys rushed in among them, endeavouring by soft blandishments to induce them to move. The Kaffirs swore in strange-sounding tones, and Denis flew here and there, poking one, lashing another, hauling at the head of a third, his example being followed by the other Englishmen. Their leader rode forward, merely observing—

"You must make haste, boys, for we have a worse bit than this to cross, and cross it we must, before we outspan for the night."

Scarcely had he disappeared in the distance than the oxen, suddenly pulling together, hauled the waggon out. Denis uttered a loud shout of triumph, and away it went rumbling after them.

The promise of their leader was soon fulfilled. After moving on for three miles or so, the foot of a hill was reached. The driver knowing what was before him urged on the oxen, hoping that by pulling together as they were then doing, he might urge the waggon up without a stop. For the first two-thirds of the way they did very well, but at last coming to a steep pitch, suddenly the whole span stopped, and refused to budge an inch farther. Frantically the driver lashed and lashed, and cracked his whip, the reports resounding like a sharp fire of musketry amid the hills. It was of no avail, and had not two of the men rushed up with two huge masses of rock, which they placed behind the wheels, the waggon would have gone backwards, and dragged the animals after it to the bottom of the hill. In vain the driver shouted and yelled; forward they would not go; but began twisting and turning round in their yokes, some facing one way, some another; some dropping down on their knees, others rolling over with the risk of being strangled by the riems which secured them to the yoke. To Crawford's eye they appeared in a state of confusion, from which it would be impossible to extricate them. The Hottentots shouted, the driver leapt from his box, and with the other boys rushed here and there, uttering yells, shouts, and execrations while they plied their tough waggon whips with a vehemence which brought blood at every stroke from the backs of the obstinate brutes. Now they seized the animals' tails, twisting them round and round, some actually seizing them with their teeth, while they endeavoured to get them back into line, all the time shouting "Juk! juk!" to make them start, or "Om! om!" whenever they wanted them to turn round, generally at the same time hitting them on their noses with the butt ends of their whips. Crawford and Percy could do nothing, but Denis and Lionel exerted themselves fearlessly. At last old Dos, dragging at the leading oxen with a riem, the whole span "trekked" at the same moment, and in a few moments the waggon was again moving forward at a slow pace.

"All our difficulties are not over yet," observed Hendricks to Crawford, as they were walking ahead, leading their horses. "See, there's an ugly spot yonder, which it will require all the skill of old Dos to surmount. I'll leave the drivers, however, to their own resources. If I interfered, they would simply follow my directions, throwing the responsibility upon me, and take no further trouble about the matter. If they get into a fix, I try and get them out of it."

The ugly spot was reached. The path was sufficiently broad for the waggon to pass, but it sloped down to the edge of a steep precipice, not however quite perpendicular, as the tops of tall trees could be seen rising out of its side, but sufficiently steep to cause a waggon to turn over and over, and of a depth which would ensure its being crushed or smashed to fragments when it reached the bottom. The Hottentots gazed at it with uneasy glances. They first examined the harness, to see that all was secure, they then fastened four riems of stout buffalo hide to the side of the waggon opposite to the precipice. The whole of the party were next summoned to lay hold of the other ends of the riems, and the driver fixing himself on his box with his whip ready for action, Dos went ahead, and the waggon started. The ground was of clay, excessively slippery, and the party holding on to the riems and running alongside the waggon, found it no easy matter to keep their feet. Every moment it appeared that the waggon must slip down the steep incline. Lionel and Denis worked as hard as any one, although their united weight did not do much to keep back the heavy vehicle. All the party were slipping, hauling, scrambling along, shouting at the top of their voices, now and then one of them coming down in the mud, but still holding on to the riems. The fear was that the oxen would come to a standstill. So long as they kept moving, the danger was not so great; but there appeared every probability, should the waggon once fetch way, that not only it and the oxen, but the whole party, would be dragged over the precipice. Hendricks, assisted by Crawford, had taken charge of the horses, and rode on ahead, too well accustomed to similar adventures to feel especially anxious about the matter.

"The waggon will get over it," he remarked; "if it does not, it will be provoking; but I always make up my mind for an occasional accident, although on the present occasion I should regret it very much, as it would delay the search for my friend Maloney: for in spite of what others think, I have hopes that he is still alive."

"Denis thinks so too, and frequently alludes to the subject. He could not be as merry as he is if he believed that his father was really lost," remarked Crawford.

Meantime old Dos and the other Hottentots were shouting and shrieking in shrill tones, the Kaffirs roaring in deeper bass, while Denis, Percy, and Lionel were halloing and laughing as they tugged away at the thongs. The oxen, encouraged by the voices of their drivers, were doing their part. The difficult spot, which the Dutch settlers called a

skint path, was passed, and the waggon gained the top of the height, when at some distance a broad river was seen flowing to the southward.

"There is the Tugela; we must cross that to-morrow morning, to get into Zululand," said Hendricks to Crawford. "To-night we must encamp midway between it and the foot of the hill."

The waggon at once began its descent, as there was but little time to spare before darkness came on. The riems were now secured to the hinder part to prevent its slipping down too rapidly in the steeper places. The scenery from the top of the hill was wild and picturesque. Beyond the river lay several cloofs or valleys, containing numerous fine timber trees, and rich in the variety of their foliage and gorgeous flowers. A carpet of green clothed the side and foot of the berg, as well as the borders of the broad river, although the intermediate space was dry and parched by the summer heat.

The waggon reached the bottom of the mountain in safety, and soon afterwards the travellers camped by the side of a small stream flowing down from the berg they had crossed, a thick wood near at hand affording them abundance of fuel.

While the camp was being formed, Hendricks and Umgolo, according to their usual custom, hastened out with their guns, and each before long returned with a klipspringer, which were forthwith cut up and prepared for supper. The abundance of good meat restored the spirits of the Kaffirs and Hottentots, which the toils of the day had somewhat depressed. The night passed without any unusual incident. Lions might have been heard roaring or muttering in the distance, and occasionally the camp was surrounded by musically-inclined jackals or hyenas, but the brutes did not venture near enough to disturb the slumbers of the travellers, and at daylight every one was on foot ready to commence the trek which was to carry them into Zululand.

Chapter Five.

Crossing the Tugela.

The bank of the river was reached. The stream was broad and rapid. Crawford and Percy looked at it with dismay.

"By what means are we to get across?" exclaimed the former.

"I'm sure I can't tell," said Percy. "There's not a ford here, at all events."

"We'll soon show you," said Denis.

The oxen were outspanned, and while the Hottentots began unloading the waggon, the Kaffirs, headed by their leader, went along the river, and cut down a number of poles of a soft buoyant wood. These they immediately began to form into a couple of rafts. The waggon being unloaded, was next rapidly taken to pieces, and the wheels lashed together, while the upper sides and pole being removed, the rest of the vehicle formed a strong and substantial raft. Long poles and paddles having been procured, a portion of the goods were placed on it and the other rafts. Four of the Kaffirs then stepped on the smallest two, having long poles and two paddles, and commenced the passage, shouting loudly as they did so, the paddlers splashing the water.

"What do they make all that noise for?" asked Crawford.

"Sure to frighten away the crocodiles," answered Denis. "The beasts would otherwise be running their snouts against the raft, wanting to see what it is, or they would be catching hold of the horses or oxen as they swim across."

The first raft having reached the opposite bank in safety, the passage of the waggon, of which Hendricks himself took charge, was commenced. This, being heavier, required a larger crew, but even then it was some time in getting across. The cargo from the first raft being landed, it returned for a further freight, bringing back some of the men who had crossed in the waggon, while the rest, under the direction of Hendricks, began putting the vehicle together. The second raft began to cross, the people in charge of it shouting and shrieking as before. All this time the Hottentots had remained with the oxen and horses, as they were to cross last, while Crawford and Percy, with Denis and Lionel, employed themselves in loading the rafts. It had been arranged that they should cross on the smallest raft after the cattle had swam over.

While they were thus employed, three of the horses, whose legs had been left free, discovering that they would have to cross the river, and apparently not liking the undertaking, took it into their heads to gallop off. When the Hottentots ran after them, the cattle began to scatter in a way which threatened a general stampede; they were therefore obliged to return in order to keep the animals together, "This won't do!" cried Denis. "Come along, Lionel; we must manage to catch the brutes. If we don't look sharp, they will be away back to Maritzburg."

Percy, seeing them start off, also followed. While Denis went on one side, Lionel took the other, accompanied by the young Englishman. Fortunately the horses stopped to graze at a tempting spot of grass which they found on their way. This, after a long run, enabled the lads to get to the south of them. They then crept up slowly, and Denis, who was the most active of the party, caught one which had a long halter trailing from its head. Instead of hauling at it, he allowed the horse to continue feeding until his two companions had seized the others. They were, however, at this time, at a considerable distance from the river, and when they got back they found the remaining horses and oxen swimming over, with the Hottentots and several Kaffirs holding on to their tails, shouting, shrieking, and splashing the water, to keep the crocodiles at a distance.

"I vote we cross on horseback," said Denis. "It will be half an hour or more before the raft can come for us, and I'm

getting desperately hungry. We can get over just as easily as those Kaffir fellows. We can either sit on the horses' backs, or hold on to their tails, while they tow us over. See, that's how the Kaffirs are crossing."

"I'm ready, at all events," said Lionel. "I think I'll ride my horse."

"Mind if you do, give him his head, and don't on any account pull at the halter," said Denis. "What way are you going to cross, Percy?"

Percy did not quite like the undertaking, not being accustomed to this sort of thing. But he was ashamed to refuse; at the same time, being an excellent swimmer, he was not afraid of the water, but more apprehensive of crocodiles, which he thought after the noise had ceased might come swimming up to the spot. At last, however, after seeing Denis and Lionel mount, they having secured their outer clothing to the heads of their horses, he imitated their example, and all three plunged into the river together, the horses now, with riders on their backs, taking to the water willingly enough. Denis led the way, keeping on the left or up stream. Percy followed closely a little farther down. Lionel was on his right. For some distance the river was sufficiently shallow for the horses to wade, with the water only half-way up their backs. Presently Denis's horse began to swim.

"I'll try the Kaffir fashion, and I'd advise you to do the same," cried Denis. "Lionel may stick on his horse's back if he likes."

Saying this he slipped off, and grasping hold of his horse's tail, was towed across, while he laughed and shouted to Percy to imitate his example. Neither Percy nor Lionel felt willing to make the attempt.

"Just try it," cried Denis again; "you'll find that your animal swims twice as fast. He can't kick, if he were to try."

They had already got more than half-way over, when, gaining courage, Percy slipped off, and had just got hold of his horse's tail when Lionel, who was, as has been said, a short distance off, uttered a cry of alarm. What was Percy's horror to see his horse frantically beating the water with his fore-legs and making no progress! The dreadful thought instantly occurred to him, that a crocodile had caught hold of the animal's legs, and that the boy, who had acknowledged a short time before that he was not much of a swimmer, would either be seized by the monster, or be drowned. Percy, though quiet and unassuming in his manners, possessed more courage and resolution than he was aware of. Another crocodile might seize him even while swimming behind his horse, but he did not think of that risk. He could not bear to see his young companion perish without an effort to save him.

"Throw yourself off, and swim towards me," he shouted.

Lionel did as he was advised, narrowly escaping being struck by the horse's hoofs. On this, Percy, letting go his horse's tail, and exerting all his strength, swam to meet Lionel, who, although supporting himself in the water, was evidently unable to reach the bank towards which they had been directing their course.

"Keep up, keep up until I come to you," cried Percy, and in a few seconds he was up to Lionel. "Now place your hand on my back, and strike out with the other and your feet at the same time. Don't attempt to clutch me, and we will, please heaven, gain the bank."

Lionel, who kept his presence of mind, did as he was bid. At first Percy was in hopes of regaining his horse's tail, but the animal had got too far ahead, and was now abreast of Denis's horse. Denis himself was too much ahead to see what had happened, and not until Percy's horse had got up to him was he aware of the danger of his two companions. His first impulse was to let go and swim to their assistance, but his next thought was that his powers were insufficient for the task.

As he looked round he saw them both swimming on steadily, while Lionel's unfortunate horse was gradually sinking beneath the surface, although its fore-feet were still striking out in the vain attempt to escape from the jaws of its captor.

"Shall I come and help you?" he shouted out. "I'll try to do so if you want me."

"No, no," answered Percy. "If you are not a good swimmer, you'll do no good. Get to shore as fast as you can, and send off a raft to us, for they don't appear to be looking at us."

Owing to the oxen and horses having just landed, what had occurred had not been perceived from the shore. Crawford, who had gone across on the last raft, was the first to discover that there were only two horses. He then saw the heads of Percy and Lionel close together.

Shouting out to Hendricks, who was at some distance, attending to the waggon, he leaped on to one of the rafts, making signs to the nearest Kaffir, to whom he could not otherwise communicate his wishes, to come off with him.

Fortunately Hendricks heard his voice, and rushing down, sprang on to the raft. In the meantime Percy had a hard matter to keep up. The stream was carrying him and Lionel farther and farther down; and as they got away from the noise made by the cattle, he well knew that the risk of being seized by another crocodile was greatly increased.

Still, though he might easily have gained the shore by himself, nothing would induce him to quit his young charge.

"Hold up, Lionel," he cried. "Kick about with your feet, and shout as loud as you can. Those brutes of crocodiles won't hurt us while they've got the horse to eat. Hurrah! we are seen from the shore; your father and Crawford are on it. They are stopping to pick up Denis, they'll be up to us soon. Now stop and tread water, it will give me a rest. It won't matter if we are floated a little lower down. Shout and shriek as loud as you like."

All this Percy said at the top of his voice, for he did not feel quite as confident as he tried to make Lionel suppose,

that another crocodile would not make its appearance. Still his hopes of escape rose as he saw the raft urged on by poles and paddles approaching. He kept looking round him, however, to watch whether one of the dreaded monsters was rising to the surface, not that, should it approach, he would be able to do much to make his escape. Lionel all the time showed not the slightest fear. He did exactly as he was told. Had his skill as a swimmer equalled that of Percy, he would rather have trusted to his own powers, than have hindered his companion from reaching the shore. The raft was still some way off, although they could distinguish the features of their friends. When, as they were treading water, holding each other's hands, Lionel, casting a glance down the stream, exclaimed, "O Percy, can that brute be coming this way?" Percy looked in the same direction, and there sure enough he saw the head of a huge crocodile, with its snout directed towards them.

"We won't stop here to be gobbled up, at all events," cried Percy. "Put your hand as before on my back, and we'll swim towards the raft. We may be in time to get on to it before the creature reaches us."

Though he said this, he felt very faint hopes of success; still, like a brave fellow, he kept up, shouting and splashing as much as he could without stopping on his way. Once he glanced over his shoulder. The dreaded monster came swimming on. In another minute, before they could possibly reach the raft, it would be up to them, though Hendricks and his companions were exerting their utmost strength to urge it on. Just then a man was seen running along the bank. He stopped, and raised a rifle to his shoulder. Percy fancied he could hear the bullet whistle through the air, and the thud as it struck the crocodile's head. The monster sank from sight. Denis and Crawford raised a loud cheer, and in a few seconds they were hauling Percy and Lionel, both almost exhausted, on to the raft.

"Bravo! Percy, you did it well," cried Denis; "and Lionel showed himself to be a brave little chap, or he would not have enabled you to save him as you have done."

Hendricks was less demonstrative, but equally grateful to Percy, although he had no time just then to show his feelings. Placing the two boys on the centre of the raft, he, with the rest who had come on it, had to exert themselves to pull back to the shore, where they found Umgolo waiting to receive them.

"You saved the boys' lives, my friend," said Hendricks, addressing him and taking his hand. "You have rendered me many services; this is not the least of them."

Of course he spoke in Kaffir, and Umgolo replied in the same language, that he was always ready to serve his young master, and that he was very glad to have prevented the crocodile from destroying the two boys. No time was lost in conveying them up to the spot where the camp was to be fixed. Here a fire was immediately lighted to dry their clothes and to cook some provisions, while they sat close to it, wrapped up in blankets. They both speedily recovered, the proof of which was that they ate heartily of the viands prepared for them.

"It's the last time I'll endeavour to cross a river at the tail of a horse, when crocodiles are likely to be swimming about," exclaimed Denis. "I'm mighty glad that you escaped from the brute, Lionel; had you been swimming as I was, it would have had you to a certainty."

The circumstance which had occurred tended greatly to draw the lads together, while Percy rose much in the estimation of all his companions.

"I only wish that I could see a hungry lion rush out on you, or a party of Zulus coming out of a kraal to cut off your head; I'd show both the one and the other what I could do with my rifle," exclaimed Lionel. "I'd fight until I was killed, and should not care if you made your escape."

"Thank you!" answered Percy. "I hope we shall not come to that extremity, but I am very sure that you will do your best to help me out of any danger I happen to get into."

The night passed with the usual chorus from hyenas and jackals. At dawn the travellers were on the move. For a considerable distance few inhabitants were met with, the king not approving of his subjects living near the border, lest, when he should require them, they should get across it, and escape from his paternal care.

After moving on for some days, another steep hill rose before them. They encamped at the foot, that the oxen might the better be able to drag up the waggon in the morning. The ascent was no easy one, and the Hottentots had to exert their arms and voices.

"I hope the descent will not be so difficult, or the waggon may chance to be capsized," said Crawford, as he and Denis were following behind, ready to put big stones under the wheels, and prevent the vehicle slipping back.

"No fear of that, for we shall not have to descend at all," answered Denis.

He was right. On the summit being reached, the travellers found themselves on the edge of a vast plateau, extending to the north and south. Some parts were covered with fine timber trees, others with scattered mimosa bushes, and here and there a hillock rose above the plain. Deer of various species were seen bounding along in unrestrained freedom, chiefly small animals; now and then a herd of pallah or koodoo would make their appearance, sorely tempting the hunters to go in chase. Hendricks, however, was anxious to proceed as fast as he could through the country, until he could reach a region where elephants and other more valuable animals abounded.

Although the sun was intensely hot during the day, the air was pure and exhilarating, especially in the early morning. Day after day the party travelled on, occasionally passing near kraals, but Hendricks generally avoided them, unless he wished to do a stroke of trade with the inhabitants. The country as they advanced became wilder and rougher, and game of all sorts abounded, so that after outspanning in the afternoon, the hunters who went out with their guns never failed to bring back an ample supply of meat for the camp. When there was time, and there was more than was required for immediate consumption, the flesh, whether of deer, or quagga, or gnu, was cut up into long strips, and

after being slightly salted, was strung up, either outside the waggon, or on a rope fastened from it to a tree, where it quickly dried in the warm air. The meat thus prepared is called beltong, and requires no further cooking to suit the palate of the hunter. It is to be sure somewhat hard, but not bad tasted. Even the flesh of the quagga, which few white men would eat willingly, becomes, when thus prepared, tolerably palatable.

Occasionally it was necessary to give the oxen a rest, when they might regain, on an abundant pasture, their strength, exhausted by the toils they had encountered.

Next time they stopped, Denis, Percy, and Lionel agreed that they would go hunting together, so that they might have all the glory to themselves; for, should they accompany Hendricks and Umgolo, or even Crawford, who had become a good shot and a daring hunter by this time, they would, as Denis observed, "not have a chance of shooting anything."

Two days after this, having arrived at a suitable spot, away from any kraal, where there was an abundance of grass, and a stream of bright water flowing at the bottom of the valley; their leader calling a halt, the oxen were outspanned and the camp formed. As there was sure to be plenty of game in the neighbourhood, the three lads at once made arrangements for their trip. As their steeds had merely followed quietly behind the waggon, they were perfectly fresh, and it was settled that they should ride them. They agreed also to take with them a Kaffir servant, Gozo, who, though not equal to Umgolo, was considered an experienced hunter. Hendricks did not object to the boys accompanying him, though he gave him strict charge to keep them out of harm's way. They turned in early, that they might be off at daybreak, as Hendricks wisely insisted that they should return before nightfall.

Chapter Six.

A hunting expedition.

The three lads, accompanied by old Gozo the Kaffir, set off in high spirits at daylight, expecting to have a magnificent day's hunting. Denis, from having more experience than his companions, took the lead. Lionel, who, though much younger, had spirits enough to carry him through anything, kept up with him; but Percy, although he did his best, being less inured to the heat of the climate, soon began to feel fatigue, and expressed his fears that he should have to turn back.

"Don't say that; come along, come along," cried Denis. "You won't mind the heat or feel tired, directly we get sight of the game. Gozo says that about five miles farther on there's a broad stream, running through a wide valley or rather a plain, and that at the ford to which he will conduct us we shall be certain to meet with large animals, elephant and rhinoceroses, quaggas and pallahs, and other deer."

Percy, thus encouraged, pulled himself together, and tried to forget the heat. They rode on, however, for several miles, without meeting with a living creature. Nothing was to be seen on either hand but wild mountain-sides and arid plains dotted here and there with gigantic ant-hills and occasional groves of tall trees.

At length, having surmounted a low ridge, they came suddenly in sight of a herd of wildebeests or gnus, grazing quietly about a mile from them. Denis was about to dash forward, when Gozo called to him and advised him to make a circuit so as to come upon the herd on the lee side. Turning their horses' heads, therefore, they descended the hill they had just mounted, and keeping under its shelter, made their way northward. They were thus able to get round until they found themselves within a few hundred yards of the herd, in which there could not have been less than sixty or eighty animals. Suddenly, however, the leader of the herd, a fine old fellow with a flowing mane, and a beard descending down his breast, perceived them, and off they dashed at a slashing pace, a cloud of dust marking their course, while the young hunters pursued. Denis led the way, Lionel keeping close after him. Gozo galloped off to the right, intending apparently to get ahead of the herd, and turn them, so as to drive them back and enable the lads with more ease to shoot one or two down. The chase was exciting in the extreme. The wildebeests at first ran well ahead of their pursuers.

"We shall soon be up to them!" cried Denis. "They'll not keep at that pace long together, you'll see."

He was right, for after a run of a couple of miles the animals began to slacken their speed, and at length Gozo was seen far away in the distance, and well ahead, gradually nearing them.

"We'll stop here," cried Denis, as they came to some thick bushes. "We can conceal ourselves, and the wildebeests won't mind the horses, even if they see them."

He and Lionel dismounted, placing their horses behind the bushes, with their reins on the ground, a sign to the well-trained animals that they were not to move from the spot. Percy soon came up, and followed their example. They then knelt down so as to be completely concealed. The herd, now turned by Gozo, came galloping back, not apparently frightened, and in no hurry, for Gozo having accomplished his object, had pulled in his rein so as to allow them to move at a moderate rate. On the animals came, lashing their sides with their flowing tails. Sometimes their leader would break away from the ranks, paw the ground, apparently determined to make a headlong charge, should an enemy appear; then suddenly he would face about and rejoin the herd. Then the whole, which had stopped for a short time, would again dash off in wild confusion, enveloping themselves in a cloud of dust which almost completely hid them from view. The young hunters waited with no little anxiety, lest they should take another direction, but on they came towards the bush, which they were about to pass when Denis whispered to Lionel to fire at the second, while he would take the leader.

"Percy, do you aim at the third; I feel sure you'll hit him in the breast."

Percy could not help smiling, for he felt far from sure of doing anything of the sort, anxious as he was to succeed. The lads held their breath. Denis was the first to fire, and a loud thud told him that his shot had taken effect. Directly afterwards Lionel and Percy pulled their triggers, but with what effect they could not tell, for the herd, frightened by the report, began kicking up the dust, as they scampered off, in a way nearly to conceal them from view. All that could be seen was a confused mass of prancing heels, whisking tails, and occasionally a few heads.

“Hurrah!” cried Denis; “my fellow is down.” Not far from them, where the leader had been seen when Denis fired, it now lay struggling on the ground.

Denis reloaded, and another shot quickly put it out of its misery. Whether any of the others were hit could not be ascertained, as they all went scampering off together; but Gozo was seen pursuing them, and the report of his rifle showed that he, at all events, considered himself within range of one of them.

Denis at once set to work to skin the animal. Neither Percy nor Lionel could render him much assistance, and he was very glad when Gozo made his appearance. The Kaffir had shot a wildebeest, he said, but he had come to assist them in disposing of theirs. It was agreed that the parts of the flesh which were worth preserving should be left in the bush, covered up with branches, so as to prevent the hyenas and jackals from getting at it until their return.

It took them some time, and their task accomplished, they sat down to enjoy some of the food they had brought in their holsters. Although they might without shame have returned to camp, satisfied with their morning’s sport, they had a wish to secure some larger and more valuable game. Their patient horses stood all the time cropping the leaves and herbage near them; for grass, properly speaking, there was none.

Their lunch over and their thirst quenched with some water which they had brought, although there was none for the horses, they again mounted, and continued in the direction they were before going.

They had applied so frequently to the water bottles, that their stock was soon exhausted; but supposing that they should speedily arrive at the river, they did not trouble themselves much about the matter, until they began to feel the unpleasant sensations of extreme thirst. Percy, less accustomed to the climate than his companions, suffered greatly.

“When shall we reach the river?” he exclaimed at last. “My throat feels like a dust bin. I shall choke if I can’t pour some liquid down before long.”

“Never fear,” answered Denis; “just try not to think about it. I’ll ask Gozo how far the river is off. It cannot be more than half a mile now, I should think.”

The Kaffir, however, did not give a satisfactory answer. It was some time since he had been in that direction, and it might be farther than he supposed.

“Then the faster we push on the better,” cried Denis. “Whollop-ahoo-ahoo! on we go;” but although he whipped his unfortunate steed, the animal refused to move at a quicker pace. All the horses showed signs of suffering. They opened their mouths, turned up their nostrils, and the foam was seen gathering on their lips. They were riding on when, as they were approaching a thicket, a sound, as if a battle was going on between some of the brute creation, reached their ears—roarings, snortings, and bellowings.

“What can produce that tremendous uproar?” cried Percy.

“Gozo says it is a lion belching,” answered Lionel; “but there’s some other animal, and we must be ready to fire or get out of its way.”

They again cautiously rode on.

“A lion! a lion!” cried the Kaffir, and looking over some bushes, they saw in an open space a large buffalo cow engaged in battle with the monarch of the wilds. Not far off lay the body of a buffalo calf, which at once explained to them the cause of the battle. The lion had taken up a position not far from some trees and thick bushes, whose branches were elevated but a short distance from the ground. The buffalo stood with her horns ready to receive her antagonist. Suddenly the lion bounded forward, fixing his powerful claws on the face and neck of the buffalo, when instantly, in spite of his weight, she turned, and rushing at the boughs, in a moment the lion was thrown off, and lay on his back with his claws in the air. Furiously the buffalo charged at him, pounding away with her horns in a manner which made it seem impossible that any life would be left in him. While the buffalo was retreating to make another charge, the lion, managing to roll himself over, recovered his feet. The buffalo received him as before, on her head. He in vain endeavoured to reach her hinder quarters, and once more she bore him into the brushwood. In an instant he was knocked off with a crash which it seemed must have broken every bone in his body; but he was soon again on his feet. This was more than the lion could stand, and, coward as he was at heart, finding himself thus defeated in his object, he took to flight, pursued by the buffalo, who went dashing away after him through the bush.

Gozo immediately dismounted, and stealing forward, dragged the calf into the bush.

“Gozo is determined that the lion shan’t benefit, even if he escapes the buffalo’s horns,” observed Denis. “Let’s keep out of the way, and we shall see what will next happen.” Presently the buffalo came back, looking about everywhere for her calf; but not observing it, naturally supposed that the lion had carried it off, and consequently away she dashed again in pursuit of the still fugitive king of the wilds.

“The big cowardly cat! I wish that she may overtake him, and give him a pounding which will knock the breath out of his body entirely!” cried Denis.

“What! do you call the lion a cat?” exclaimed Percy.

“To be sure I do. What is he but ‘Felis leo’? which means the cat lion, as you know, in Latin. He is more cowardly, too, than most cats, for he’ll never attack either a man or a beast unless he thinks he has a good chance of coming off the victor. I have not forgotten an unpleasant morning I spent once up a tree, with a couple of lions and their cubs rampaging round me; and if it had not been for my father and Hendricks, I should have been there still, at all events my bones would, for nothing would have induced me to come down and be torn to pieces by the brutes. It was a day or two after Hendricks found you, Lionel, and our friends Mangaleesu and Kalinda made a wonderful escape from their enemies which you have heard of.”

“What do you mean by finding Lionel? I thought he was the son of Hendricks,” said Percy.

“So I am his adopted son,” answered Lionel. “At first Hendricks thought that my parents might be Dutch boers; when Denis however tried to teach me English, I remembered so many English words that he was convinced they were English people; but although he has endeavoured to discover them for my sake rather than for his own, he has never yet succeeded in finding even the slightest clue as to who they could be.”

“How very curious!” said Percy. “When I get home to my father and mother, I must tell them all about it. They will be much interested, and I hope, Lionel, that you will come and see them.”

“I should like to do so very much, if Hendricks will let me,” said Lionel. “But he wants me to accompany him on this expedition, that I may become as great a hunter as he is, and that is just what I should like to be. I am sure, therefore, that he will not allow me to stay with your family longer than the one night we shall outspan at the farm, as we have had so many delays that he is in a hurry to push on.”

The conversation was interrupted by a loud crashing of the underwood, and the lion was seen bleeding from numerous wounds, springing on over all impediments, with the buffalo in the distance, still pursuing him.

He took no notice of the party on horseback, except to turn slightly aside as he came near them. He was too far beyond range to enable either Denis or Gozo to hit him. Although the buffalo came much nearer, Denis would not injure the noble brute; but the Kaffir would have tried to kill her, had not he and Lionel shouted out to him not to fire. The lion had not made many bounds forward when he fell. He managed, however, again to get himself on his feet, and was once more going on when the buffalo got up to him, and striking his hinder quarters with her horns, sent him flying, heels over head; then dashing forward, she struck him again and again before he had time to bring his claws into play.

“Hurrah! she’s done for him!” cried Denis, as the brave animal was seen butting and then trampling on the carcass of the lion. “We had better let her enjoy her victory without interference; for probably, being in a combative mood, she may run a muck at us, and we shall be under the painful necessity of shooting her.”

Just as he was speaking, Lionel shouted—

“Look out! look out!” and the brave buffalo, catching sight of the horses, and probably fancying that they were fresh enemies, came dashing through the underwood towards them. Denis had only just time to throw himself from his horse, Gozo having already dismounted, when the enraged animal was close upon them. Percy galloped off on one side and Lionel on the other. Denis fired, aiming at the buffalo, as did Gozo immediately afterwards, but Denis’s bullet flattened against her hard skull, and although Gozo wounded her in the neck, she came on. Denis fully expected to be tossed into the air or trampled to death, when Lionel’s horse standing stock still, he raised his rifle and pulled the trigger. The bullet struck the buffalo, and must have entered her heart, for she at that instant fell so close to Denis, that he narrowly escaped an awkward prong from her horns directed towards him.

“Bravo, Lionel! you did that well, and many thanks to you for it,” he exclaimed. “Hendricks will be as delighted to hear of it, as I am that you took so true an aim.”

“I am very glad I brought the beast down,” said Lionel, “though I would rather she had shown her discretion by keeping clear of us. Poor brute, she deserved a better fate.”

Gozo, however, who was influenced by no such feelings, immediately set to work to cut up the buffalo, and to preserve some of the more valuable parts of the meat, but Denis suggested that in consequence of the state of irritation the creature had been in, it could not be wholesome.

The Kaffir, however, laughed at this notion, and declared that it would make no difference. Denis begged that he would be quick about it, as Percy especially was suffering from thirst.

The Kaffir suggested that he should drink some of the blood, but Percy naturally shuddered at the idea, and declared that the very thought of it made him feel less thirsty.

“A proof that you are not dying of thirst,” observed Denis. “However, you are perfectly right. The chances are, had you followed Gozo’s advice, you would have been made very ill.”

The Kaffir having secured a portion of the meat in a tree, and covered it over with part of the hide, some boughs



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being placed on the top of all, they rode on as fast as their tired horses could go in the direction of the stream. They carried some of the meat, both of the buffalo and wildebeest, with them, but to eat it would have been impossible until they had quenched their thirst.

At last Gozo shouted out, "See, see! there is the water!" and they caught sight below them of a stream glittering in the sun as it wound its way through the broad valley. Their horses appeared to have seen it also, for they moved forward with more alacrity than heretofore. Presently, as they rounded a thicket, up sprang just before them a herd of waterbok.

"Whollop-a-hoo!" cried Denis, his usual hunting cry, and he dashed forward. "Venison will be better than tough wildebeest or heated buffalo meat."

Reining in, as he was close to the animals, he fired, and brought one of them down.

"Hurrah!" cried his companions.

"We must have another!" he exclaimed. "Lionel, see what you can do. Gozo, stop and look after the beast I have shot;" and he rode forward, loading as he went.

Lionel got ahead of him, and also pulling up fired, and stopped the career of another of the herd.

"Capital!" cried Denis. "If we kill nothing else to-day, we shall have done very well."

There was certainly no chance of their catching the rest of the waterbok, which, dashing down to the river, swam across, and were half-way up the opposite bank before the horsemen had reached the brink. A little higher up was a ford, and they might have crossed at once, but neither they nor their horses were inclined to do so without drinking. Their steeds rushing in, soon had their noses in the refreshing liquid. They all three dismounted, although they had to step into the water; but as the bottom was hard, no mud was raised, and they lapped up the liquid in their palms. They were soon joined by Gozo, who had thrown the second waterbok killed by Lionel across his horse. As he had no shoes, and his legs were bare, he walked farther across the ford, and he and his horse followed their example. Presently he shouted out in Kaffir, and Lionel exclaimed—

"He says that he sees a crocodile, and there may be more near. We had better get out of the water as fast as we can, or one of us or a horse may be caught hold of."

Percy, who, although as brave as any fellow, had a great horror of the voracious creatures, quickly led his horse out of the water.

"Come away, come away!" he shouted. "I see one of the brutes on the opposite side eyeing us, and he'll be making a dash in this direction presently, if we don't get on shore."

Lionel and Denis laughed, and deliberately led their unwilling steeds to the shore.

"Tell Gozo to make haste. The crocodile is moving—it is coming towards him. I'm sure it is!" cried Percy.

Gozo, looking round, seemed to think the same, for throwing himself on horseback, he urged on his animal to the bank. He was only just in time, for the crocodile came on rapidly.

"Shout, shout!" cried Denis, and they all shouted together.

He took also still more effectual means of stopping the animal by firing at its head; with what effect he could not tell, except that the creature swerved from its course, and away it went swimming down the stream, probably frightened as much by the shouts as by the tap of the bullet on its skull.

"Now I vote we have some dinner," cried Denis. "We have plenty of food, that's a good thing to be thankful for; but we will be prudent, and not pitch our camp close to the stream, or one of those gentlemen may take a fancy to interrupt us while we enjoy our meal, and make a meal of us."

Matches having been introduced in those days, and there being an abundance of dry wood about, a fire was quickly lighted, a couple of hundred yards or so from the bank, on a stony spot where there was no risk of igniting the herbage. The horses were knee-haltered and turned loose, and the young hunters set themselves diligently to work to cook their venison and warm up some mealy cakes which they had brought in their saddle-bags; a small kettle was put on to boil, and tea was made. Pepper and salt were not wanting, and although they had no milk, they agreed that they could very well dispense with that luxury, especially as they had plenty of sugar.

"Well, this is what I call jolly," cried Percy. "Although my throat now feels as if a flowing stream had run down it, pleasanter than being like a dust bin, I'll trouble you, Denis, for another cup of tea."

They were too hungry to wait until their meat was cooked, so they nibbled their cakes and sipped their tea while waiting, till Denis pronounced the venison fit for the table. It was very juicy, and certainly not overdone. Gozo had in the meantime disposed of a couple of slices before they were well warmed through.

"I say," said Percy, "we must not spend much time here, if we are to get back before dark. I had no idea how fast time had gone by; it is two o'clock already. Fortunately we have more game than we can carry home on our horses, and we need not be ashamed of ourselves."

"I should like first to knock over another wildebeest, or an elephant, if one were to come in our way," said Denis. "The tusks would be of more value than all the meat we have obtained, as I have no doubt Hendricks will have brought in more than we shall."

As he spoke, he leant back to enjoy that rest which a hunter can best appreciate.

"Still I advise that we should not delay," said Percy. "Hendricks told us to get back before dark, and we promised to do so. It would be no valid excuse to say that we were tempted to stop longer than we intended, for the sake of hunting even the most valuable game."

"Your are right," answered Denis. "Just hand me another cup of tea, there's a good fellow. I don't feel I have had quite enough liquid to supply the amount evaporated during the morning."

"That was a curious story you were telling me of yourself, Lionel," observed Percy; "I am more interested than you may suppose. Should you like to find your real father and mother?"

"Indeed, I should," answered Lionel; "for young as I was, I fancy I remember my mother. I have often in my sleep seen her standing by my bedside and watching over me. I was very fond of Aunt Susannah. Still I never looked upon her as my mother. She was very different to the lady I remember."

"Then you think your mother was a lady?" asked Percy.

"I am certain of it," answered Lionel; "and a very charming lady, too. I am as sure of that as I am of my own existence."

While they were speaking, Gozo, who had been looking about him, cried out in a low voice, pointing to the river, "See, see!"

As they sat up, they observed a troop of elephants approaching the ford from the opposite side.

"We must try and get a shot at one of those fellows," exclaimed Denis, looking round to ascertain where the horses were feeding. Satisfied that they were well away from the track the elephants were likely to take, he began creeping along towards some bushes close to the river, at no great distance from the ford.

"The young master knows what he is about," whispered Gozo to Lionel, as they followed behind Percy, who had kept close to Denis.

They reached the bush without the elephants having observed them. The animals came on, and arranged themselves along the bank, some going into the ford, while others kept on dry ground, near enough to dip their trunks into the water. Having satisfied their thirst, they commenced squirting the water over their backs, so as to give themselves a pleasant shower bath that hot day, appearing to be in no hurry to proceed. The party in ambush began to fear that they would move back the way they had come, and that there would be no chance of getting a shot at them.

"The time is passing, and we ought to be on our way to camp," whispered Percy. "Would it not be better to give up the chance of killing an elephant to-day? We could not carry home the tusks, and it would be a long distance to send for them."

"Hendricks won't mind that. We might carry them between us part of the way, and they are too valuable to be lost," answered Denis; "but see, what is that fellow about?"

He pointed to one of the elephants who had gone farther into the ford than the rest. He was slowly moving across; now he stopped and looked back at his companions, then he went on again: from the way he lifted his legs it was

evident that he was dragging something attached to one of them. Another elephant followed the first, the largest in the herd. As the former got into the more shallow water, near the bank where the young hunters lay concealed, what was their astonishment to perceive that he had a huge crocodile clinging to his leg, just below the knee! The saurian seemed to have fixed its sharp teeth so securely in the tough skin of the elephant that it could not withdraw them. At all events, it made no attempt to get free. Perhaps it held on under the idea that it would be able to bring the elephant to the ground and feast off its body. If so, it was greatly mistaken. The elephant seemed in no way alarmed, but went on dragging the creature along with it. When it reached the bank, it uttered a peculiar cry and stood still. On this the largest elephant came hurrying up, and winding his trunk round the body of the crocodile, which he pressed against his tusks—he dragged it by main force from the leg of his companion, then lifting it in the air, walked with stately pace—the creature vainly struggling to free itself—till he reached a stiff forked, thorny tree of moderate height, and without more ado, raising the crocodile as high as he could, he brought its body down with a tremendous crash on the pointed branches, where he left it impaled, struggling, but ineffectually, to free itself. Its escape was as hopeless as a poor cockchafer pinned by a cruel boy to a board.

The elephants regarded its struggles with evident satisfaction. They were little aware of the danger they themselves were in from the bullets of the hunters. The leader at length gave vent to a triumphant trumpeting, and moved on, followed by his companions, at a leisurely pace; but instead of coming near the bush where the hunters lay concealed, they turned in the opposite direction. To fire would have been utterly useless. The tough hide of an elephant will turn a bullet, unless discharged at a short distance, and even then it can only penetrate at certain parts with any chance of killing. The hunters waited still hoping that one of the hindermost elephants might turn aside and come nearer to them. But the last went by, following the footsteps of the leader, and all chance of getting a shot was over, unless they were to start up, and by going ahead of the herd, have time to conceal themselves in another ambush until the animals came past them.

Denis wanted to do this, but Percy reminded him that they were already late, and that after all they might miss the elephants.

“I suppose you are right,” answered Denis, reluctantly; “but I vote, before we start, that we take another slice of venison. I have scarcely had enough, and it may be a long time before we get any food in these wild regions. It is always better to eat when we can, in case we should have nothing to put into our mouths later. You will see that Gozo follows my principle.”

The fire had kept burning, and probably caused the elephants to turn aside away from it. As there was no necessity for further concealment, the party returned to their camp. Gozo proved that Denis was right, by cutting off some huge slices, which in spite of the quantity he had before eaten, he quickly stowed away in his inside. The horses were feeding at no great distance off, so that they could keep watch over them. They had hitherto been perfectly quiet, notwithstanding the proximity of the elephants, cropping such tufts of grass as they could find here and there, or the tender shoots of trees. Suddenly they began to move about uneasily. First one lifted up its head and gazed around, then another and another did the same Gozo observing them looked anxious and said something to Denis. At that instant, before they could rise to their feet, a dozen Zulus, who had crept up unperceived, suddenly sprang up as if from the ground, holding their assegais poised in their hands, and completely surrounded them.

Lionel, who was rapid in all his movements, lifted his rifle to fire.

“Don’t do that!” cried Denis, in time to stop him; “it would be the signal to them to kill us. We are in for it, and must try to make friends with them.”

Percy, who was looking towards the horses, cried out,—“They have got hold of them all.”

Several Zulus had in the meantime caught the animals, and were now leading them up towards the camp.

It was evident that an attempt to escape would be useless, so the young hunters sat still, as did Gozo, who looked very much astonished, not being able to make out why the Zulus had captured them. They were fierce-looking fellows, some of them being apparently chiefs, for they wore kilts of monkey or cat skins round their waists. Their breasts and backs were covered with ox-tails, while their heads were adorned with caps of monkey skins, in which were stuck tall plumes composed of ostrich and crane feathers. The rest of the men had very little clothing beyond a small kilt of skins round their waists. They all carried shields on their arms and a bundle of assegais in their hands. Denis was the first to recover from his astonishment, and turning toward one who appeared to be their leader, he asked in as quiet a tone as he could command—

“Why have you thus come suddenly upon us, while we were enjoying our repast? Such is not the way the Zulus behave towards their friends the English.”

“We knew not whether you were English or boers, and we found you hunting in our territory,” answered the chief.

“The English have never been prevented from hunting wherever they choose throughout Zululand,” answered Denis.

“That matters not at present,” said the chief. “You are our prisoners; you must accompany us to our king, and beware that you make no resistance or attempt to escape.”

Denis interpreted what the chief said to Percy, who was naturally anxious to know the result of the conversation.

“We must put the best face we can on the matter,” he added, “and I only hope that they’ll let us keep our guns.”

This seemed very doubtful, for from their looks the Zulus certainly did not regard their prisoners with any affectionate feeling. Lionel had not hitherto spoken, and as they found that Percy was unacquainted with their language, they supposed that he was so likewise.

"Don't speak to them, Lionel," said Denis. "I'll act as interpreter, and then you may be able to find out why they have taken us prisoners, and what they intend to do to us."

"It will be wise to do so," answered Lionel; "and if I am able to get away, I will let Uncle Hendricks know what has happened, and he will very soon be down upon these gentlemen, and rescue you."

"A good idea, and I hope that you may succeed," said Denis. "In the meantime the best thing we can do is to pretend to be as much at our ease as possible. I don't think the fellows intend to kill us, or to do us any harm."

"They look fierce enough," said Percy. "I only hope, Lionel, that you'll be able to carry out your plan; but you must run no unnecessary risk. I should think that Hendricks is sure to search for us, when he finds that we do not return; whereas, should they find you trying to run away, they might, in very wantonness, send an assegai through you."

"If I try to run, it will be at night, when there will be very little chance of being discovered," answered Lionel; "I hear the men saying that they are about to carry us off. Should we be separated, we must keep up our courage, remember that."

As he spoke, two Kaffirs seized each of the lads somewhat roughly by the arms, to make them get up, and at the same time snatched their rifles out of their hands. This done, the chiefs, squatting down, appropriated the remainder of the venison, which they quickly ate up, while their followers stood holding their prisoners at a little distance. The chiefs then rising, ordered the men who had charge of the horses to bring them up, and mounting, rode forward, while the rest of the party, holding fast the young Englishmen, followed behind.

They first ascended the hill, down which Denis and his companions had come, but they soon altered their course, and proceeded first to the south, and then turning due west continued their march.

"I can't say that I quite like the way they are treating us," said Denis. "It shows that they are not animated by any friendly spirit, or they would not have ridden our horses while they make us walk. It puzzles me to say to what party they can belong. I am nearly certain that King Panda and his son Cetchwayo would not treat us in this fashion, as they have always shown a tolerably friendly feeling towards the English."

"I have been trying to listen to what the men have been saying, but I cannot make out what they intend to do with us," observed Lionel.

"At all events, it is a comfort that we are allowed to keep together," said Percy. "It strikes me that perhaps their object is to hold us as hostages for some purpose or other, but what purpose that is I can't even guess."

Poor Gozo looked very crestfallen, as he was led along at some distance from his young masters; he, apparently, fully expecting to be put to death.

They proceeded for some way at a rapid rate, which, active as the three friends were, they found it very difficult to keep up with. Occasionally the chiefs looked back to see that they were coming, and Denis thought he saw them laughing and casting scornful looks at him and his companions. They went on without stopping to rest or take any food; sometimes up hill, sometimes down, across valleys, and over rocky ground, until, as evening was approaching, the hum of human voices was heard. Some little distance ahead a kraal was seen on the side of a hill, while in the valley below were assembled a large concourse of men employed in various ways; some formed into regiments were marching here and there, others collected round fires were engaged in cooking, while a considerable number were employed in putting up huts.

"Who can they be?" asked Percy.

"I suppose that they must be Cetchwayo's followers, and if so we shall find him there. He, at all events, is not likely to do us any harm, if, as is generally supposed, he wishes to be friends with the English. I know that he sometimes holds a sort of court by himself, away from the king, although he is said to have almost as much power in the country as his fat old father," answered Denis. "I'll try and find out from our guards."

When Denis, however, put the question to the Zulus, they, not understanding, or not wishing to give him information, made him no answer.

"Never fear, it will be all right," said Denis. "When Cetchwayo finds that we belong to Hendricks, whom he knows well, he will set us at liberty, and soundly rate our captors for carrying us off."

They were still, however, left in doubt as to how they were to be treated. The chiefs on horseback proceeded down the hill, and directed their course towards one end of the valley, where a large hut had been put up, before which was seated a tall, rather stout personage, with several chiefs standing near him.

"That must be Cetchwayo," said Denis, pointing him out to Percy. "I never saw the black prince, but he answers his description."

On reaching the neighbourhood of the hut, the chiefs dismounted, and giving their horses to some attendants, advanced on foot. After going through the usual ceremonies, they stood on one side, and their leader making a sign to his followers to come forward with their prisoners, the prince cast a frowning glance at them; perhaps it was habitual to his countenance.

"Can either of you speak the Zulu tongue?" he inquired in a gruff voice.

"I can," answered Denis in the same language, stepping forward. "What does the Prince require of us?"

"To whom do you belong?" was the next question.

"To Hendricks the hunter and trader. He is well known to you," answered Denis.

"I care not for your relatives or friends. Whom do you hold to be the chief person in Zululand?"

"Surely who else but King Panda and his son Cetchwayo?" replied Denis, in a confident tone.

"In that respect you have not answered wisely. Panda is king it is true; but Cetchwayo, who is he?"

"I thought that you were Cetchwayo," said Denis.

"In that you are mistaken, young Englishman; I am Umbulazi, a better man than Cetchwayo, and have more right to be the prince than he has."

"I beg your pardon," answered Denis, in no way abashed.

"Understand, Prince, that we are travellers through the country, that we have come to trade and to hunt, but we do not pretend to have more affection for one ruler than another. We were on a hunting expedition to obtain some meat for our camp when your followers seized us and brought us here. All we now ask is to be set at liberty, and to be allowed to return to our friends who are anxiously waiting us."

"Such cannot be allowed," answered Umbulazi. "You will carry information of what you have seen to Cetchwayo, who will then be induced to attack us before we are ready for him."

"We promise to give no information which will in any way injure you," said Denis.

"I shall take very good care of that," answered Umbulazi. "Whether the English intend to be friends to me or not, it matters little. I have many followers, some of whom you see here, and many more will join me ere long; so that we shall soon drive Cetchwayo out of the country, and Umbulazi will some day be king of Zululand."

Denis had heard that a son of King Panda, Umbulazi, had been supplanted by a younger son, Cetchwayo, and that, being destitute of talents and ability, he was not likely to attempt to interfere in the affairs of state, but to remain quietly at his kraal, attending to his herds, and cultivating his mealy grounds. It was now evident that he was in open rebellion, and it was very important not to offend him; for, like other Zulu chiefs, he was utterly regardless of human life. Denis therefore feared that should he say anything to excite his anger, he might order his guards to cut him and his companions to pieces, or might give them leave to amuse themselves by throwing their assegais at them. He therefore assumed as humble a manner as he could, and replied, "When Umbulazi is king, all Englishmen who come into this country will pay him reverence, and abide by his laws, as I and my friends now wish to do. Again I ask that we may have permission to proceed on our way, as our leader, Hendricks, the great hunter, is waiting for us; and as we shall in a short time pass the borders of Zululand, we cannot trouble Umbulazi by our presence."

The prince said something not very complimentary to the speaker, signifying that he was talking nonsense. He then ordered some of his attendants to carry the three prisoners to a hut close by, and to place a guard over them until he had determined how they should be disposed of.

Chapter Seven.

In the hands of the Zulus.

The three lads found themselves the sole occupants of a hut about seven feet in diameter, and of a height scarcely sufficient to enable them to stand upright, except in the centre. There was but one opening, through which they had been compelled to creep, and this was closed by one of their guards sitting down before it, with his knees drawn up to his chin, the only light and air they enjoyed being admitted through the small space above his shoulders.

"It isn't altogether pleasant to be shut up like rats in a trap," said Denis, as he surveyed the hut; "but it might have been worse if a party of Kaffirs had slept in it last night. As far as I can judge it hasn't been occupied before."

"If it had, there would have been mats and bundles of grass," observed Lionel; "whereas we shall have nothing but the bare ground to lie on."

"As the ground appears to be perfectly dry, we need not complain of that," observed Percy, "I only hope that the chief will let us go in the morning."

"There's very little chance of that," said Denis. "He intends that we should be of some use to him, or he would not have sent his people to capture us. I wonder whether he will send us some food."

"I can't say I feel very hungry," observed Percy. "It is fortunate that we took a good dinner."

They waited and waited, expecting that Umbulazi would think of them, but no food was brought. At last Denis spoke to their Kaffir guard, saying that they were very hungry, and would be much obliged if he would obtain some provisions; but no answer was returned to his request.

"I believe the fellow is asleep," said Lionel. "Yes! listen, I can hear him snoring. I see his head nodding through the opening. If that's the way he keeps guard, I think I can play him a trick; and the chances are the rest of the fellows are asleep also. It is now nearly dark outside. In a little time the whole camp will have lain down. We could easily

make a hole under the wall of the hut, large enough for me to creep through, and once outside, if the guards don't catch me, I could find my way to where the horses are feeding."

"A capital idea," said Denis. "I don't think there will be much difficulty in carrying it out."

"But you would run a fearful risk of having an assegai sent through you if you were discovered," exclaimed Percy. "For your own sake I had much rather you did not make the attempt."

"I am not afraid of that," answered Lionel. "I'll take good care not to be caught. I know the ways of the people, where they are likely to be sleeping, and where their guards are posted. The chances are they will be asleep in a short time, like that fellow who is acting as doorkeeper to us. If I can manage to reach our camp, Hendricks will soon come and set you free."

"But suppose you were to meet a lion or leopard, as you have no rifle, how would you defend yourself?"

"I would keep out of his way, and shout and shriek at the top of my voice, you may depend upon that," he answered.

Percy was at last induced, though not very willingly, to consent to Lionel's making the attempt he proposed.

They all three sat down on the ground to talk over the matter, and agreed that it would not be wise to commence operations until later on in the night.

Fortunately Percy had a match-box, for the Zulus had not rifled their pockets, and striking a light, he ascertained that it was about eleven o'clock.

"We cannot have a better time," said Denis, "so we'll set to work immediately; but I say, we must keep talking, lest that black guard of ours should open his ears and suspect something."

They accordingly all three began talking as if holding some exciting discussion, Denis every now and then giving way to a hearty laugh.

Percy tried to imitate him, but did not succeed very well, for he was exceedingly anxious about Lionel's undertaking, which he thought more dangerous than it really was. Having no tools except their knives, the operation was a long one. They cut through the lower part of the twigs, and had to scrape away the earth with their hands. Only two could work at a time, and they took it by turns, the third sitting near the door to hide his companions or give notice, should the guard awake and look in.

"We shall be through in another minute!" exclaimed Lionel. "Hurrah, it is done now!" he cried out soon afterwards. "I can be through in a moment. What is the old fellow at the door about?"

"He is still snoring away," answered Percy.

"Well, then, do you and Denis keep talking and laughing, and I'll slip out."

"But do come back if you find any difficulty in making your way to the horses," said Percy. "It would be far better that we should submit to whatever the prince intends than that you should run the risk of being killed."

"No fear," answered Lionel, as he shook hands with his companions. "Depend upon it, I shall be safe with Hendricks before the morning. Good-bye!" and he began to crawl through the opening. He stopped, however, before he was quite through, and backing in said, "Remember to close the hole, Denis, before the morning, so that, if possible, the Zulus might not discover how I got out."

"I'll do my best," said Denis, and Lionel again crawled through the opening. Not the slightest noise was made, so that the guards at the entrance of the hut, even if they had not been asleep, would not have heard him. Denis, as soon as he had gone, lay down with his head to the opening to listen. No sound reached his ears. He then crept partly through, but could see nothing. Not a person was stirring, not even a dog barked. "Lionel will get clear, I hope," he said, as he drew back into the hut. "He is a wonderfully sharp, clever little fellow. As he lived so long among the Zulus, he knows all their ways. Even if he meets any one, he will be able to pretend to be a young Zulu, provided it is still dark, though of course his dress would betray him in daylight. I almost wish that we had gone too," said Denis. "If he succeed, so might we."

"Not so sure of that," observed Percy. "Three objects moving along the ground would be more likely to be discovered than one; and if I were addressed, I, at all events, could not pretend to be a Zulu boy, whatever you might do. Still, it would have been satisfactory had we all got free; but then, what would have become of poor Gozo? They would have assegaid him in revenge. Depend upon it, we were wiser to remain. Perhaps, after all, Lionel is hiding, and may find it necessary to come back."

They waited anxiously, almost fearing to hear Lionel's voice. Time went on, but he did not make his appearance. At last Denis thought that he might venture to stop up the opening; so he began shovelling in the earth and replacing the twigs; he knew, however, should any one examine the outside, it must be discovered that a hole had been made; but it was just possible that it might not be observed, and he amused himself by thinking that if so how puzzled the Zulus would be to account for the disappearance of Lionel.

"I'll pretend not to know what has become of him, and to be as much astonished as they are," he said, laughing. "I'll suggest that he might have vanished through the roof, or that he was not put in at all, or that he has evaporated, although, to be sure, they won't know what that means, and I don't know how I could well explain it, as the Kaffir tongue has nothing equivalent to the term. However, I'll do my best to mystify them."

"I would rather not make the attempt. I always hold that we ought to tell the truth and stand the consequences," said Percy. "He had a perfect right to run away, and he exercised that right. I would rather you said what had happened, and that he had gone only for our sakes, to let our friends know what has become of us."

"Well, we'll see how things turn out," said Denis. "Are you not beginning to feel hungry?"

"Indeed I am, and sleepy too," answered Percy. "I would rather have something to eat; but as we cannot get that, the best thing we can do is to go to sleep. I'll try, although our couches are not of the most luxurious description."

Percy lay down, as did Denis. They felt various creatures crawling over them; but they knew that they must bear such annoyances patiently. Their eyes in a short time closed, and they went fast asleep. They were aroused at early dawn by the shouts and cries of hundreds of voices. The Zulu gaoler no longer stopped up the doorway by his black body. They concluded that he was not afraid they would attempt to escape during daylight, as they would certainly be seen.

Denis therefore crawled out of the hut to look about him. The sun was just rising over the hills to the eastward. The whole valley, at the farther end of which they were, was filled with warriors formed into regiments of four or five hundred men each. Some little distance off, in front of his hut, stood the chief, Umbulazi, surrounded by his counsellors and other wise men.

Suddenly all the men commenced performing the most extraordinary antics, leaping, and whirling, and twisting, and turning, at the same time uttering the loudest shrieks and cries at the top of their voices.

"What are they about?" asked Percy, who had crept out after Denis.

"They are simply dancing a war dance in honour of their chief. We shall have an opportunity of witnessing their performance."

The chief and his attendants were so busily employed in watching the troops, that they did not observe the young Englishmen standing outside their prison.

Presently the leading regiment began to move forward, the men still leaping, twisting, and turning, shaking their shields, quivering their assegais, and shouting all the time until they approached to where the chief stood, when halting for an instant they redoubled their efforts, and then passed on (it cannot be said they marched) to give room for another party who went through the same style of performance.

When the whole had passed in review, they dispersed in different directions, some to bring in wood, and others to slaughter some oxen which had been driven into the camp for the purpose.

So occupied had Umbulazi been with this extraordinary review of his troops, that he had apparently forgotten all about his prisoners, who meantime stood watching the proceedings, much interested with the curious spectacle. Denis at length proposed that they should make off, catch their horses, and gallop away. Percy was opposed to this, as it was nearly certain they would be seen and followed.

"I'm afraid you are right," said Denis; "and there's another strong argument in favour of staying—I'm so desperately hungry, that I don't think I could ride far without food; and as these fellows will soon be having breakfast, I conclude that they will have the grace to offer us some. If they don't, I shall make bold to go and take it, for they won't object, even though they may intend to assegai us directly afterwards."

They waited until the review was over. Denis then advised Percy to go back into the hut, while he set off on a foraging expedition.

"If we two were to go together, they would wonder what had become of Lionel, but if I alone appear, they will suppose that you are both inside the hut," he said. "The chances are, they don't put in their heads to find out; for everybody is so busily employed that they won't trouble themselves about us."

Percy agreed to the proposal, and creeping in, sat down to wait the return of Denis.

"There's nothing like putting a bold face upon the matter," thought Denis; and seeing Umbulazi standing in front of his hut, he walked boldly up to him.

"*Unigane!*" he said, saluting him in the Kaffir fashion.

"*Saka bona,*" answered the chief, equivalent to good morning. "What is it you want, my friend?"

"My companions and I were made prisoners by your people, but I conclude that you do not wish to starve us, and we want some breakfast," answered Denis.

"You should have remained inside the hut where you were placed, and it would have been brought to you," said the chief, apparently just recollecting all about his captives. "How dare you come out?"

"To obtain some fresh air, and to see you review your magnificent army," answered Denis.

"And you think that my soldiers are fine fellows?" said the chief, evidently well pleased. "They will be able to drive Cetchwayo and all his followers out of the country, so that none will be left to oppose me."

"I have not seen Cetchwayo's army, so that I cannot reply to that remark," answered Denis. "What is in the future no man can tell."

"Ah! but I have engaged a famous enchantress who knows all things that are going to happen. She is to come to me this morning, having spent the night in looking into the future, and will tell me what is to be my fate, whether I shall be defeated or gain the victory and become king of the Zulus."

"If you become king of the country, you will wish to be friends with the English, as Panda is. Now it strikes me, the best way to show your friendly intentions is to treat well those who fall into your power. I hope therefore, after we have had some breakfast, that you will restore us our rifles and horses, and allow us to return to those who are waiting for us."

"Go back to your hut, and wait until I send for you!" answered Umbulazi, making a grimace from which Denis drew no favourable augury. He thought it wise to obey.

"What news?" asked Percy, as he entered.

"One certain piece of news is that Lionel got off safe; but what the chief intends doing with us is more than I can say. I hope he will send us some breakfast; if not, we must forage for ourselves. The fellows down there will soon have their meat cooked and their mealy cakes baked. Before they have eaten them all up I will go down to one of the fires and claim a portion."

They waited for some time.

"I can stand this no longer!" cried Denis at last, and he got up intending to proceed to the nearest fire, when just as he crawled through the opening a Kaffir woman appeared carrying a basket on her head.

"The chief has sent you this," she said; "you are to eat it and be thankful; but he bids me tell you that if you attempt to run away you will be killed."

"We are much obliged to the chief," said Denis, as the girl placed the basket on the ground. "Tell him that we wish to remain friends, and that when he gives us permission we will bid him good-bye."

Denis, however, was too hungry to say more, and taking up the basket entered the hut. It contained a gourd of whey, some mealy cakes and cooked buffalo flesh.

"This isn't bad, after all," observed Denis as they fell to. "We have got Lionel's share as well as our own; however, we may stew that away in case we want it."

They had just finished their meal when their attention was attracted by a loud hubbub outside.

Denis crept out to ascertain the cause of the noise. Percy followed him, when they saw the whole Zulu army collected



THE ENCHANTRESS.

in two long lines, extending to the farther end of the valley. In the distance appeared one of the strangest figures imaginable. It was that, as the dress betokened, of a woman. Slowly she advanced up the centre, between the two lines of warriors, followed by a dozen men or more, carrying large shields, against which they beat with their clubs, making a sound like that of drums. As she drew near it was seen that she was bedecked in the most curious fashion. Her nose was painted white, as was one of her eyelids, while the other was dyed with red earth. Her long hair was plastered together by a mixture of grease and clay blackened with charcoal. Round her neck were suspended coils of the entrails of animals stuffed with fat, while her hair was stuck over in all directions with the gall bladders of animals. Several dried snakes, a human skull, and the heads and claws of birds, hung suspended from her shoulders, besides which she wore a necklace made of human finger bones, and rings of the same description round her ankles, her only actual garment being a short kilt hanging from her waist. In

her left hand she held a wand with long tails at its end, which she flourished vigorously above her head as she advanced with prancing steps up the valley. In her right she carried her magic rattle, which she shook violently, now on one side, now on the other. The men drew aside to let her pass and to avoid being struck either by her wand or rattle, evidently holding her in great awe. On she came, however, disregarding their terror, and showing no inclination to denounce any of them as evil-doers, the service wizards and enchantresses are generally employed in rendering to the governing powers. As she got near to Umbulazi, she increased the rapidity of her movements, springing forward in the most wonderful manner, now turning to one side, now to the other, and bounding high in the air, while the charms she wore rattled and bumped against her body. Umbulazi and the chiefs round him watched these proceedings with intense eagerness, wondering what she would next do. Presently her eye fell on Denis and Percy.

"I think we should be wise to get into our hut," exclaimed Percy. "I don't like the look of that hideous creature."

Before, however, they could do so she was up to them, and flourishing her magical wand she struck them both on the shoulders. Although the blows did not hurt them, the effects were likely to prove disastrous. In another instant she had bounded away, and was apparently about to retire between the lines of soldiers. She had not gone far, however, before Umbulazi shouted to her to return.

Almost directly she had delivered the blows, several of the Zulu warriors, chiefs and others, rushed with threatening gestures towards the two captives. Denis, who was well acquainted with the customs of the Zulus, fully expected that a cruel death was instantly to be their lot; but mustering all his courage, he put on as determined a look as he could assume.

"We're in for it, Percy," he said, "so you must be prepared for the worst; but I'll try what I can do with these abominable savages."

Then looking boldly at the surrounding chiefs he addressed them in an undaunted tone.

"What are ye about to do, my friends?" he asked. "Because that strange woman struck us, are we to be treated as if we had committed some crime or were your sworn enemies?"

But no reply was deigned; all the expostulations he could offer were without the slightest effect. He and Percy were dragged up to the hut of the chief, before whom the woman was standing. He had just put the important question for her to answer—whether if he went to war he should obtain success over his enemies.

"Success will attend those who are the bravest and most numerous. See yonder host spread out before you. Can you doubt, O Prince, that victory will be yours?" she replied, in a loud chanting tone.

Umbulazi looked highly pleased at this answer.

"You hear what the wise woman says?" he exclaimed, turning to his chiefs.

"We will fight, we will gain the victory," they shouted.

Denis and Percy were all this time watching the proceedings with the greatest anxiety, wondering what would happen to them.

"What would you have me do with these white boys?" asked the chief.

"They have come as spies into your camp. They are the sons of those who have often tried to dispossess you of your lands. Let them, before the sun sets, be pierced through with assegais, and become as the dust of the earth."

"What does she say?" asked Percy, observing the expression of Denis's countenance.

"Something not very pleasant to us. She advises these fellows to kill us. But she has made a mistake, and not for the first time in her life; for she declares that we came into the camp to act as spies. Now the prince and the rest of the chiefs know perfectly well that we were brought in prisoners, and I should think they will have wit enough to see that she knows nothing about the matter."

From the remarks made by the chiefs, and the fierce glances they cast at him and Percy, Denis however felt anything but sure that they would do so.

"I'm very thankful that Lionel escaped," said Percy. "He will tell Hendricks where we are, and if we do not return, he will know what has become of us. Still I can scarcely fancy that these fellows will really put us to death."

"I don't think they would if they were left to themselves," said Denis; "but that dreadful old woman has so wonderful an influence on their superstitious minds, that she can induce them to do anything she likes. Now I suspect that she is in the interest of the other party, and she thinks that if these fellows can be induced to kill us, they will make our countrymen their enemies."

"If they are to die, the sooner they are put to death the better," exclaimed Umbulazi. "We will then, my brave warriors, set forth, sure of victory, to fight our foes."

Just at this juncture a large band of warriors was seen approaching the camp, led by a chief, who could be distinguished as such by the plumes in his head-dress, his cloak, and kilt of skins, and the ornaments on his oblong shield. He hastened on with his followers towards where Umbulazi was standing. As he drew near, Denis exclaimed—

"I am much mistaken if that young chief is not Mangaleesu, who was for so long living near Maritzburg. He was

always a great friend of Lionel's and mine, and I'm sure he would not see us massacred without trying to save us." Denis however waited until the fresh arrivals had paid their respects in the usual fashion to the prince. He then shouted out in English, "Mangaleesu, Mangaleesu! come and save us. These people accuse us of being spies, and threaten to kill us, although the prince himself knows we were brought into the camp against our wills, and that our only object is to get back to Hendricks, with whom we are travelling."

Mangaleesu, on hearing his name called, came up to them, and at once addressing their captors, inquired what crime they had committed.

No one could at first answer him, but at last one of them observed that the great enchantress declared that they had come into the camp as spies.

"But you all know that they were brought into the camp, and I will answer for it that they have no evil intentions against the prince or any one else. If we were to kill them, we should make all the white men in Natal our enemies," answered Mangaleesu.

His arguments appeared to be prevailing, when the savage old hag, fearing that her influence would be lost, should her orders not be obeyed, shouted out in a croaking voice—

"Kill them! kill them! If they are allowed to live, you cannot gain the victory."

"If they are killed," cried Mangaleesu, "neither I nor my followers can unite with those who allow so cruel an act. The English have always been my friends, and I will not see them ill-treated, notwithstanding what that old woman says. It was not long since that she was seen paying a visit to Cetchwayo, and who can tell that she has not been sent by him to betray us?"

The hag, who heard all that was said, began to move uneasily, and gradually drew back from the crowd, until she joined the men who had accompanied her into the camp. So deeply steeped in superstition were the minds of the Zulus, that they could not divest themselves of the idea that her predictions would be fulfilled, in spite of all Mangaleesu had said. Denis and Percy were therefore kept strictly guarded in their midst.

They could see the old witch at some distance gesticulating violently, waving her arms about, occasionally leaping from side to side in the most extraordinary fashion. Now and then she pointed to them in a way which made them fear that she was still urging the chiefs to put them to death. Mangaleesu was the only one who held out. Had he not arrived, it seemed very probable that the savages would have plunged their assegais in their bodies. Even now their lives hung in the balance. For some time she was seen talking to several men, among whom were those who had been their guards during the night. Presently she advanced, and as she waved her wand, and pointed towards them, Denis heard her exclaim—

"There were three of them! Where is the third? Without him the number is incomplete."

The prince, who seemed to have forgotten this fact, on hearing her speak, exclaimed—

"You are right, most sagacious prophetess. There were three. Bring him forth, that he may suffer the doom of the others."

Instantly several of the young chiefs rushed to the hut, and were seen, one after the other, crawling in.

"They'll be mighty puzzled when they find that he's not there," said Denis. "I'm doubly thankful that he got off if we are to be killed, and there seems a great chance of that."

"Do you think they'll have the barbarity to put us to death?" asked Percy. "What object can they have in doing so?"

"Those fellows think no more of killing a man than we do of snuffing out a candle. If Mangaleesu cannot persuade them to let us go, we'll have a poor chance indeed of escape."

It seemed that Denis was right in his conjectures. The dreadful old witch was evidently bent on their destruction. Still, while there's life there's hope, and Percy did not give way to despair. They both maintained as calm a manner as they could command.

Again Mangaleesu addressed the prince with a boldness which astonished the other chiefs, who regarded the dreadful old impostor with the most profound awe; but he was again out-talked, both by her and the other chiefs. Presently the men who had gone into the hut to look for Lionel returned with the astonishing announcement that he was not to be found, declaring that they could not account for his disappearance.

"What has become of your companion?" asked Umbulazi.

"We were not set to watch him, and if he's not there, it's clear that he's gone," answered Denis, adding in English, "and I hope you are much the wiser for the information."

"How did he go?" asked the prince.

"If he walked, he went on two legs," answered Denis.

"But how did he get out of the hut?" inquired the Prince.

"The guards who had us in charge should answer that question," said Denis, in the same tone as before.

"Where are the guards? Send them here!" cried Umbulazi, in an angry tone.

Denis feared that the poor fellows would lose their lives, and unwilling to have them put to death, he cried out—

"They are not to blame. He is but a small boy, so he crept out by a hole, through which a large man could not have forced his way. He is with our friends long ago, I hope, so you need not trouble yourselves about him."

This answer, however, did not save the unfortunate guards, who soon approached, looking very downcast.

"I gave three prisoners into your charge; here are two, but where is the third?" asked the prince.

The three guards could not reply. At last one of them asked permission to go and search the hut. The prince told them that they might do so, but must come back and be killed, if they did not find the boy.

As may be supposed, they were a long time in making the search, and although the Zulus are very indifferent to death, yet they were naturally unwilling to go back and be killed. Denis earnestly hoped that they would try and make their escape, for he justly feared that should the prince once see blood flowing, like the savage tiger, he would be even more ready than before to shed theirs.

At last the prince, growing impatient, ordered some men to go to the hut and bring out the guards, either with or without the prisoner. The unhappy wretches were quickly dragged forward.

"Where is the boy?" asked the prince.

No answer was given.

"Kill them!" he exclaimed; and in an instant some heavy clubs descended on their heads, and each man lay in his blood, pierced by a dozen assegais.

"It will be our turn next!" cried Denis. "Are you ready, Percy?"

"As much as I can be. How thankful I am that Lionel escaped!" As he spoke, a dozen warriors with their assegais uplifted, still dripping with the blood of their former victims, approached; but at that moment there was a cry that some white men were coming, one of them waving a flag.

"Hold!" exclaimed Umbulazi. "It will not be wise to kill the prisoners just as their countrymen are coming. I would rather have them as friends than enemies."

Denis, who heard him speak, felt his heart bound.

"I don't think we shall die just yet," he said to Percy, "for here come Hendricks and Crawford and Umgolo, with a dozen armed men close behind them."

Chapter Eight.

The escape.

Denis and Percy, taking advantage of the excitement which the arrival of Hendricks and his party caused among the Zulu warriors, rushed out from their midst, and before any one could stop them, they darted away in the direction their friends were coming. Lionel, who was among the first to see them, uttering a shout of joy, galloped forward, followed by Crawford.

"Jump up behind me," he cried to Denis, stretching out his hand. "We possibly may have to run for it, if Hendricks and Umbulazi don't agree."

Percy at the same moment sprang up behind Crawford, while Hendricks, ordering his party to halt, rode forward alone towards the prince, keeping however his horse well in hand, and his rifle ready for instant use.

"I come to salute you, Umbulazi, and to ask you why you detained my young companions; but as they have been restored to me I will not enter into that subject," he said, drawing up at such a distance that he might, without difficulty extricate himself should it be necessary.

"Do you come as a friend or a foe?" asked the prince.

"I come as a friend, for such I am to all the Zulu people," answered Hendricks.

"Well, as a friend I invite you to dismount and partake of a feast which will speedily be prepared to do you honour," said the prince.

"I cannot at present delay my journey," answered Hendricks, who, his keen eye having observed the expression on the countenances of several of the chiefs, greatly doubted the sincerity of the prince. He also recollected the treacherous way in which a large body of boers had been massacred a few years before by a relative of this very man, having been beguiled by a similar invitation.

Again, however, the prince pressed him, assuming so courteous an air, that he was almost persuaded to yield, when the old prophetess, disappointed at not seeing the boys put to death, came whirling up, shaking her rattle and waving her wand, and crying out to her countrymen, "Beware of the strangers! Beware of the people with pale faces!"

They are no friends of the Zulus. Now you have them in your power, kill them! kill them all!"

Mangaleesu on hearing this cried out to Umbulazi, "Be not deceived by her. The white men wish to be friends with the Zulus. Harm them not. If injury is done them, the Zulus will be the sufferers."

Hendricks, who of course understood all that was said, saw that it would be the height of folly to put himself in the power of Umbulazi and his followers, and therefore, thanking Mangaleesu, whom he now recognised, for his good intentions, replied to the prince's invitation, that his mission being accomplished, he and his party must take their departure.

He was anxious for another reason to get clear of them as soon as possible; for, knowing the jealousy which existed between Umbulazi and Cetchwayo, he felt convinced that the former was about to make war on his more favoured brother, and would very likely try to detain him and his people for the purpose of compelling them to fight on his side. He therefore, uttering an "Usaleke," the usual Kaffir salutation at leaving, turned his horse's head and rode back to his companions.

"Keep ready for a start," he said; "for although we have one friend among them, I cannot depend upon the rest. Show no hurry until I give the word."

They rode on slowly, Hendricks ordering the rest of the party to go on ahead, while he brought up the rear. He had got to a short distance when Mangaleesu was heard shouting—

"Go on, go on! they try kill! No time lose!"

These words, spoken in English, were mixed up with Kaffir expressions, hurling abuse at their heads, evidently for the purpose of deceiving his countrymen.

Hendricks inwardly thanked Mangaleesu for the warning he had given; still he knew that it was important not to exhibit the slightest alarm, as by so doing he should only the more speedily tempt the Kaffirs to follow. The old witch, now finding that her intended victims were likely to escape her, or rather, that her traitorous plan for committing Umbulazi with the English—for such there can be no doubt she entertained—was a failure, shrieked out to the warriors—

"What! are you going to let the dogs escape? Come on! come on! we shall be even now in time to overtake them. Never mind what Umbulazi says. He will thank you for destroying his enemies."

At this time she was some distance from the prince, so that her remarks were not heard by him, and no one would have ventured to repeat them. Several of the chiefs had already been influenced by her, and a large number of the men, excited by her denunciations against the hunter and his party, uttering loud shouts, rushed forward with their assegais quivering in their hands, bent on their destruction.

Hendricks, who had been carefully noting what was occurring among the people, even before they made an onward movement, knew what was about to happen. He now saw that not a moment was to be lost.

"On, on, my lads!" he shouted; "keep straight ahead up the hill."

Crawford, who had gone ahead, with Denis behind him, dug his spurs into his horse's flanks. Lionel and Percy followed close to him. The rest of the party were not far behind. Hendricks brought up the rear, keeping his rifle ready to shoot down any warrior with a fast pair of heels who should come near enough to hurl his assegai. When once he had got a good start, he had no doubt about keeping well ahead. But the hill had to be surmounted, when the men on foot would have the advantage of the horses. He turned for a moment to take a glance at his pursuers. Excited to fury by the howls and shrieks of the old hag, they were exerting every muscle of their lithe bodies to spring over the ground, and were coming on at a rapid rate. The well-trained steeds bravely pressed up the hill, as if they were perfectly aware of the threatened danger. Several of the Zulus had already got up to within fifty yards of the fugitives. A couple of assegais came whistling through the air, but they fell short of Hendricks, who now urging on his horse, made the animal spring ahead. The rest of the party were by this time almost on level ground. A few more bounds, and they were on the brow. There was now no probability that the Zulus would overtake them. Hendricks might have punished their pursuers by shooting down one or more, but he had no desire to kill any one, and the extreme danger passed he rode on to the head of his party. Still he could not venture to slacken his speed, for before them was another valley with a good deal of rough ground, and some of the more active Zulus might even now approach near enough to hurl their assegais. The desire he felt to avoid bloodshed made him still more anxious to keep ahead; for he and his companions might otherwise, by halting, have received their pursuers with a fire which would effectually have stopped their career. It was satisfactory to know that the Zulus had no horses, for none had been observed in or about the camp, so that when once they had got well ahead there was no risk of being overtaken.

What all this time had become of Gozo? Denis and Percy had not seen him during the morning, nor had he made his appearance after Hendricks' arrival at the camp. It was hoped therefore that he had escaped, although it was too possible that he had been put to death by the Zulus.

As the party gained the brow of the slope which led down to the next valley, they saw below a herd of cattle, among which were several horses feeding, attended by a few Zulus.

"The chances are our horses are among them," cried Denis, as they rode down the slope; "yes, yes, I see them! I am sure they are ours; and, hurrah, there too is old Gozo safe and sound. He has caught sight of us, and, depend on it, is planning how he can best get clear of those fellows near him."

"You are right," said Hendricks, and he shouted his follower's name.

The herdsmen, thinking the strangers were about to make a raid on their cattle, began to drive them off, on which Gozo, throwing himself on the back of one of the horses, caught the two others, and galloped on to join his friends. Some of the herdsmen, seeing what he was doing, hurled their assegais at him; but, experienced hunter as he was, he avoided them by bending down over the neck of his horse, and escaped. He was quickly up to his friends.

"Hurrah! here he comes," said Denis. "I will relieve you, Crawford, and mount my animal."

"But he has no saddle," said Crawford.

"Oh, never mind that; I've ridden many a mile without one; and your horse will go all the faster for not having my weight on his back," answered Denis, as he threw himself off and quickly mounted one of the horses Gozo brought up.

No time was lost in asking Gozo questions. Lionel, who was as well accustomed to ride without a saddle as was Denis, at once climbed up on the back of his own horse.

Again the party set off, allowing the herdsmen to escape with their cattle; and looking back, they saw the Zulus in considerable numbers on the top of the hill they had just crossed; but the slope on the opposite side was not very steep, and pushing on they gained the summit before their pursuers had reached the bottom of the valley. Waving an ironical farewell, they galloped forward. Still it was prudent not to pull rein as yet, and on they went at a rate which soon carried them far out of reach of their enemies.

"I wish that Mangaleesu had not joined Umbulazi; for though the prince fancies he will succeed, there is every probability that he will be defeated, as, besides being supported by the king, Cetchwayo has by far the larger number of people with him," said Hendricks, addressing Crawford. "Had I found an opportunity, I would have spoken to Mangaleesu on the subject, and urged him to retreat while there was time."

While the two elders of the party were conversing as they rode on together, the three boys were galloping alongside each other and exchanging remarks in somewhat disjointed sentences, as people are wont to do when going at a fast rate on horseback, especially if their steeds are without saddles, as was the case in the present instance with two of the lads.

"I cannot tell you how glad I was to see you come back with Hendricks, for I was much afraid that you had been caught by the Zulus and killed," said Percy, turning to Lionel. "How did you manage to escape?"

"It was not so difficult as you might have supposed," answered Lionel. "When I got out of the hut, I crept along, keeping as much as possible under the shadow of bushes and rocks. If I heard the slightest sound, I stopped and lay flat on the ground, just as the Zulus do when approaching an enemy or trying to escape. The guards were off guard, supposing, I fancy, that none of Cetchwayo's people were near enough to reach the camp. I saw two or three in the distance, but none came in my way. My chief fear was that I might fall in with a prowling lion or leopard, or encounter a snake of some sort crawling along. I did not, however, allow myself to be troubled about such matters, I only thought how I had best act should I meet with either of them. On and on I went; but it was somewhat fatiguing work, as I could never venture to stand upright, and had generally to make my way on all-fours, although sometimes I ran on my feet, bending low down; but even in that position I could not run fast. I at last reached the side of the hill up which I had to climb. There were several open parts, where, had the Zulus been keeping a bright look-out, I must have been seen, although they might have taken me for a jackal or a lion. I crawled along as fast as I could, not stopping even to look behind me, until I reached the brow of the hill. On getting to the other side I saw a number of cattle, with several horses among them, cropping the grass. Before I could venture on I had to try and ascertain whereabouts the men herding the cattle had posted themselves. I was pretty sure that they would be under shelter somewhere, and as the night wind was chilly, they would be either seated beneath the rocks, or would have built themselves huts of boughs. I feared that if by chance I should creep near one of them, I might be seen, when the fellow would to a certainty hurl his assegai at me, as he would take me for a wild beast of some sort. At last, unable to discover any one, I crawled down the hill, prepared at any moment to take to my heels, should I be discovered. No sound reached my ears, and I at length found myself close to several horses. As they were not alarmed, I guessed that they were our own, which the Zulus had taken from us. I knew that my beast would come to me, as I had taught him to do, could I venture to call him. I whistled low. I saw one of the horses lift his head. I could just distinguish him against the sky. As I lay on the ground, I whistled again, and he began to move towards me. The third time I whistled louder than the first, when, to my infinite satisfaction, he trotted up. He had the rope bridle still round his neck. Slipping it into his mouth, so as to be able to guide him, I grasped his mane and leapt upon his back. Just as I reached it and found myself firmly seated, I heard a shout, and looking round, caught sight of a Zulu rushing out from beneath a thick bush, where he had ensconced himself. I did not stop to inquire what he wanted, but urging on my animal with my voice and heels, I galloped off across the country. I was breasting the opposite hill when several other Zulus joined the first. Whether, even then, they had made out that there was anybody on the back of the horse, I was not certain. I think they did not; for, as I bent low down, they might have supposed that the animal had been suddenly seized with a desire to return to its former companions, and that the others would probably follow, which of course they wished to prevent them from doing. When once I was on the top of the hill, I knew that there was little chance of the Zulus overtaking me. I galloped forward, soon getting beyond the sound of their voices, while I knew that they could not distinguish even the clatter of my horse's hoofs at the distance I was already from them. I had a long ride before me; but as my horse was fresh, and had had a good feed, I had no doubt that I could accomplish it. I guessed, more or less, the direction of our camp, and hoped that I was steering a straight course by the stars, which shone brightly. My steed fortunately could see his way better than I could, or I should often have been greatly puzzled. At last the moon rose. Although it dimmed the stars, it afforded more light, and enabled me to see the outline of the hills, by which I knew that I was going right. I was galloping along, when my horse started and began to tremble. Presently a loud roar saluted my ears. Looking ahead, I saw, to my dismay, a lion just emerging from a thicket. Had I

had my rifle, I would have tried to shoot the brute. To gallop either to the one side or the other would have been madness, as the lion would have been up to me in a few bounds; for, heavy as the creature looks, he can, I assure you, move for a short distance faster than the fleetest horse. Could I have induced my steed to move forward, I would have ridden at the lion, taking care, you may be sure, not to get within range of his paws; but the poor animal, trembling with fear, stood stock still. At first I was not quite certain that the lion was looking at me. Presently, however, he roared again. In return I shouted at the top of my voice. This seemed to encourage my horse, and patting him on the neck, I tried to soothe him and get him to advance a few paces. I was in a very dangerous predicament, I knew, but I did not despair. Presently I saw a pack of jackals run by, with a lioness at their heels, when the lion turned and joined her. From this I knew that he must have killed a deer, or some other large animal, and had been calling to his mate, and that his roaring was to keep the jackals away. People often declare that the jackals are the lion's providers; but such is all nonsense. I did not stop, you may be sure, to see how either the lions or jackals were employed, but rode on as fast as I could out of their way. I was not certain of the distance I had gone, and was very doubtful whether I should hit the camp. I was afraid that I had passed it, and should suddenly find myself in front of some kraal, whose inhabitants might not be amiably disposed. Still it would not do to stand still. It at last appeared to me that my horse had a strong inclination to move to the right, and on reaching the summit of a hill I caught sight of two fires in the distance. I rode towards them, feeling sure that they were at our camp. As I approached, I shouted at the top of my voice. In an instant all the dogs came out barking, followed immediately, to my great satisfaction, by Hendricks himself on horseback.

"I was just setting off to look for you boys, for I feared some accident had happened," he exclaimed. "Where are the rest?"

"I told him.

"You must have some food while I make arrangements for our expedition," he observed.

"Very glad I was, I can tell you, to get something to eat. Meantime he sent for Umgolo, and directed him to order as many men as could be spared to get ready. He wanted me to stay behind, but I begged to accompany him, though I asked for a fresh horse, which was likely to carry me better than my own after his hard gallop."

By the time Lionel had finished his account, the party had come in sight of the camp, where they were welcomed by the men in charge, who, having heard reports of the approach of Umbulazi's forces to attack Cetchwayo, feared that they might have been detained if not cut off. The fires were made up, and the remainder of a buffalo killed in the morning was quickly cooked to satisfy the hunger of the party Hendricks had taken with him, as they had had nothing to eat since they left the camp in the morning. They had, unfortunately, no other meat; and it was necessary, before they could proceed to any distance, to obtain a further supply. Still Hendricks was anxious, as quickly as possible, to get out from between the two contending forces, one of which was on his right hand and the other on his left.

As soon as the meal was over, sentries being placed round the camp, and careful watches, to keep a look-out on the oxen, the rest of the party lay down with their arms by their sides, ready to start in the morning, as soon as there was sufficient daylight to enable them to see their way clearly. Scarcely had Lionel, with his young companions, placed their heads on the saddles or rolls of cloth which served them as pillows, than they were fast asleep, dreaming of the antics they had seen played by Umbulazi's dusky warriors on the previous day. Even the howls of the hyenas and jackals failed to disturb them, nor did the roaring of a lion, which came up close to the camp, and made most of the Kaffir servants start to their feet.

Before daylight, Hendricks, whom no exertion could fatigue, was on foot, when he quickly aroused his followers. Being in a hurry to set off, he did not wait for breakfast, but ordered the horses to be saddled and the oxen to be inspanned, and the men taking their accustomed places on each side of the waggon, the journey was commenced, just as the first streaks of day appeared over the distant hills. The road was well known, or it would have been difficult to find it in the gloom of morning; but as soon as the sun rose, there was light enough and to spare, as well as more heat than was pleasant, especially in the opinion of the young English travellers. Moving on for some miles, they came to the edge of the plateau, or rather to a broad valley which ran across it. As they gazed down from their elevated position, it appeared sprinkled with clumps of mimosa of various sizes, springing up from a sward of soft green grass.

"That will be delightful for a gallop!" exclaimed Crawford, as they halted for a short time to secure the drags to the waggon wheels.

"Wait until we get down to it," observed Hendricks, laughing. "We shall find that seeming sward a tangled network of long coarse grass, as high as our waists."

Such indeed was proved to be the case, although the oxen managed to tramp through it.

"Look out for snakes!" cried Denis. "I saw a big fellow wriggling through the grass just now. He seemed more afraid of us than we need be of him; only remember, Crawford, that you don't step upon one, if you can help it."

No accident, however, happened, and the waggon in a short time was ascending the opposite height. Some further distance had to be traversed before water was reached, when the travellers outspanned for their morning meal, as also to afford the oxen rest after the toils they had gone through.

The travellers had but meagre fare, as no meat had as yet been obtained, but mealy cakes and bowls of tea were sufficient to satisfy their hunger for the present. Scarcely had they begun breakfast, however, when Umgolo, who had gone to the top of a slight elevation in the neighbourhood, came hurrying back with the report that he had seen in the far distance a herd of buffaloes, and he proposed setting out immediately to shoot some. The meal was therefore hurried over, and Hendricks and Umgolo, with two other Kaffir hunters, accompanied by Crawford and the three lads, set off on foot, hoping to bring back a sufficient supply of meat, not only for present consumption, but to turn into

belong. The party first made for the hill, that they might take a look over the country, and observe the direction in which the buffaloes were moving, as also the quarter from whence the wind was blowing, so as to approach the herd on the lee side, and thus avoid being discovered by the keen-scented animals.

Far off to the right was a wood, towards which the herd was travelling for shade and rest; but as the wind blew from where the hunters then were towards the wood, it was necessary to make a long circuit before they could approach from the desired quarter. So bright and pure was the atmosphere, that distances seemed almost as nothing. The buffaloes, which were in reality miles away, appeared so near that Crawford and Percy, who were less accustomed to the country than the rest of the party, fancied that they should be up to them in a quarter of an hour or less. As it was, they had a weary tramp, the sun beating down on their heads with intense force until they reached a wooded part of the country, where they enjoyed some shade; but owing to the tangled roots and creepers, they were compelled to make even slower progress than before.

"Silence now, lads," said Hendricks, "no talking: we must creep up, and not let our footfalls be heard. I bring you for the sake of giving you a lesson. Remember, none of you are to fire until Umgolo and I have brought down a beast, but then you can exercise your skill."

Saying this, he and Umgolo set off, followed by the rest of the party, who imitated their example, stepping cautiously, and stooping down when they had to cross an open space where they were exposed to view. They could catch glimpses of the buffaloes moving slowly along, cropping the grass as they went, an old bull acting as their leader and guardian. At length a spot which afforded shelter and concealment was reached inside the wood. Hendricks and Umgolo searched round carefully, lest it should prove that a lion or some other savage animal had made its lair thereabouts, and might spring out upon them.

Satisfied on that point, directed by Hendricks, they took up their positions, and then commenced creeping forward as noiselessly as mice. Presently Hendricks pointed in front, and made a signal to prepare for instant action. By moving aside some of the boughs with the greatest caution, the whole herd was seen, magnificent-looking fellows, some standing, others lying down, and several snoring away, enjoying their noonday siesta. The old bull, the leader of the herd, stood, however, looking out, as if suspecting danger, yet perhaps not sufficiently satisfied that it was near to warn his companions. Hendricks had got within ten or a dozen yards of him; Umgolo had crept up to about the same distance from another fine-looking brute. The younger hunters had each selected an animal, but, obeying orders, refrained from firing. Presently Hendricks, who was kneeling, raised his rifle, and a loud report was heard. Almost at the same instant Umgolo fired, when the rest of the party, deeming themselves at liberty to act as they thought fit, discharged their rifles. As soon as the smoke had cleared away, three fine animals were seen on the ground, while the rest of the herd were scampering off in full flight across the plain. One fell before they had got far, showing that two of the younger hunters had fired with effect; but which had been the successful shot, neither of them could be very certain, though each claimed the honour.

Umgolo, followed by the other Kaffirs, sprang forward, eager to cut up the carcasses. Hendricks had ordered two of the men left in camp to bring up the horses by a direct path to carry back the meat. They soon arrived, and the animals being loaded with the more valuable portions of the slain buffaloes, the whole party set off to return in triumph with the spoils of the chase. They were scarcely out of the wood, when suddenly, from behind the bushes and tall grass, a hundred Kaffirs, with assegais in hand, which they shook as if about to hurl them at the hunters, sprang up, and almost completely surrounded them.

"We're in a fearful predicament," exclaimed Percy, as looking round he saw no means of escape. "Good-bye, Lionel, good-bye, Denis. I suppose these black fellows will run us through with their ugly-looking spears before many minutes are over."

"Sure, I hope they'll not be after doing anything of the sort," said Denis; "they're only quivering them just now to frighten us."

"I don't like their looks," said Lionel; "but I hope, as many of them know Hendricks, they don't intend to kill us."

"What means this?" exclaimed Hendricks, advancing towards the nearest. "We are friends of the Zulus, and desire to traverse their country in peace. You know me; I have often been among you."

"Yes, we know you well," said a chief, stepping forward.

"We have no desire to injure you or your companions; but you must accompany us to our Prince Cetchwayo, who desires to see you. It is known that you have been at the camp of Umbulazi, and he wishes to know the object which took you there."

"I went there from necessity, to rescue some of my followers who had been made prisoners. I succeeded, and carried them off, tarrying not a moment longer with Umbulazi than I was compelled to do."

"The prince will hear what you have to say, and will act according to his judgment," said the chief. "Yield yourselves as prisoners."

"If you insist on our going, we have no choice in the matter," said Hendricks, looking round at the large band of savage warriors which had surprised them. "But perhaps the assurance I give, that we are friends to Cetchwayo, and are simply travelling through his country, will satisfy him."

"The prince wishes to see the great hunter face to face," answered the chief; "and he and his followers, with his waggon and cattle, will accompany us forthwith. The word has been spoken. The order must be obeyed."

"We must submit to these fellows," said Hendricks, turning to his English companions. "But load your rifles, and be

prepared to act as I may direct you, though there is, I fear, but little chance of making our escape."

The Zulus had now gathered closely round their prisoners, whom, however, they did not ill-treat, but allowed them to walk as they liked.

"I fear that my people in the camp, when they see you coming, will take to flight," said Hendricks to the chief. "Let me go on first, and I will tell them that you come as friends. Will you trust me?"

The chief looked at him. "Yes," he said, "I know that I can trust the word of a white chief, and you may go forward."

"Halt here, then, for a few minutes, to give me time to get ahead of you," said Hendricks, "and I will trust you also with my people, that you will not injure them."

The chief, on this, ordered his followers to halt, while Hendricks went on with rapid strides towards the camp. On his arrival, he found his people in a state of great consternation, they having just caught sight of the Zulus, and they confessed that in another minute they would have fled, believing that he and those with him had been killed.

He managed, however, to quell their fears by the assurance that Cetchwayo would not injure them, though he might delay their journey. This was of greater consequence to him than to them. In a short time the Zulus were seen advancing. On their arrival, the chief told Hendricks that he must at once inspan and proceed towards Cetchwayo's camp, which was much nearer than had been supposed. On Hendricks, however, representing to him that he and his people had been without meat the whole day, the chief consented to their waiting until some had been cooked, observing that he would take charge of the remainder. He did so, by dividing it among his followers, who forthwith lighted several fires, and cooking it after their barbarous fashion, quickly ate the whole of it up, scarcely leaving a few scraps for the hungry dogs. This was not a little provoking to the hunters, but it allowed them some time to rest and recover from the fatigue they all felt.

As soon as the feast was over, Hendricks gave the word to inspan. The chief somewhat demurred on seeing his prisoners preparing to mount their horses, naturally fearing that they would try to make their escape, but on Hendricks assuring him that they would accompany him to Cetchwayo's camp, he consented to their riding, though he took good care so to place his people on either side, that they would have found it a difficult matter to get off, even had they been so disposed.

Chapter Nine.

King Panda.

The band of Zulus, with the captives in their midst, were compelled to move at a slow pace; for the Hottentot drivers of the waggon, uncertain of the reception they might meet with at the end of their journey, would not hasten on the oxen even when the ground was level, and it was frequently rough, with steep hills to ascend or descend, so that a quicker pace was impossible. The warriors belonged to a regiment of unmarried men or boys, as could be seen from their heads wanting the ring at the top, which is the mark of those who have been allowed by the king to take to themselves wives. As they marched along they shouted and sang songs descriptive of the deeds they had performed, or of those they intended to do, referring sometimes to their prowess in having captured a party of white men, who had not ventured to strike a blow for freedom; while they boasted especially of the way they intended to annihilate Umbulazi and his followers. Some gave way to their exuberant spirits by leaping and dancing in a fashion which offered a curious contrast to the march of a regiment of life guards. They shrieked, they quivered their assegais, and clashed their shields together, until Crawford, who had never before seen an exhibition of the sort, began to fear that they might take it into their heads to kill him and his companions.

"I think we should be prepared for an attack from these savages," he said to Denis, gravely. "For my part, I hope that we shall sell our lives dearly, if they attempt to take them."

"No fear of that for the present," answered Denis; "they are only in somewhat high spirits at the thought of having soon to engage in battle. You see Hendricks rides on as composedly as ever, so does Lionel, who perfectly understands what they are saying. They don't intend us any harm. However, I confess that it is possible their mood may change, and it would be as well not to do anything to offend them. Hendricks knows them better than most people, and will take care to keep them in good humour. I shall be very glad when we are out of their company notwithstanding."

"So say I," exclaimed Crawford. "I confess that had I known what savages they are, I should not have been so eager to come into their country."

"As to that, I do not suppose they are worse than other tribes," said Denis; "they are certainly more intelligent and brave. My chief regret is that we shall have further delay in going in search of my father. I wish that you were to accompany us instead of stopping with Captain Broderick, although I daresay Percy will be very glad of your company; and he has some sisters, who won't be ill pleased to have an English gentleman to talk to, as they must lead a somewhat monotonous life in that out-of-the-way spot, with only an occasional visit from a Dutch boer and his frau, or, when the weather is not too hot, a gallop through the wilds."

"I am half inclined to ask Hendricks to let me accompany him on his expedition into the interior," said Crawford. "I am afraid I should get tired of the sort of life you describe. However, I shall be able to judge better when I have seen the place."

"Or the young ladies, eh?" observed Denis; "I fancy something will depend upon that, won't it?"

Crawford made no reply.

This conversation caused the journey to appear shorter than might otherwise have been the case. Lionel and Percy, who generally kept together, amused themselves by talking away in a lively fashion, while Hendricks rode ahead, thinking over his plans for the future, and considering how he could best get free from King Panda and his son, the Prince Regent, for such was the rank held by Cetchwayo at that time. At length a kraal was seen on the slope of a hill, rising gradually from the plain. It was at present the habitation of Panda. The warriors raised a shout, intended as a compliment to the king, and again beating their shields and shaking their assegais, they made signals to the drivers to urge on the waggon at a faster speed than heretofore. The Hottentots, observing their threatening gestures, obeyed, and the ground being even, the oxen pulled away, incited by the lash of the drivers, which came down with incessant whisks on their flanks.

Hendricks, knowing the customs of the country, put his horse into a trot, Crawford and Denis and the two boys imitating him, and thus the warriors and their captives appeared to be rushing forward eagerly towards the palace of the king. The chief who had captured them hurried on first to announce the success of his expedition. Just before he reached the kraal he was met by a tall stout chief, evidently a person of much consideration, for as he approached he bowed again and again, and then crouched down to the ground, apparently not daring to look up at his face. The tall chief wore, like the others, a cap stuck full of ostrich and crane feathers, with lappets of monkey skins, a kilt of the same skins round his waist, and a sort of cloak hanging over his shoulders, fastened in front by numerous white ox-tails. His features were handsome for a Kaffir; in height he towered above those surrounding him; and though still young, he was remarkably stout. He was evidently also a powerful man, and he possessed the supposed attributes of high birth—wonderfully small hands and feet for a person of his size.

“Who can he be?” asked Crawford.

“A whopping big fellow, at all events,” answered Denis; “I’ll ask Hendricks.”

“That is no other than Cetchwayo, the real ruler of Zululand,” said Hendricks; “he has come here probably on a visit to his father, and he it was who ordered our seizure. I have always been on good terms with him, and must try and induce him not to detain us. It will not do, however, to approach him on horseback. We must show him some respect, though we need not bow and cringe as that fellow is doing.”

When the party had approached to about a hundred yards or so from the prince, a halt was called, when Hendricks, dismounting, summoned Umgolo, and leaving the horses in charge of the other attendants, they proceeded together towards the prince.

Hendricks saluted him in Kaffir fashion, and having paid the usual compliments, begged to inquire why he and his party had been summoned. The prince replied that he wished to see him face to face. That no harm was intended him, but that he required his services for an important object. Hendricks asked what that object was, saying at the same time, that he should be always ready to do anything to serve him.

“That is well!” answered Cetchwayo; “but you are equally ready to do anything to serve Umbulazi, to whose camp I find you have paid a visit.”

Hendricks replied that he had been compelled to visit the camp for the purpose of rescuing some of his followers who had been made prisoners, and that he had neither promised his assistance nor expressed his approbation of the proceedings of Umbulazi.

“You must show which side you espouse by joining me, and assisting in defeating the traitor who is planning to deprive me of my father’s favour, and to rule the country in my stead,” said Cetchwayo.

In vain Hendricks pleaded that although friendly to Cetchwayo, he was anxious to proceed on his journey for an important object, and that it was not becoming in white men to interfere in the quarrels of the natives, with all of whom they wished to be at peace.

Cetchwayo smiled grimly, remarking, “That whether Hendricks and his followers fought or not, they must accompany him to see the way in which he would punish his enemies.”

When he pleaded still more earnestly, the prince began to grow angry, and hinted that if his white friend did not accompany him willingly he should be compelled to use more powerful arguments.

Hendricks, seeing that it would be imprudent to press the point further, had at length to submit, and Cetchwayo then told him that he might camp where his waggon stood, and that wood, water, and food would be sent to him.

The oxen were accordingly offspanned, the horses were knee-haltered, and the other usual preparations made. In a short time a party of boys appeared bringing firewood, which they deposited near the waggon. They were followed by the same number of girls, who came along laughing and singing, bringing some large calabashes of water on their heads. Finding that no meat appeared, Hendricks did up a packet of blankets and other articles, and bidding one of his men accompany him, proceeded to the chief kraal. Percy and Lionel followed at a short distance, as they said to each other, to see the fun. As they got near the kraal, they observed a number of half-naked blacks dragging at what looked like a huge gun carriage, but which proved to be a hand-waggon, very similar to a big chest on wheels. In it was seated an immensely fat man. As he approached, the people who were standing outside immediately went down on their hands and knees, shouting out, “Bayete, bayete!” or King of all other kings; “Zulu-lion, Monarch of the world,” and similar complimentary cries.

“Why, who is that fat old fellow?” asked Percy.

"Who should he be but King Panda, to be sure?" answered Denis. "He is too fat for his legs to support him, so he has to be dragged about in that fashion."

The king looked about him in a complaisant manner, and gave some order, when half a dozen of the courtiers darted off as fast as their legs could carry them, eager to obey it. On seeing Hendricks, he desired him to approach. The hunter advanced without considering it necessary to make a salute in the style the black king's subjects adopted; but taking the bundle of blankets from his attendant, he offered it, saying that he had brought a present which he hoped his Majesty would deign to accept.

The king, on seeing the blankets, which were ornamented with gay-coloured borders, expressed his great satisfaction, and without referring to the way in which the hunter and his party had been taken prisoners, inquired the news from Natal, the price of cattle, and talked about other similar subjects.

Hendricks, knowing that it would be useless to plead with Panda against Cetchwayo's decision, having answered his questions, simply expressed his pleasure at seeing the king look so well.

The old fellow grimly smiled, and stroked his stomach as if he considered himself still capable of swallowing an unlimited quantity of beef and mealy cakes. Yet this mountain of flesh had unlimited power over the lives of his subjects, which he showed before the day was over by ordering one of his courtiers, who had offended him somehow or other, to be put to death. Some thirty of those standing round darted off with their assegais in their hands. Just at that instant the unhappy offender appeared, coming to ask pardon of the king, and to explain the reason of his apparent negligence. He was met by the executioners of the king's pleasure, and before he could open his mouth he was pierced through and through by a score of assegais. When his dead body was dragged up to the waggon, the king simply nodded his approval of the act. The body was then dragged off again to be buried. None of the man's relatives or friends dared to utter a word of complaint. Soon after Hendricks and his companions had reached the waggon, an ox was driven towards them by some of the attendants of the king, who had sent it as a return for the presents he had received. It was at once slaughtered, and the meat was spitted, and placed before the fire to cook, greatly to the satisfaction of the Kaffir and Hottentot servants, who had begun loudly to complain of being starved. Hendricks had still some hopes that Cetchwayo would allow him to continue his journey the next morning; but the prince sent word that he must remain another day, as he was not prepared to commence his march.

This was a further trial of temper to Hendricks, and by the way he bore it he set a good example to his young followers. Guards were placed round the camp by Cetchwayo's orders, so that no one could leave it without permission. It was thus very evident that he intended to adhere to his first intention, of compelling the white men to accompany him on his expedition against his brother. There was no help for it. The whole party turned in to sleep, satisfied, at all events, that they were not likely to be disturbed by a lion or rhinoceros, or any other wild beast, making an inroad into the camp.

Next day a messenger from the king made his appearance, and presented an invitation to the great white hunter to dine with His Majesty, and to bring his young white companions.

Hendricks groaned. "I know what that means," he observed to Crawford. "We shall have to drink beer and eat beef until we are ready to die of repletion. I would thankfully avoid the honour if we could possibly do so; but if we were to refuse, the king might grow angry, and perhaps confiscate our goods, if he did not order us all to be put to death."

"Let us go by all means," said Crawford. "It will be great fun, and we shall, at all events, be able to boast that we dined with the king of Zululand."

"We must go, I fear, but I doubt if you or any of us will find it much fun," answered Hendricks.

He then turned to the messenger, who, of course, had no conception of the remarks which had been made, and begged him to inform the great king that his white friends would do themselves the immense honour of obeying his commands.

At the appointed time Hendricks and his four companions set off, leaving the waggon under the charge of Umgolo, with directions to keep a strict watch upon it, lest any of Cetchwayo's brave soldiers should take it into their heads to appropriate the contents. They then proceeded towards the kraal at the side of the hill. The heat was excessive, the sun beat down with intense force upon their heads, so that they were not inclined to move very fast. Having arrived at the kraal, they were ushered into the outer circle, where, in a hut considerably larger than those inhabited by the common people, they found the king seated on a pile of mats, he being utterly unable to squat down in the fashion of his less obese subjects. Hendricks saluted him in due form, and Crawford and Percy imitated their leader as well as they could. They then arranged themselves so as to form part of a circle on one side of His Majesty.

Panda looked at Lionel. "That boy knows how to behave," he remarked, observing the proper Kaffir salutation which he made on entering.

"Yes, O King! I have long lived in Zululand, and I know good manners," answered Lionel, with perfect gravity, while Denis turned away his head to indulge in a quiet laugh, to which he could not openly venture to give way.

Presently several girls appeared, each carrying a bowl holding about a gallon of beer, one of which they set down before each of the guests. Others then brought in wooden platters, huge pieces of beef, large masses of which an attendant cut off with an assegai, and handed to the king, who munched away at them with infinite satisfaction. The guests were desired to help themselves with their knives which they carried in their belts. There were, in addition, baskets of mealy cakes, which Percy declared were more to the purpose than the tough half-roasted beef. The king every now and then looked round the circle, exclaiming, "Eat! eat!" The guests did their utmost, but were very soon satisfied.

"Pray tell him that I can do no more," said Crawford. "This hot day I should prefer some cold lamb and a salad, but this coarse beef beats me."

Hendricks apologised as best he could.

"Tell them to drink, then," said the king, "if they cannot eat. The beer will slip down without any difficulty. Don't you like beer?" asked the king, when he saw that after taking a few mouthfuls they stopped.

"Pray tell him that we like beer in moderation, but shall never be able to finish off one of these bowls," exclaimed Crawford.

Hendricks assured the king that his young companions were anxious to please him; but that Englishmen's insides were not of the same magnificent capacity as His Majesty's, and that therefore it would be impossible for them to do as he desired.

A frown gathered on the king's brow. "Drink, I say, drink! They must drink," he exclaimed.

"Tell the king that I'll see him at Jericho first," said Denis; an observation which set Percy off laughing.

"Command yourselves, lads," said Hendricks, turning to them. "This may become no laughing matter. Although you cannot drink, and I don't wish you to do so, you must show the king that you desire to please him."

"Sure I'll do that," said Denis, putting the bowl to his mouth, and pretending to swallow a huge draught, and then placed it on the ground and gasped for breath. "Please tell His Majesty, that unless he wishes to kill me, he'll let me off this time," cried the irrepressible young Irishman. "Poor Percy and Lionel will burst outright if they have to swallow this stuff."

"That I shall," exclaimed Percy. "I'll not swallow another drop to please him or all the nigger kings in Africa."

Lionel did not venture to make any remark, but looked as resolute as the rest not to turn himself into a beer barrel.

Hendricks began to wish heartily that he had left his companions in the camp, but had now to get out of the difficulty in the best way he could. He therefore reminded Panda that they were very young, and that English manners were not like Zulu manners, but he hoped the next time they visited the country, should the king give them the honour of an invitation, that they would behave themselves better.

Both Hendricks and Crawford had already swallowed more of the beer than they liked. Although its intoxicating qualities were very weak, the latter declared he felt its effects in his head, and that should he take much more, he could not answer for himself.

At last Hendricks thought of an expedient which might possibly prove successful in enabling his companions to escape from a further infliction of the king's hospitable intentions. "The Lion of Africa" (such was one of the titles the obese old savage delighted to be addressed by) "was inquiring about affairs in Natal," he observed. "Not long ago, there lived in England,—which, as your Majesty is aware of, is a long way off,—a man named Jones. He was a worthy man, and had he been born in Zululand, he might have become a great warrior. But Jones was a man of peace. He had a family of ten children, six boys and four girls, very like him in all respects. Jones had a brother, and Jones's brother had twelve children, they were equally divided between boys and girls. As there was every prospect of there being a good many more little Jones's born, they agreed that the country might not be large enough to hold them, and they therefore determined to come out to Natal. Jones's brother came in a ship called the *Swan*, while Jones himself embarked in one named the *Duck*. They sailed almost at the same time. When the sea was smooth, the little Jones's were tolerably well, but when it grew rough, they became very sick, and wished that they had not come."

Hendricks, while he was speaking, kept his eye on the king, who, before he had got thus far, began to nod. He continued, therefore, in a low voice, giving the history of the Jones's, which, as it would be uninteresting to most readers, was especially so to the king, who, therefore, before the hunter had got much farther, fell fast asleep.

"Now my lads," said Hendricks, turning to his young companions, "you may take the opportunity of slipping off. Make a bow to the king as you leave the hut, more to please his attendants than His Majesty, who will certainly not see it, and I will follow."

His directions were obeyed, and they all breathed more freely when they found themselves in the open air. They guessed that the courtiers would not let the king discover that any beer had been left in the bowls, by drinking it up themselves, and they therefore were not troubled on that account.

"It is the first time I ever dined with a king, and it's the last, I hope, ever to have that honour—at least with a black one," exclaimed Denis, as they strolled back towards the waggon. "I wish we could send Cetchwayo to sleep as easily as Hendricks has done his fat old father, and then we might at once continue our journey."

Cetchwayo, however, was not a man to be sent asleep by any amount of Kaffir beer, whatever might have been the effect of half a dozen of London stout. He visited the camp in the evening, to have a talk, as he said, with his friend the great hunter.

He intended, he said, to commence his march at daylight the next morning, to attack Umbulazi, and he should depend upon his friends to afford him the assistance of their rifles.

"Do you wish, O Prince, to destroy me and my companions?" exclaimed Hendricks. "Know you not that I am subject to the laws of my country? Those laws forbid me to kill my fellow-creatures, except in self-defence, or in such warfare as is sanctioned by my government. If I were to kill any of Umbulazi's people, who have not attacked me, and who

are at peace with my country, I should make myself liable to the penalty of death. Remember, O Prince, that although your warriors are brave and numerous, yet Umbulazi has a strong force, and should the fortune of war turn against you, your women and children would be exposed to great danger. Now if you will place them under my charge, I will undertake to defend them, and will fight to the last, rather than allow them to be killed.”

To this proposal Cetchwayo would not consent, but at last he agreed that Hendricks and his men should remain in the reserve, and that in the event of any of his regiments being defeated, they should afford them protection, and enable them to rally, so as to renew the attack.

Very unwillingly Hendricks was compelled to consent to this arrangement, for he feared being drawn into the conflict, which he especially desired to avoid. Next morning, at daybreak, the army began its march. The main body advanced so slowly, that the waggon was able to keep up with it; but active scouts were sent ahead, to feel every inch of the way, while the rest kept themselves concealed, so that there was no possibility of their being taken by surprise. For three days they advanced, when it was supposed that they were approaching their enemies; but the scouts brought in word that they had retreated to a position nearer the border. This showed that Umbulazi was not so confident of victory as he had appeared to be—possibly he had discovered that his forces were far outnumbered by those of his brother.

On receiving this information, Cetchwayo ordered his whole army to advance. Hendricks was in hopes of being allowed to remain behind, but the prince would not hear of it.

“I will grant you this favour,” he answered. “I will leave two of your people, and six of my own, who are sick, to assist in taking care of the waggon; but you and the rest must accompany me on horseback, and view the battle, even if you do not take a part in it. I want to show you how we Zulus fight, and how we treat our enemies when we gain the victory.”

Chapter Ten.

A battle in Zululand.

Cetchwayo’s army, like a devouring host of locusts, advanced across the country in an extended line, burning the kraals belonging to the chiefs who had sided with Umbulazi, or were supposed to have sided with him, trampling down their mealy fields, and destroying their crops. Old men, women, and children were indiscriminately put to death when found within the huts. The greater number had fled to die in the woods of hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts. No mercy was shown to those who were captured. The warriors believed victory was certain, for the prophetess had declared that all the auguries were favourable. One more preliminary performance had to be gone through—a grand war dance of the whole army, to excite their enthusiasm, and to warm up their courage to the highest pitch. The scouts had brought the information that the enemy were still some distance in advance, and that there was no fear of the performance being interrupted. The army had been drawn in on purpose, and were assembled on a level plain backed by a hill to the eastward, which they had just crossed. On either side were woods, while a stream ran in front. On the slope of the hill, Cetchwayo took his stand, with Hendricks and his other prisoners—for such they were compelled to consider themselves—near him.

The regiments, headed by their respective chiefs, or colonels, as they really were, advanced from the woods on either side in due order; the tall plumes of the chiefs, their skin cloaks, and ox-tail adornments, fluttering in the breeze. They advanced, singing a monotonous chant, describing the heroic deeds they were about to perform, till each regiment in turn came in front of Cetchwayo, when halting, the men formed a semi-circle, and began slowly moving their feet and arms. As they grew more excited, their action increased in energy and fierceness, and their songs became louder, until at length there was a perfect storm of singing, yelling, and stamping. At the same time the utmost regularity was kept up; their feet, for they did not move from their positions, leaving deep dents in the ground. Notwithstanding the turmoil and apparent disorder which prevailed, they kept perfect time with their voices, arms, and feet. At length, when well-nigh exhausted from their exertions, having received the approval of their general, they moved on to give place to another regiment, which performed precisely the same manoeuvres, except that the men endeavoured to outdo their predecessors in loudness of voice and vehemence of action.

Ten regiments were thus passed in review, forming a force of as many thousand men.

“I suspect poor Umbulazi will have very little chance against these fellows, if they once come up with him,” observed Denis to Crawford. “His best chance will be to escape across the border, where I do not suppose that Cetchwayo will venture to follow him.”

“From your account, he and his followers are perfect savages, and these fellows are much of the same description,” answered Crawford. “For my part, I wish we were out of the country. I am surprised that Captain Broderick should have ventured to settle in the neighbourhood of such people. I had formed a very different notion of them before I came out.”

“Of course they are very much like other Kaffirs,” said Denis. “They have no more regard for human life than they have for that of the animals they chase. They have become formidable from the way they have been trained by a succession of clever chiefs like Cetchwayo, though I don’t suppose that old Panda has ever done much to maintain good discipline in his army. However, as Cetchwayo is well disposed towards the English, he will not give much trouble to the colony.”

“Not as long as he considers it to his advantage to keep friends with the English,” remarked Crawford. “But suppose they offend him, how will he act?”

"A few red coats and our colonial militia would soon keep him in order, should he show any inclination to quarrel," said Denis.

The conversation was interrupted by a loud shout from Cetchwayo ordering the army to advance, when they spread out as before, forming one vast semi-circle, that is, the wings were in advance of the main body, so that should an enemy be encountered, they might close in and surround him. In this order they advanced until dark, when they halted, each man carrying his provisions, so that there was no necessity for forming a camp or lighting a fire, which would have shown their position to the enemy. Our friends, who had also brought some food in their holsters, lay down on the ground near Cetchwayo.

The night passed quietly, with only an occasional alarm from wild beasts, who however speedily decamped on finding themselves in the neighbourhood of so vast a concourse of people, and at early dawn the army again advanced. In a short time much excitement was caused among the ranks, for scouts came continually hurrying back with information respecting the movements of the enemy.

A line of hills of no great elevation rose in front, extending north and south for a considerable distance. These had to be surmounted, when Cetchwayo told Hendricks that he expected to find Umbulazi's force on the other side. Not a word was spoken along the whole line; for although the warriors themselves could not have been heard by the main body of the enemy, the scouts might have discovered their advance.

Cetchwayo now told Hendricks and his companions to dismount and lead on their horses, keeping a short distance in the rear of the army.

The Zulu warriors advanced in the same order as before, as fast as the nature of the ground would allow, concealing themselves as much as possible, by taking advantage of the trees and bushes and tufts of tall grass, so that a person standing on the summit of the hill, if he had perceived them at all, would have had no conception of their numbers. Whenever shelter was wanting, they stooped down, and very often crawled along the ground like snakes amid the grass.

The two wings could now be seen creeping up the hillside. Shortly afterwards the main body reached the bottom, and also began to ascend. Occasionally a herd of deer or smaller game, driven out of their coverts, started off, some making for the hill, others darting to the one side or the other, probably to fall victims to the noiseless assegais of the warriors.

Hendricks, although as resolved as ever not to engage in the fight, was still compelled to move forward. The hill covered with trees afforded as much shelter as the lower ground had done. On gaining the summit, in the rear of the troops, he was able to obtain a view over the country beyond. It was a comparatively level region, with a broad river running across it. On the nearer side of the river, and at no great distance from the bottom of the slope, could be seen the forces of Umbulazi. It was tolerably evident from the movement among them that they had just obtained information of the approach of Cetchwayo's army. The chiefs were marshalling their men, some facing the hill, some preparing for the assault on either side, but it appeared to Hendricks that they were uncertain in what direction they might be attacked.

Slowly, and still keeping themselves concealed, Cetchwayo's warriors descended the hillside. Nearer and nearer they drew to the foe, the wings being gradually extended, and at the same time closing in towards each other.

Thus, even before the attack had commenced, Umbulazi's force was almost entirely surrounded. It had probably been Cetchwayo's intention completely to hem in his enemies; but before there was time to do so, they had discovered his right wing, and apparently supposing it to be the main body, advanced to meet it. On this he gave the signal to his whole force to commence the attack, and in an instant, from the hitherto silent woods and thickets, hideous shrieks and yells arose, and the warriors, no longer taking pains to conceal themselves, rushed on at headlong speed, clashing their shields and quivering their assegais.

The rear of Umbulazi's force was completely taken by surprise. To fly was impossible, either to the right hand or to the left; their own people engaged with the enemy in front, preventing them from moving in that direction. Their only resource was to face about and endeavour to drive back their assailants, or to defend themselves to the last. Now the main body appearing rushed down on what had been their right flank, and the slaughter commenced.

Vastly outnumbered and completely surrounded, they fought with the energy of despair. Some few of the younger men, seeing relatives and friends among their assailants, pleaded for mercy, but they pleaded with those to whom mercy was unknown. The sharp assegais of Cetchwayo's warriors did their death work rapidly and surely. His victorious bands pressed forward, closing in on their victims.

Hendricks stood observing the battle through his telescope, which he occasionally handed to Crawford and Denis. The scene enacted on the ground near the foot of the hill could be clearly observed with the naked eye, but through the glass alone could be distinguished what was taking place in the distance.

One path leading towards the river alone remained open, and towards it a few who had been posted in that direction were seen endeavouring to make their escape. The greater number were pursued and overtaken; but one warrior, who had exhibited wonderful activity, kept those chasing him at bay, and hurling his assegais with unerring aim, brought one after the other to the ground; then once more resuming his flight, he gained the river, and, plunging in, was no more seen.

"Well, I'm glad that poor fellow got off," exclaimed Denis, who had been watching him anxiously. "I hope he'll make his escape; for he must be very brave, or he would not have turned round and fought his enemies in the way he did. It is dreadful to see what is going on below us."

The battle-field had now become a scene of indiscriminate slaughter. Here and there a few groups could be discerned standing amidst their fallen comrades, supporting one of their chiefs, and hurling back the assegais aimed at them, which they had caught on their shields, and which had fallen at their sides; but the numbers in these groups were rapidly diminishing: first one man fell, then another, then another, until several were seen to fall together, and at last their enemies, rushing on with triumphant shrieks, and hurling their assegais, brought the remainder to the ground, finishing those who had fallen with repeated thrusts of their sharp weapons. At length but one group remained in the midst of the corpse-strewn field. They gazed fiercely round them, well knowing that ere long they must be like those lying dead at their feet. Still they fought on, keeping their assailants at bay. In their midst was a chief, known by his tall plume and stalwart figure, a very Ajax in appearance. Cetchwayo, seeing the determined resistance offered, and that numbers of his men were falling, summoned a company of his own regiment, and led them on to the attack. The struggle was fierce, but of short duration. Scarcely a minute elapsed before he was seen to sweep over the spot, trampling on the bodies of the slain, into which his followers were fiercely plunging their weapons. Of the adherents of Umbulazi, who in all the pride of manhood had a short hour before occupied that now blood-stained field, not a man remained alive.

"Now is our time to make our escape from this fearful scene of slaughter," exclaimed Hendricks. "The savages will be too much engaged in rejoicing over their victory to think of us, and we are not bound to remain here longer than we choose."

Their guards, it should have been said, excited beyond all control at the scene of bloodshed, had rushed down to join in the work of slaughter. Not a moment was to be lost. Tightening their saddle-girths, the party mounted. "You go ahead, Denis, and lead, and I will bring up the rear," said Hendricks. "We shall gain the waggon, and be able to push on towards the border, before Cetchwayo sends in pursuit of us, if he thinks it worth while to do so. Having gained a victory, he will be in an especially good humour; but if we remain now, he will perhaps take it into his head to detain us for the purpose of compelling us to witness his triumph."

This was said as the party were preparing to mount. They had retained their arms, and as their horses had moved only at a slow pace, and had had plenty of time to feed, they were prepared for a long ride.

Hendricks gave the word, and Denis leading, off they started. They were soon down the hill and across the plain which they had before traversed, making a direct course for the spot where the waggon and its guards had been left. Hendricks occasionally turned his head to ascertain if they were pursued; but as no one was to be seen, he felt satisfied that Cetchwayo had not discovered their flight, and the probability was that he would not do so for many hours to come. As much of the ground was level, they did not spare their steeds until they reached the waggon, some hours before sundown.

The Hottentot and Kaffir servants welcomed them with every sign of joy. Not aware of the superiority of Cetchwayo's army over that of his rival, they had feared that he might have been defeated, and that the pursuing enemy had attacked them in revenge for their being associated with him.

Hendricks instantly gave the order to inspan, and bestowing presents on the Zulus who had been left to assist in guarding the waggon, he advised them immediately to return home.

They, without demur, took their departure, well satisfied with the presents they had received, and the oxen were urged on at as rapid a rate as they could be got to move. The ground was fortunately level, so that good progress was made, and several miles were got over before sunset.

They camped in a hollow, the ground round which was covered with trees, so that the light of their fire could not be seen to any distance.

The chirrup of the cricket on the hearth is not more familiar to the inhabitants of an old country house in England, than is the roar of the lion to the ears of the traveller in Africa. Our friends had become so accustomed to the low mutterings, as well as to the loud roars of the king of beasts, that, provided the sounds came from a distance, they scarcely interrupted their slumbers. Occasionally, however, when a brute more savage and hungry than usual, ventured up to the camp, evidently on a foraging expedition, it was not only difficult but impossible for any one to sleep; indeed, common prudence required that all should be on the watch, with their weapons ready to defend themselves or the cattle, should they be attacked.

As there was still nearly an hour of daylight to spare, Hendricks, with Lionel and Denis, who were always ready to start on a hunting expedition, went off in search of game, accompanied by the dogs, who, although they have not often been mentioned, had always faithfully done their duty in giving due notice of the approach of strangers or any animals.

They had not got far from the camp when Hendricks shot an antelope, and to save the necessity of returning at once, it was hoisted up on to the branch of a tree to prevent its being eaten by the jackals and hyenas which would quickly have found it out. They went on for some distance farther, when Lionel, looking ahead, exclaimed—

"See, see! the grass is moving; there is some beast within." And scarcely had he spoken, than out sprang a lion, which, however, instead of coming towards them, made its way in the direction of the camp.

"It's as well we secured our game, or the brute would have had it," observed Denis, as they followed the lion. "I only hope our friends in camp will be on the look-out, or that brute will be among them and do some mischief."

As soon as the lion had turned tail, the three dogs set off in pursuit, Hendricks and his companions following. The lion at first went along leisurely; but when he heard the barking of the dogs and the shouts of the hunters, who wanted him to turn so that they might get a shot at him, he increased his speed.

In a short time Fangs got ahead of the other two dogs, and at length almost reached the heels of the lion. This showed his courage more than his discretion; for had the lion turned suddenly, he would have paid dearly for his boldness; but probably the lion was scarcely aware how close his pursuer was to him. On coming to the antelope in the tree, he stopped and evinced a strong inclination to try and pull it down. He saw, however, that it was beyond his reach, and again went on, until he was in sight of the waggon and oxen; but fortunately he was seen, and the Hottentots and Kaffirs began shrieking and shouting to drive him off, while Crawford and Percy seized their guns, ready to fire as soon as he should come near enough.

Fangs had kept all this time close after the chase, but well knew that one kick from those powerful hind-paws would send him flying into the air with a cracked skull.

Still, carried away by the excitement of the chase, he was on the point of springing forward to throw himself on the lion's quarters, when the latter became aware of his being so near, and making a bound forward, stopped, turned, and crouched. Fangs saw his danger, and turned to flee, barely in time to escape the claws of the lion who sprang after him. Away Fangs went, however, fleet as the wind, followed by the lion, with his mane flowing, his ears pricked forward, and his tail erect. The dog took the direction in which his master was coming; but the lion apparently did not perceive the hunters until he was within range of their rifles.

"Now, my lads, show what you can do!" cried Hendricks. "I will reserve my fire in case you should miss, you couldn't have a finer opportunity. Denis, do you fire first."

Denis, highly pleased, raised his rifle and fired. His bullet merely grazed the back of the lion, which at that instant, taking alarm, turned aside and bounded off up the hill. The dogs made chase after him; but Hendricks, fearing that they would perhaps encounter the lioness and come to grief, called them back. Unwillingly they obeyed, and although even Fangs, the bravest, would not have ventured to encounter the lion face to face, they were all eager to go in chase of him when turning tail.

Getting down the antelope, they now returned to camp. As it was very probable that the lion would come back as soon as darkness set in, an additional fire was lighted. The horses were secured to the waggon wheels, and the oxen were brought in and also made fast. The antelope flesh was cooked, and eaten with good appetites by the travellers. Scarcely was supper concluded when several roars were heard, some on one side at a short distance, some on the other, close to the camp. Directly afterwards the horrid chorus was increased by the howl of hyenas and the crying of jackals, more numerous than at any previous occasion during the journey. There was no necessity to order the Hottentots and Kaffirs to be on the watch; for they all well knew the risk they ran of an attack from the lions. Even the animals seemed aware of their danger. The men replied to the roars by shrieks and cries, every now and then firing off a rifle in the direction from which the sounds proceeded. Hendricks, however, considering that three of the party were sufficient to keep watch, ordered the remainder to lie down, either under or close to the waggon, and thus the first part of the night passed unpleasantly by.

Chapter Eleven.

A succession of disasters.

In spite of the wild uproar made by the savage brutes encircling the camp, some of the guards began to doze after they had been on the watch two or three hours. Crawford had undertaken to keep watch while Hendricks turned in. Now that he was getting accustomed to the country, he was anxious to take a more active part than he had hitherto done. With rifle in hand, he continued walking up and down, keeping inside the fires and watching to see that all had sufficient fuel to cause the flames to burn up brightly. Both the horses and oxen were naturally restless while within sound of their dreaded enemies.

He had stopped to look out, when, at the end of the waggon farthest from that to which the horses were secured, he heard the tramp of feet, and looking round, by the light of the fire, he saw one of them loose and trotting away. He instantly called to some of the men to secure the animal, but they either did not hear, or did not understand him, and it was some time before any of them were on their feet, when the horse had disappeared in the darkness.

"You must go and bring it back," he shouted, and was himself about to set off in chase of the horse, when Umgolo, who had been awakened, stopped him, and gave him to understand by signs and such few English words as he could speak, that he would run a great risk of being attacked himself, and would to a certainty not recover the animal that night.

"If he escapes the lions, he may come back, or we may find him in the morning," said the Kaffir.

Crawford, acknowledging the wisdom of this advice, remained in the camp, looking out occasionally, however, in the hopes of seeing the horse return. After some minutes Umgolo touched him on the arm.

"Hark! do you hear that sound?" he asked.

Some suppressed growls reached their ears.

"The horse is dead, and the lions are gnawing his bones. They are growling at the hyenas and jackals who have gathered round to join in the feast, but the lions won't let them until they have eaten their fill."

Presently to the growls of the lions was added the howling, shrieking, chattering, and barking of the hyenas, mingled with the cries of the jackals, producing a most unearthly chorus.

"Come, let us try and kill the brutes," said Denis, and he and Crawford walked out a few yards from the camp; but, although they fired several shots, no effect was produced; and Umgolo calling to them to come back, lest a lion should pounce upon them, they returned to the camp. The sound of the shots had awakened Hendricks, which the howlings of the wild beasts had failed to do. He rated Denis and Crawford for their folly in leaving the camp.

"In spite of your firearms, you might have been seized in the darkness by one of those savage brutes, who would not dare to face you in daylight," he observed. "Never, if you can help it in these wilds, be away at night from the light of a fire."

It was found in the morning that Crawford's horse was missing. On searching round the camp, two leg bones and a few pieces of skin were discovered, the sole remains of the unfortunate animal, the rest had been carried off by beasts of prey. As soon as the oxen had been watered and had had time to pick up some grass, the party inspanned and proceeded on their journey.

Fortunately Hendricks had a couple of spare horses, one of which he lent Crawford, who would otherwise have had to march on foot, or have been indebted to his friends, who would undoubtedly have insisted on his getting into their saddles while they walked. For three days they travelled on as fast as the oxen could move. Hendricks, being as anxious to get as far as possible from Cetchwayo and his warriors, instead of taking a circuitous route, as he had at first intended, through a fertile and thickly inhabited district, proceeded on a direct line across a wild and barren region with which he was but little acquainted. It abounded, however, he knew, in game, and he hoped that water, sufficient for the wants of the oxen and horses, would be found. Scarcely half an hour passed, that a herd of grotesque gnus, with the heads of bisons and horns of oxen, or of graceful quaggas, swift blesbocs, or light and elegant springbocs, did not pass in sight, in hundreds, or rather in thousands, across the plain. Although it was no easy matter to get up with them, still Hendricks was too experienced a hunter to be baffled, and he never failed, when he went out for the purpose, to bring back an ample supply of meat for the party. Water, however, was becoming scarce. The supply which had been brought for the use of the men was well-nigh exhausted, while the holes in which it was expected there would be enough for the animals, were found to be dry. The country they were traversing was level, thinly scattered over with trees and small bushes, and there was abundance of grass; so that cattle and horses were able to obtain food, and such moisture as the grass afforded, but had had for two days not a drop of water; still, as the only hope of obtaining any was to push forward, they moved on as fast as the animals could drag the waggon. Hendricks, the Kaffirs and Hottentots, accustomed to privations of all sorts, uttered no complaints, but the younger members of the party began to suffer greatly from thirst.

"I'd give a guinea, if I had it, for a thimbleful of water," exclaimed Denis, "for I feel as if I could drink the Liffy dry."

Night came on, and they were compelled at length to outspan, when the poor oxen lay down overcome with fatigue. To move during the night was impossible, and the whole party sat round their fires in no happy mood. They attempted to take supper, but few could swallow a particle of food. The fires had been lit to keep off the lions heard roaring in the distance, but some time passed before any came near enough to cause disquietude to the oxen, which invariably show their dread of the savage brutes. A vigilant watch was kept, but the night became very dark, and the fires, which for want of fuel had sunk low, scarcely shed their light far enough to show the oxen lying down a short distance off. Most of the party had turned in; but Hendricks himself, with Percy, who had offered to assist him, were keeping the first watch.

"How soon do you think we shall reach Falls Farm?" asked Percy.

"In five or six days, possibly, if we are fortunate enough to find water," answered Hendricks; "but I fear that the cattle will become so weak, they will scarcely be able to drag on the waggon. If we don't discover any to-morrow, we must set off to search for it in different directions. I propose letting Denis and you explore to the north-west, while I ride ahead with Lionel, and Umgolo, with Crawford, if he choose to accompany him, can go off more to the north-east. We shall thus, I hope, fall in before long with what we so much require. The waggon can in the meantime proceed onwards as fast as the poor oxen can drag it."

"We can't fail in that way, I hope, to find water," observed Percy. "So I suppose that I may count on getting home in the time you speak of."

"Are you tired of the journey?" asked Hendricks.

"Oh, no, on the contrary," answered Percy. "But I think my father and mother will be growing anxious at our not appearing so much longer after the time they expected us; otherwise I should like to accompany you through the whole of your expedition into the interior. I like the life much better than I fancy I shall being planted down on a farm, and not seeing any one for months together, except my family, though I am sure I shall be very happy with them."

Just then one of the oxen bellowed loudly.

"Get a lantern from the waggon, Percy; we must see what is the matter," said Hendricks.

Percy quickly brought the lantern, and they advanced towards the spot; but scarcely had they got half a dozen paces, when a rushing, trampling sound as of many feet was heard, and three of the oxen dashed into the camp, almost through the fire, others apparently taking an opposite direction. At the same time stifled groans reached their ears.

"One of the oxen must be hurt," observed Percy.

"Yes, but those groans are not made by the poor beast. They are the sounds produced by the lion as he devours his prey, and I must try to interrupt him," said Hendricks.

As he spoke, he advanced a few paces farther. At that moment Percy caught sight of an animal, certainly not an ox,

springing by. Hendricks fired, and the next instant every one in the camp had jumped up, asking what was the matter.

"The matter is, that a lion has killed one of the oxen, and he may destroy several others if we don't stop his career," answered Hendricks, rapidly reloading.

He now led the way to where the oxen had been lying down, while the Hottentots secured the three which had come into camp. None of the other oxen were to be seen, except one, which lay motionless on the ground, with its neck broken. In their eagerness to overtake them, the men, in spite of the darkness, would have set off in pursuit, had not Hendricks called them back.

"It would be useless in the dark, and you would run a great risk of being caught by the lion," he observed. "You must wait till morning, when we will go in search of them; and we may, perchance, find water at the same time, as they will probably head towards it, if they escape from the lion."

This was the most severe disaster which had yet occurred to the travellers; for in that wild district it would be impossible to replace the oxen, should they not be found.

The men, on being summoned, returned to the camp, but none of them were inclined again to go to sleep, for all were suffering greatly from thirst, and at any moment another lion might pay them a visit.

Morning at length dawned. The body of the ox killed by the lion was discovered about a hundred yards from the camp, a part of the hind-quarters only eaten, the brute having evidently been frightened away by the shot Hendricks fired, though whether it was wounded or not it was impossible to say.

Although they had gone supperless to bed, so parched were their throats that they were unable to take any breakfast. The horses had been secured to the waggon, or they to a certainty would have gone off with the oxen. Most of them, however, were too much knocked up to exert themselves. To recover the cattle was of the first importance. Hendricks therefore found it necessary to alter his plan. The rest of the party undertaking to go on foot in search of water, he selected the only two horses fit for travelling, and rode away with one of the Hottentots to look for the missing cattle, while Crawford and Umgolo, as had been arranged, proceeded in a north-easterly direction. It had been decided, as soon as the oxen were recovered, should they be able to travel, that the waggon was to continue on due north, that they might have no difficulty in again finding it.

The morning was fresh, almost cold, and the air pure; so that had not Denis and Percy, who, accompanied by Gozo and two dogs, were the first to start, been suffering from thirst, and very much from hunger also, they would have been able to march merrily along. As it was, by chewing some grass which they plucked as they went on, they somewhat lessened their sufferings. They kept their eyes about them for any signs which might indicate water. Though here and there shrubs, and even trees of some size, grew out of the sandy soil, yet no moisture could be discovered. Fewer animals than usual were seen, but occasionally a herd of gnus or antelopes bounded across their path, but too far off for a shot.

As the sun rose the heat increased, but that made them still more anxious to discover water. The poor dogs suffered even more than they did, as they followed at their heels; for even the sight of game did not induce them to scamper off as they would have done on other occasions.

"It will never do to give in," said Denis, as Percy proposed sitting down under the shade of a tree to rest, where the dogs had already sought shelter.

"I don't wish to give in; but if we cannot find water soon, I fear that it will be impossible to get on," answered Percy.

"Look at poor Gozo, he seems to be suffering even more than we are, though I should have supposed that he would have held out the longest."

The old Kaffir threw himself down in the shade, and lay on his back gasping. "I shall die, masters, I shall die!" he said; "I cannot go farther."

"Don't be saying that, Gozo; you'll get up after a little rest, and we'll find water before long; if not, we may fall in with some juicy roots: I have heard that such grow in some parts of the country where the soil is sandy, and so we are likely to discover them here."

"It won't do to stop here long," said Denis. "We must up and away; the sooner we set off, the sooner we shall find water. Come along, rouse up, Gozo; you will be better moving along than lying still."

The Kaffir thus incited to exertion got on his feet. The party set off, the dogs dragging themselves after their masters, for their instinct told them that there would be no safety for them alone. On and on they went, Denis and Percy doing their best to keep up each other's spirits. Poor Gozo, however, complained more and more. He had drawn his hunger belt tighter and tighter round his waist, until it looked as if it would cut him in two. His throat, he said, felt as if a hot iron had been run down it; yet, encouraged by Denis, he staggered on. It was too evident that he was growing weaker and weaker, and he declared a last that he could not carry his gun.

"But without it you will not be able to defend yourself, should we be attacked by a lion or lioness," said Denis.

"No matter: I must die then," answered Gozo.

"Well, if I carry your gun, will you come on?" asked Denis.

"I'll try, master, I'll try," answered the black as Denis took the gun.

"I must help you to carry it," said Percy. "I cannot do much to assist the fellow along, but I hope that his weakness is more fanciful than real, and that now he is relieved from the weight of his gun he will move on more briskly."

For a short distance Gozo staggered on faster than he had done for some time previously, but again his feet moved slower and slower, until coming to a tree he begged that he might lie down under it in the shade and rest.

"But rest means delay, and every minute we are becoming more and more thirsty," said Denis.

Still Gozo insisted on lying down, and Denis and Percy had to agree to his doing so. As they could not leave him, they sat down by his side.

After remaining a few minutes, however, Denis started up. "Come, this will never do," he exclaimed; "push on we must; we shall be as exhausted as he is, if we do not soon find water, and we shall not find it by sitting here."

"I am ready," said Percy; but when they tried to induce Gozo to rise, he declared that he was utterly unable to move.

"Leave me here, masters," he groaned out. "If you find water in a short time, come back, but if not go on, for it will be useless to return, as I shall be dead."

Again and again they endeavoured to induce him to get up, but in vain were all their efforts. At last Denis said, "We must leave him, I fear, though he runs a great risk of being destroyed by some wild beast."

He then turned to the unhappy native. "We will do as you wish. We will leave you your musket to defend yourself, but I would urge you not to give in; and if you feel yourself stronger, follow us. You will easily distinguish our spoor, and we will fire off our pieces to show you our whereabouts, should we find water," he said.

With much regret they left poor Gozo, having strong doubts whether they should find him alive on their return. They set off slightly refreshed by their rest. They had not gone far when they caught sight of a single wildebeest, or gnu, scampering along at a great rate, and going almost in the direction they were pursuing.

"Perhaps that animal is making its way towards water," observed Percy.

"I fear not," answered Denis. "If so, it would not be alone. It has been separated from the herd; and see, there are some creatures chasing it. They are wild dogs; you can just distinguish their heads moving along the grass in single file; the leader is close at the heels of the poor wildebeest."

As the dogs came nearer, a whole line amounting to several score could be seen, following exactly one behind the other. Presently the leader took a leap, and alighted on the haunches of the affrighted gnu. Another and another followed, until, borne down by numbers, the gnu was dragged to the ground.

By this time Denis and Percy were near enough to fire with effect. Denis knocked over one of the dogs, and the rest, frightened by the report, turned tail and scampered off. The lads rushed forward, eager to obtain some of the flesh of the gnu. The animal was already dead, so they were saved the trouble of shooting it. They at once cut off some slices, while the two dogs, who had refused to remain with Gozo, ate a hearty meal.

"We must take some of this back to the poor fellow we left under the tree," said Denis.

Percy agreed; and much revived themselves, they set off by the way they had come. They hurried on, hoping to find Gozo still alive. As they approached they shouted out to give him notice that they were coming. The dogs on this ran forward; but as they got near to the spot, stopped and gazed towards it, and then came back.

"What can have happened?" asked Percy. "Surely Gozo cannot have died during the short time we have been absent, yet otherwise the dogs would have remained."

They hurried on to find Gozo lying at full length where they had left him. His eyes were open, but staring meaninglessly. Denis called him by name. He made no reply. He lifted his hand, it felt cold and clammy, and fell as he let it go; his heart had ceased to beat. Notwithstanding this, he pressed some of the juice from the flesh they had brought, into his mouth. They lifted up his head, they rubbed his feet, but all in vain. They saw with sorrow that they had been too late to save him. To remain longer would be useless, and already the journey back had occupied some time.

"We must hurry on to save our own lives," said Denis; "if we don't find water in an hour or two, we shall be badly off indeed."

They therefore left the body of the Kaffir where it lay, his rifle by his side, but they wisely carried off his ammunition, in case their own should run short. Sometimes they thought they saw shrubs which could only grow near water, but on getting up to them they were disappointed at not finding the slightest signs of moisture. Although the flesh of the gnu had greatly revived them, still in a short time their thirst returned. They pressed onward as before, the dogs ranging on either side, apparently aware of what they were in search of, or prompted by instinct to look out for themselves. Still there were no signs of water. They went on for fully an hour more, during which time they could have got over only between two or three miles, for they could not walk very fast.

They had gone some way farther when Percy caught sight of some objects moving over the plain, now stopping, now going on again.

"They are small animals of some sort," said Denis, to whom he pointed them out. "We must try and get near them without putting them to flight. Depend upon it they are not likely to be far from water."

There were some bushes at a little distance, to which the lads made their way, in order to get near the creatures without being seen.

"Why, I believe they are baboons!" cried Denis; "the Kaffirs call the creature the chacma. They are hunting for babiana root, which is always full of water. We can drive them off just as they have begun to dig, and before they have got hold of the roots we shall secure as many as we want for ourselves. Had we seen them only a few hours ago, poor Gozo's life might have been saved."

They were now getting near to the bushes, and the baboons, being very busy, had fortunately not perceived them. They crept on cautiously until they had got within fifty yards of the animals. There were a couple of dozen at least. Some had got hold of roots which they were eagerly eating, others were busily digging away in the sand. The lads had some difficulty in keeping back the dogs; for as soon as they saw the baboons they made efforts to rush at them, and very probably would have suffered severely in consequence.

"Now," whispered Denis, "I see three or four have been digging away not far off, evidently expecting to find roots. In a few seconds we'll fire, then shout, and let slip the dogs."

They did as he proposed. The baboons, frightened at the unusual sounds, and seeing the unknown creatures coming towards them, scampered off as hard as they could go. Denis and Percy rushed forward to the holes which the baboons had made, and digging eagerly with their hands, each of them soon came to a root, and rubbing off the sand which adhered to the outsides, put them to their mouths. Perfectly refreshing and cool was the pulpy substance, full of the purest water. The dogs eagerly gobbled up the portions they threw away. They went to another and another hole, in each of which a root was found. The effect was almost instantaneous; they at once felt refreshed and strengthened. Having satisfied their own thirst, they found two more roots, which they gave to the dogs; but the baboons had already extracted the roots from the other holes, and after searching for some time they could find no more. Although they themselves felt revived, they did not forget the object of their expedition, and resolved to continue on; but it occurred to Denis that as the baboons had come to the place to obtain roots, it was not likely that they would find any water in the neighbourhood.

"That makes it more important that we should push on as fast as possible," said Percy; "but I say, Denis, do you think there's any chance of our getting back to the waggon to-night? It is already late."

Denis looked at the sun, which was sinking towards the west.

"Faith! I was not thinking how time was passing," he answered; "and, to say the truth, I'm pretty sure we shan't get back, and we must make up our minds to camp out. If we keep up a good fire to scare away the lions and other savage beasts, there will be no danger and no great hardship."

Percy, who did not like the thought of passing the night in the wilderness, proposed that they should strike away to the right, or about due east, in the expectation of falling in with the track of the waggon, which he hoped might have been able to move on. Denis was of opinion that there was no chance of their getting as far before nightfall, and that it was very possible the oxen might not have been found, or if they had been found, that they would have been able to make much progress towards the north.

"We shall be wiser if we continue our search for water, and look out for some food; for now—thanks to the roots—my thirst is quenched, and I am getting very peckish," he added.

"So am I," said Percy; "but I am too anxious to get back to the waggon to think much about my hunger."

"You'll not be so indifferent about food before long, let me tell you," observed Denis. "You'll then feel that you'd rather bring down a springboc, or gnu, or any other animal we may come across, than see the waggon moving ever so merrily along. I know what it is to be starving, and to feel that one's life depends on bringing down the game one is chasing. Come, move on! we will keep our eyes about us on the chance of finding something to shoot. When the sun gets lower, we will look out for a clump of trees or bushes which will shelter our camp from the night wind, and give us fuel for our fire."

"I would rather find a stream or water hole," said Percy.

"So would I, provided we could afterwards get something to eat and fuel to cook it; but if not, we must make the best of circumstances. Many people have been in a worse situation than we are, so don't let us begin to complain yet," said Denis.

His indomitable spirits encouraged Percy, and they trudged on in the direction they were before going, looking eagerly about them, both for signs of water and for any animal which might appear near enough to give them a chance of shooting it. Denis was sure that Hendricks, should he find water, would at once set off on horseback in search of them in the direction he had desired them to take, and by his experience would quickly come upon their spoor and follow them up, or if he could not come himself, that he would send Umgolo. They were, of course, very sorry for the loss of poor Gozo, who would have been of great assistance both in obtaining food and searching for water, if any existed in the neighbourhood. Meantime the sun was sinking lower and lower, but neither game nor signs of water had they discovered. In vain Raff and Fangs ranged widely on either side of them, as eager as they were to find it.

Some way to the left there appeared a wood. The trees were not very high, but they would afford them the shelter and fuel they required, and Denis proposed that they should make towards them.

"It cannot be helped; we shall have to go without our suppers, I fear; but we must hope to find something for breakfast," said Denis.

Percy groaned. He had become, as Denis guessed he would, very hungry, and the lower limb of the sun had almost reached the horizon. They knew that soon after it had set darkness would come on, when it would be difficult to select a suitable spot for camping, or obtain time for collecting fuel. They had not gone far when Percy exclaimed, "Hallo, what's that? What an enormous bird!" And Denis, looking to the right, in which direction Percy pointed, saw an ostrich scampering away across the plain.

Both the dogs instantly started off in chase, but the ostrich quickly outstripped them; and Denis, fearing that they might lose themselves or get exhausted to no purpose, called them back.

"Did you mark the spot it started from?" he asked eagerly. "We must try to find it. The chances are it was sitting on its eggs, and if they are tolerably fresh, they will serve us for food and liquid too."

"I think I can calculate the whereabouts of the place it rose from," said Percy; and they hastened on, keeping a little apart, that they might be able to examine a wider extent of ground than if they had been together. Denis could see nothing like a nest, and he began to fear that the ostrich had been merely resting after being chased, and that their hunt would be fruitless.

"It can't be helped; we must make for the wood, or we shall not be able to see our way," he shouted to Percy.

Just then the latter exclaimed, "Hurrah! hurrah! five magnificent eggs!" and he held up one of them with both hands.

Denis hurried to the spot. There, sure enough, resting in the centre of a clump of dry grass, with otherwise very little protection, were four large white eggs besides the one Percy had in his hand, each large enough to afford a good meal to them both.

Their hunger would have prompted them then and there to sit down and eat the contents raw, but Denis wisely advised that they should restrain their appetites and hasten on to the clump of trees. They accordingly each secured two in their handkerchiefs and Percy carried the fifth in his hand.

Although the sun had sunk by the time they got close to the wood, there was still light sufficient to enable them to collect a supply of broken branches and leaves for their fuel.

"Take care that you do not catch hold of a snake, fancying you are about to pick up a stick," cried Denis. "I nearly did so just now. Fortunately the creature wriggled off more frightened at me than I was at it."

"You may trust me for that," said Percy; "but what do you say, instead of sleeping on the ground, to climbing up into a tree? I see one with the branches sufficiently low to enable us to get into it without difficulty. We should at least be out of the reach of lions."

"Yes, I agree with you it will be the safest place, although not the most comfortable, and we must remember to carry our guns with us, or we may chance to be besieged there as I once was," answered Denis, coming along with a bundle of sticks. "We'll light our fire first, and cook an egg. If that is the tree you propose, let us pitch our camp beneath it;" and he threw down the sticks, while Percy hastened to bring those he had collected and left at a little distance.

"Holloa! I saw one of the branches move in a curious fashion," he exclaimed, looking up at the tree in which they proposed to form their resting-place for the night.

"A branch! why that's a boa or snake of some sort, big enough to eat us both up, if so disposed," cried Denis.

They had fortunately not gone sufficiently close to enable the creature to spring down upon them, or the consequences might have been serious.

"We must dislodge that fellow, if we are to get up the tree," said Denis, raising his rifle. "I can see his head." And he fired.

The huge snake gave some convulsive struggles, trying to coil itself round and round the branch, but its folds speedily relaxed, and its head hung down towards the ground, still it clung on by its tail, the folds of its huge body twisting and writhing in a manner truly terrific as seen in the dim light beneath the deep foliage of the tree.

"We must put a stop to that fellow's performances, or he may be doing us some mischief still," cried Percy; and raising his rifle he fired. In a few seconds down fell the big snake to the ground; its tail, however, still kept moving, and Denis, who had reloaded his rifle with small shot, stepping forward, discharged it at the tail end of the body. The effect was instantaneous—its struggles ceased—the huge snake lay dead.

"I only hope there may not be more up the tree. You see we might have been in as much danger among the branches as on the ground," said Denis.

They both looked up, going round and round the tree, but could discover nothing moving, so they came to the conclusion that the boa had been its only occupant.

"It won't be pleasant to have this fellow close under us, as the hyenas and jackals will to a certainty collect to feast off him before long," said Denis. "We must drag him off as far as we can. To be sure, if we hadn't found the ostrich eggs, we should have been thankful to get some steaks off him; as it is, we may as well cut a few for ourselves, in case the eggs should not be as fresh as we might desire; while Raff and Fangs will have no objection to as many as we like to give them."

"You don't mean to say that we may have to eat some of that horrible snake!" cried Percy.

"I mean to say it is possible that we may be very glad to eat a good junk of it," answered Denis. "We may fancy all the time that we are banqueting on a magnificent sturgeon."

"Oh, do let us get the fire lighted first, and cook an egg," cried Percy. "Without food I am sure I could not drag that snake a dozen feet."

To this Denis agreed. Having match-boxes in their pouches, they quickly lighted their fire, but they had to wait till some ashes were formed before they could begin to cook one of the eggs. In the meantime Denis cut some slices from the thicker part of the snake's body, and some hunches which the hungry dogs very speedily disposed of. He then began to drag it away, but alone he could scarcely move it, so that Percy, in spite of his hunger, was obliged to assist him. They did not get far, however, but hurried back, pretty well exhausted, to cook the eggs they were longing for. Denis performed the operation in a scientific manner, by making a small hole at one end, and then putting in some pepper and salt which they had brought with them, and stirring the inside about with a stick till the egg was cooked. It was soon done in this fashion; and greatly to the satisfaction of Percy, who dreaded having to sup off the snake's flesh, it was found to be perfectly sweet. Although they had no water, they were able from the liquid nature of the egg to eat a small portion of the biscuit they had in their pouches. The meal greatly restored their strength, as well as Percy's spirits.

Having made up the fire to give them light, they dragged the body of the snake still farther from the camp. Denis was inclined to remain under the tree, where he could stretch himself at full length on the ground. Percy entreated him to come up into the branches.

"But supposing we were both to go to sleep, and the fire was to go out, and a lion was to come prowling this way, what would become of us?" asked Denis. At last he agreed to do as Percy wished, and making up the fire so as to give them plenty of light, they climbed into the tree with their guns and four ostrich eggs.

"We must get up the dogs also, or some wild beast or other may carry them off," said Denis. "Come along, Raff, old fellow, catch hold of this;" and Denis, leaning down from the lowest branch, held out his handkerchief, which Raff, clearly understanding what he was to do, caught hold of, and was quickly hauled up. Nothing however would induce Fangs to follow his example, and at last they were compelled to abandon the attempt to get him up, he having evidently made up his mind to pass the night at the foot of the tree—probably that he might enjoy at his leisure a further meal off the snake. Greedy Fangs, like many human beings, influenced by sinister motives, he was doomed to suffer severely for his folly.

They soon selected for themselves and Raff three tolerably secure places among the forked branches, where they hoped to be able to pass the night, if not in a very comfortable manner, at all events without the risk of being pounced upon by a hungry lion.

Chapter Twelve.

In search of water.

After the fatigue and anxiety they had gone through, it was not long before Denis and Percy began to feel excessively drowsy.

"Take care you don't fall off, Percy," said Denis; "or let your gun drop either. I've fastened mine to my neckerchief, and I'd advise you to do the same."

"I have jammed myself and my gun between two branches, so that there is no chance of falling," answered Percy; "but I'll make fast my ostrich eggs, for I would not lose them on any account, lest we should have to breakfast off that horrible snake."

"Little chance of that," murmured Denis. "By to-morrow morning there won't be a scrap of it left."

Denis said this in a very drowsy tone. His eyes were fixed on the fire, which seemed to him sometimes to flare up with unusual brightness, then to flit about, then totally to disappear, for the best of reasons, his eyes were closed. Percy was also just going off, when his ears were assailed by a hideous uproar of shrieks and howls and barks.

Looking out from his leafy covert, he could see a number of creatures moving about in the direction of the spot to which the body of the snake had been dragged. He guessed what they were, and was very thankful that he and his companion were safe up the tree.

"Do you hear those brutes, Denis?" he asked; but there was no answer. He could see the place where he supposed his friend lay, but could not reach him. At first the dreadful idea occurred that he might have fallen off, and he was about to crawl along the branch to feel for him, when the light from the fire flickered on one of his arms, and he knew that he must be fast asleep. He had not the cruelty to awaken him, and indeed after he got accustomed to the hideous chorus raised by the hyenas and jackals, his own eyes began to close. He could just make out Fangs by the light of the fire, crouching down close to the trunk, and every now and then giving vent by a low growl to his anger as he watched the savage creatures devouring the snake on which he had intended to breakfast.

Percy had scarcely shut his eyes, when he was startled by hearing a terrific roar, and looking towards where the hyenas and jackals had been holding their revels, he saw them scampering away in every direction, while the glare of the fire fell on the head and shoulders of an enormous lion. The king of brutes, however, looked disappointed at finding only a few scraps of a mangled snake, instead of the repast he expected, and not deigning to touch the leavings of the jackals, he advanced a short distance towards the tree. Afraid to approach nearer the fire, he stopped

and began to roar loudly.

“Roar away, old fellow,” cried Percy. “You’ll not get hold of us.”

That was true enough so far as he and Denis and Raff were concerned, but the case was very different with regard to poor Fangs. Between him and the lion there was only a small fire, which the latter might spring over at a single bound. He prudently neither barked nor growled, but shrank closer and closer to the trunk, while the lion stood within a dozen yards of him, every now and then uttering a terrific roar.

To Percy’s surprise, Denis slept on in spite of the roaring. He was probably dreaming about it, but it had not the effect of awakening him. Percy thought of shooting the lion and trying to save Fangs, but found that he could not fire without changing his position, and he was afraid, in attempting to do so, that he might fall to the ground, he therefore contented himself with watching the lion. The animal evidently suspected that there was something up the tree, and having roared for some minutes, he began to circle round it, keeping, however, at a respectful distance. Would Fangs escape his scrutiny? Percy could no longer see the dog, for the fire was getting low, and he was concealed by the roots. Presently there was the sound of a rush, of a heavy blow struck, but not a growl nor a cry was heard, and then the lion bounded off with something in his mouth.

No sooner had he gone, than the hyenas and jackals came back, but they too in a short time, having probably finished the snake, also took their departure. Percy had too much reason to fear that poor Fangs had become the prey of the lion; but his thoughts began to wander, and overcome by fatigue, he was soon fast asleep.

The night passed quietly by. Denis was the first to open his eyes. It was broad daylight. On looking up through the branches, he observed that the sky was completely obscured.

“Hallo! we must have had a long snooze,” he exclaimed. “Are you all right, Percy?”

“Somewhat stiff and sore, but I shall feel better when I have stretched my legs, I daresay,” answered Percy. “Dear me! the fire has gone out.”

“Then the sooner we get down and light it the better,” said Denis.

They descended from their roosting places, Denis carefully handing down the guns to Percy, who went first. They then helped Raff to reach the ground.

“Take care! I saw a lion close to the tree, just before I went to sleep, and he may perhaps be in the neighbourhood,” observed Percy.

“You dreamed about one probably, as I did,” said Denis, “and a fearful roaring I fancied he made.”

Percy assured him that he had seen a real lion, and described it so minutely, and the visit of the jackals and hyenas, that Denis was almost convinced. He was thoroughly so when, on looking towards the spot where the snake had been, he saw that not a particle of it remained.

“Hallo! what has become of Fangs?” he exclaimed.

“The lion, I fear, has carried him off,” answered Percy.

Of this there could be no doubt, for no trace of the poor dog could be discovered, except a few drops of blood close to the base of the tree where he had been lying down.

“The chances are, the lion has gone to a distance, and won’t come back at all events until we have lighted a fire,” observed Denis, as they set to work to collect fuel, when without loss of time they cooked another ostrich egg for breakfast. They then started on their tramp, fancying that, although there was no sun to guide them, they could easily make their way by continuing the same course as they had followed on the previous day.

After going a short distance, still unsuccessful in their search for water, Percy again suggested that they should keep to the right, so as to fall in with the waggon. To this Denis agreed, and they accordingly turned, as they supposed, to the east. As, however, there was no wind, they could not be certain that they were keeping in a direct line. Had there been any prominent objects by which they could steer, their minds would have been more comfortable on the subject. After going some distance, Percy declared that he thought they must be up to the course the waggon was to take. Seeing a tall tree a little distance ahead, they made towards it, and agreed to climb into the topmost branches, that they might take a look-out, hoping that they should see the waggon coming along. Percy, who was well accustomed to climbing, offered to mount the tree, while Denis took charge of his gun and one of the remaining ostrich eggs which he had carried. The tree was more difficult to get up than he had supposed, but he managed at length to reach a high bough, from whence he could obtain a wide view around.

“I can see nothing of the waggon,” he shouted. “The country looks everywhere equally arid and barren, except to the northward, and there I see some trees, which from their bright green hue must grow near water.”

“Well, then, come down, and we will make towards them,” said Denis; and as soon as Percy had descended, they set off in the direction he had indicated.

They were getting very thirsty. Had the sun been shining, they would have suffered even more than they did; but as it was, their throats were parched and dry, and they eagerly pressed forward, in the hope of speedily obtaining water.

Their disappointment was proportionally great when, arriving at the trees towards which they had been directing their course, no stream or pool could be found.

Percy, who had hitherto kept up bravely, threw himself on the ground, almost in despair.

"Oh, I am so thirsty! What shall we do?" he cried.

"I'll tell you what we must do—get up and push along," answered Denis. "I fancy that I see some more trees, much greener than any we have yet passed, and the chances are we shall find water near them."

Percy, thus encouraged, got up. He had no wish to give in as poor Gozo had done. It was very trying, but the lads had stout hearts, and kept up bravely. They reached the trees at last, once more to be disappointed. Accompanied by Raff, who was suffering as much as they were, they ran here and there, attracted by a shrub looking fresher than usual, then by a depression in the ground.

Percy, who had gone some distance, shouted, "Hurrah! here are signs of water."

Denis hurried to the spot. The ground sloped down to where Percy was standing, looking into a deep basin or hollow. The bottom was moist. They both jumped down, digging away with their hands. Though the sand was wet, no actual water could they see. They somewhat allayed their burning thirst by putting the moist sand to their mouths. The appearance of the moisture encouraged them to hope that they might get to good water at last. Still they dug and dug with the same result as before. At length Denis stopped.

"The sand is getting drier instead of moister, and I am very much afraid that this is merely a hole once full of rain, which being low down and sheltered has not been dried up by the sun."

Percy agreed with him, and all they could do was to suck some of the still moist sand, and to place it on the back of their necks, which gave them temporary relief. It was very evident that all their labour had been in vain.

"It cannot be helped," cried Denis. "Forward is the word, and on we must go. Perhaps before long we shall find another hole with water at the bottom, or some more roots, though unless some baboons help us, I don't know how we shall discover them."

"I wish that we could feel a little more certain we are going in the right direction," observed Percy. "If the sun would but come out, I should be more happy in my mind on that score."

The clouds, however, hung as thickly as before from the sky. Had they sent down their contents, the wanderers would have been relieved from the burning thirst from which they were again suffering.

Although there was no sun, the air was hot and oppressive, and they began to feel much fatigued from their long tramp. Still they felt that it would be folly to halt while they had strength left to go on. So they pushed forward mile after mile. Denis declared that he was certain they were going in a north-westerly direction, from the appearance of the bark on the trees, which on that side was dry and perfectly free from moisture, while on the other, whence the rain generally came, here and there a few fungi and a little moss could occasionally be discovered. Percy did not like to express doubt about the correctness of his friend's opinion, but he was not convinced that he was right.

Another night was approaching. Percy, less inured to fatigue than his companion, felt that unless he could obtain water and rest, he could scarcely hope to live through it. Still he struggled on, Denis doing his best to encourage him.

"Lean on my shoulder, and let me carry your gun," he said; "you'll get on better then; and when we camp, and you have had another ostrich egg, you'll find your strength restored."

"If I can manage to eat it," murmured Percy, "but I much doubt whether I can get even that down my throat."

"Never fear; I see some thick bushes, and I fancy some rocks beyond. We'll camp there, if you find yourself unable to go farther; and we shall have plenty of fuel for our fire, and who knows but that we may find water?"

Denis said this in a no very confident tone, for he was almost beginning to despair of discovering what they were so eagerly in search of. Still he hoped that rest and food, and the cooler air of night, might restore Percy, and that they might push on for another day, at all events.

Raff continued creeping after them, the very picture of misery, his tongue hanging out, and his head down. Every now and then he would look up to their faces in the most piteous manner, as if to ask when they were going to find water. The poor dog was suffering from hunger as well as thirst; for although he had licked the ostrich egg shells clean, he had got but little nourishment out of them. At last the bushes seen in the distance were reached, and Percy, sinking on the ground, declared that he could go no farther.

"Well then, we will camp here," said Denis; "and while you rest, I'll collect some wood for our fire."

Raff crouched down by the side of Percy, though his eyes followed his master while he was employed as he proposed. He was not long in collecting a sufficient supply of sticks to commence a fire.

"I'll get more while the egg is cooking," he said, throwing down the bundle. The fire was soon burning up brightly, and an egg was put on. Percy had just strength enough to watch it, while Denis collected some more sticks. He then came and sat down by the side of Percy, to whom he kept talking, while he stirred the egg. "I think it must be done now," he said. "Come, eat away, old fellow, and you'll soon be yourself again."

"It's water I want! it's water I want!" murmured Percy.

"But as we haven't water, the egg is the next best thing you can take," said Denis, helping him.

But poor Percy could scarcely gulp it down. All the time Raff was looking up as much as to say, "I wish you'd give me some of that; I'd eat it fast enough." Denis could not resist the imploring looks of the poor dog, and gave him a portion of his own share.

The usual noises of the African wilds were absent,—not even the note of a bird was heard. Suddenly Denis lifted his head in the attitude of listening.

"Hark, Percy!" he said. "I heard a peculiar murmur. Yes, I am nearly certain it is the sound of falling water. Do you listen."

"I pray Heaven that you are right. I think so," said Percy.

"Well, then, do you stay here by the fire, and I'll go and look for it alone, if you are not able to come with me," said Denis. "Keep your gun on the cock, and your eye about you, in case any brute of a lion or leopard should come near, though I don't suppose there's much chance of that."

Percy tried to rise, but declared his inability to move farther, so Denis set off. The moment Raff saw him going, he crawled after him. Denis had taken both his own and Percy's water bottle. No sooner had he got round the clump of bushes than he saw before him some rocks, beyond which the ground rose, covered with shrubs, extending away to a considerable distance; but no signs of water could he perceive. He stopped and listened. The same sound as before reached his ears. He could not be mistaken. He went on, until, to his unspeakable joy, he saw a spring of bright sparkling water rushing out of the cliff, falling from rock to rock, but instead of forming a rivulet, it was almost immediately lost in the sand, of which the bottom of the gully was composed. There was one part, however, which he could reach by climbing without much difficulty. Poor Raff, who had followed him thus far, was unable to get up to it, and looked wistfully at him, evidently entreating to have some given him without delay. Denis, having quenched his own thirst, filled the water bottles, and then, looking down at poor Raff, he filled his hat also, and brought that to the dog, who quickly lapped up the contents. Losing as little time as possible, he hastened back to Percy.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed, as he came in sight of the fire, "I've got some water. You'll soon be all to rights, Percy."

But Percy did not reply; his heart sank. Could anything have happened? He rushed forward. Percy lay gasping on the ground. He lost not a moment in lifting his friend's head, in moistening his lips, and then pouring some water down his throat.

Percy at length opened his eyes, and said, "Thank you, thank you; oh, how delicious!"

Denis gave him another draught of water. "There, now I think you can eat some more egg," he observed. "I propose that we cook the last one. We are sure to fall in with game. If we take plenty of food now, we shall the better be able to go in chase of it."

At last Percy sat up and managed to eat the remainder of the first egg cooked, and some of the other; then he took another draught of water. He felt that he could drink any quantity of that. It was now too late to continue their journey; indeed, Denis had only time to collect a further supply of sticks before darkness came on. They made up the fire in a semi-circle, and lay down as close to it as they could venture to do without risk of burning themselves, hoping thus to be secure from the attacks of wild beasts, while Raff took a post near them, to act as sentinel.

Poor Percy was soon fast asleep. Denis did his utmost to keep watch; but he also, having made up the fire, soon dropped off. He had been asleep some time when he was aroused by hearing Raff growl and bark. He started up and looked about him, but could see nothing. Indeed, the fire had burned so low, that its embers cast but a faint light to a short distance. Fortunately, he had reserved some sticks, which he immediately threw on the fire. As they burned up, he took another look round, when he saw the dim outline of some animal passing by. Whether a lion, leopard, or hyena, he could not make out. Percy was sleeping so soundly, that he did not like to awaken him; but he determined not to go to sleep himself again if he could help it.

Raff had ceased growling, so he concluded that the animal, frightened by the flames, had gone off. He hoped that it would not return. Had he not been aroused at the moment by his faithful dog, he and his companion might have lost their lives, and he felt grateful for their preservation. He husbanded the remaining sticks with care, for he was afraid that they might not hold out until the morning, and he employed himself by stirring up the embers when they grew dim, and raking them together. At length the sticks were exhausted. He dared not move from the camp to collect more; indeed, he would have had to go to some distance, as he had already picked up all those near at hand.

The fire grew dimmer and dimmer, until at last but a faint semi-circle of embers remained. Shortly afterwards, however, he became aware by seeing shrubs and rocks, which he had been hitherto unable to distinguish, that the light of day was returning, but the clouds still hung so densely around the horizon, that he was unable to ascertain the direction of the east. This he had hoped to do, that they might with greater certainty direct their course. At last the light became sufficient to enable them to proceed. He called Percy, who at once got up, saying that he was greatly refreshed and ready to go on as well as ever, though he wished they had another ostrich egg on which to breakfast.

"We can't eat our loaf and have it too," answered Denis, "but I hope we shall have something as good."

They first made their way to the fountain, where they refreshed themselves with a draught of pure water, and having given as much to Raff as he could drink, they filled their water bottles, washed their faces and heads, and then pushed on, their spirits cheered with the hope of soon obtaining some game, and of falling in with the waggon before the day was over.

They trudged on, and although they saw some animals in the distance, they could not get near enough to distinguish

what they were. It showed them, however, that there must be water in the neighbourhood, and they hoped therefore before long to come upon it. Percy had for some time been walking with much less elasticity than when they first started. At last he proposed that they should stop and eat the remainder of the biscuit they carried in their pouches. Having a good supply of water, they could now swallow it, which they could not have done on the previous day. They made towards a tree which would afford them shade, and on reaching it sat down and took their frugal breakfast, but poor Raff had to go without any, as Denis knew that it would be folly to give him any of the biscuit, which would not have satisfied his hunger. Again they went on, looking out anxiously for the tracks of the waggon wheels, or other signs which might indicate that their friends had been that way. Denis at last had to confess that he felt somewhat anxious. The day wore on, and though very thirsty, they husbanded their water for fear of not finding any before night.

They were almost in despair of falling in with game, when they caught sight, issuing from behind a wood in the distance, of a troop of pallahs coming in their direction. Looking about eagerly for some cover behind which they could conceal themselves, until the pallahs came near, they observed a thick bush a short distance ahead; they made for it, and got under cover, they hoped, without having been seen. The animals moved slowly along, feeding as they came. When within a hundred yards of the bush, they turned aside, to the bitter disappointment of the young hunters.

"We must be after them," said Denis; "and if we can still find cover, we may get near enough to have a shot. Come, let us put our best feet forward. Stoop down as low as you can. Heel, Raff, heel!" he whispered to his dog, who was too well-trained to disobey him, and kept close behind him.

The pallahs kept moving on, sometimes slowly, at other times much faster. Percy felt but little able to follow, though he did his best. On and on they went. Before them they saw a grove of tall trees, towards which the pallahs were directing their course.

"The chances are there's water not far off, and if the animals go down to drink we shall have a good chance of shooting one," whispered Denis.

The pallahs reached the wood, but stopped to graze outside it. This enabled Denis and Percy to creep up towards it, at a part some distance from where they were feeding. They thus hoped, by making their way through the wood, to be able to get near enough to the animals to obtain a good shot. They had cautiously crept on for some way when Percy stopped, and seizing his companion's arm, pointed up to the branch of a tree under which they were about to pass. There, extended at its full length, ready for a spring, lay an enormous leopard. Its eyes were turned away from them, watching the pallahs. They stepped cautiously back, having no doubt that had they attempted to pass under the bough, the leopard would have been down upon them, and probably killed both, as they were close together. They retreated behind a tree, where they stood watching for what would next occur. Denis well knew that should they wound the leopard, and not kill it, it would become a terrible foe.

The pallahs, unsuspecting of danger, at last moved towards the tree, several entering the wood almost together. One approached the fatal bough. Like a flash of lightning, the leopard sprang upon the unfortunate creature, and in an instant it lay dead, struck down by its powerful claws.

"Now is our time," whispered Denis: "let us fire together; I'll aim at the leopard's head; do you fire at its shoulder, and then, without stopping to see if we have killed it, we'll retreat behind the tree and reload."

The plan was perfectly carried out. Before the smoke cleared away they had sprung back to their places of concealment, and had begun rapidly reloading. The instant Denis was ready, he cautiously stepped out from behind the trunk.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "We did better than I expected."

There, within twenty yards, lay the leopard and the deer, both dead. Under other circumstances they would have been eager to possess themselves of the leopard's skin, which was of considerable value, but as it was they were far more anxious to obtain a supply of meat. They therefore set to work to cut off as much as they could carry from the pallah, without stopping to skin or disjoint it, while Raff enjoyed an abundant meal from the pieces which his master threw to him. The rest of the pallahs had taken to flight.

"We must remember this spot; and if we find Hendricks before long, he will be glad to send for this skin, supposing it is not torn to pieces in the meantime by the rascally hyenas and jackals."

After the excitement of the chase, they were tempted to stop and take a draught of water, which nearly exhausted their stock. Anxious to obtain a fresh supply, they made their way through the forest in the hope of coming across a stream, towards which they supposed the pallahs had been bending their steps.

"There's the water!" suddenly exclaimed Denis; "I see the animals drinking at it."

The animals were there, but as the young hunters approached they took to flight. Having meat enough, they did not feel justified in firing a shot after them.

On reaching the spot, great was their disappointment to find that although there had been a little water, the pallahs had drunk it almost dry, while the remainder had sunk through the bottom, in which their feet had trampled. Not a drop could they obtain.

The wood formed an oasis in the wilderness; for farther on the country assumed the same barren, arid aspect as before.

"We must either go back to the fountain we left this morning, or push our way over this stony ground as fast as we can," said Denis.

"Let us go on," answered Percy; "we may find water again before long, or may fall in with the waggon."

"Then I vote we fortify ourselves first with some meat," said Denis; and collecting some wood, they speedily had a fire lighted, and some of the venison roasting before it.

Eager to prosecute their journey, after a short rest, they again set off. Night overtook them, however, and they had only just time to reach some bushes, which afforded but slight shelter and a scanty supply of firewood, before darkness came on.

They laboured in collecting sticks as long as the light lasted, and then, having made up their fire, cooked and eaten their supper, and drunk the remainder of their water, they lay down close to it, fatigue preventing them from troubling their minds as to what might happen during the night.

Chapter Thirteen.

The journey continued.

Overcome by fatigue, both the young hunters fell fast asleep. Watched over by a merciful Providence, no savage animals came near them. Not a growl or bark did Raff utter during the night; and when morning broke, Denis, who was the first to awake, was somewhat dismayed to find that the fire had completely gone out. He was not long in scraping the ashes together, and with the remainder of the sticks he had gathered relighted it and put on some venison steaks to cook.

When sufficiently done, he roused up Percy, who was greatly astonished to find that night had passed away. They did not fail to return thanks to God, who had taken care of them during the hours of darkness; for they felt, as any persons with the least sense of religion in them must have done, how utterly helpless they were under such circumstances. "Oh, how I wish I had some water!" poor Percy kept saying, as he tried to get down the meat. They neither of them could eat much, and Raff came in for a larger share than he would otherwise have obtained.

The clouds had cleared away, a bright sun was shining. According to their calculation, they had hitherto succeeded in keeping the course they had intended. The country to the east, however, looked so barren and uninviting, that they agreed to travel northward, where there appeared to be a better prospect of obtaining water, without which they could not hope to get on. As the sun rose in the sky, the heat became more and more excessive. Not a breath of wind cooled the atmosphere, and they consequently suffered more than ever from thirst. As before, poor Raff crawled along at their heels, with his tongue hanging from his mouth. In vain they looked out for trees of sufficient height to afford them shade.

"It won't do to stop here," said Denis, whom no suffering could daunt; "the faster we move, the better chance we shall have of finding water."

Percy agreed with him, and did his best to push on. The same rocky ground, with shrubs growing amidst it, appeared ahead. At last they saw before them a clump of mimosa bushes.

"Oh, do let us rest there for a short time," exclaimed Percy. "I think I shall then be able to get on better. I am keeping you back, I know, but I cannot help it."

"Don't let that trouble you. I feel pretty tired myself," answered Denis; and they directed their course towards the bushes.

Their meat was rather high by this time, but they had no inclination to eat, and were too tired to collect wood for a fire. Percy threw himself on the ground in the shade, where Raff had already lain down. Denis seated himself by his side. He had scarcely been there a moment, when he started up, whispering—

"I hear some animal moving on the other side of the wood. It may be a deer, and I must not lose the chance of killing it."

He stole cautiously among the bushes, endeavouring to discover the animal he fancied he had heard. He had got a



hundred and fifty yards or so from his friend, when what was his horror to see rushing towards him a huge black rhinoceros! The creature did not see him, and perhaps would not have observed Percy, had not Raff started up and begun barking furiously. This aroused Percy, who, getting on his feet, thus exposed himself to the view of the rhinoceros. He would have been more prudent had he remained perfectly quiet. The rhinoceros looked at him savagely, when Percy levelled his rifle, but instead of waiting till the animal had got near him, fired; the bullet grazing the creature's head, excited its rage, and on it rushed, with its horn lowered, directly towards the hapless lad. In another instant that fearful weapon would have been plunged into his body. Denis trembled for the safety of his friend; for he knew, should he fire, that his bullet was more likely to wound him than the rhinoceros. Percy's death seemed certain, when at that moment, bursting through the wood, a young Zulu warrior appeared, with rifle in hand, shouting and shrieking to attract the animal's attention. This had the effect of making the savage brute turn its eyes towards him. He fired. The rhinoceros was still rushing on, when its knees bent, its head sank down, and its horn ploughed along the ground. In another instant it would have been up to Percy, had not the Zulu, bounding forward, seized him in his arms, and carried him a few paces from the spot where he had been lying, which the rhinoceros reaching, it fell over on its side, and lay motionless.

"Thank you, whoever you are," said Percy. "You have saved my life; for the animal's horn would have run me through, had you not come to my assistance."

Though the Zulu might not have understood what Percy said, he comprehended by the tone of his voice that he was expressing his gratitude.

Denis in the meantime, dreadfully alarmed, was hurrying on, scarcely expecting to be in time to save Percy, when the Zulu made his appearance. At first he was unable to tell whether he came as a friend or a foe, until he saw him fire, and knock over the rhinoceros.

"Thank heaven, he is safe! But who can that be? What, Mangaleesu!" he exclaimed. "Thank you, my friend, thank you! You have indeed come at the right moment. We feared that you were among those slaughtered by Cetchwayo and his followers."

This was said partly in Zulu, and partly in such English as the young chief understood. Denis had grasped his hand, and pressed it warmly to express his gratitude.

"I had a narrow escape; but I slew six of my pursuers, and got off free," answered Mangaleesu. "I could not, however, make my way directly into Natal, as I had left my wife, when I joined Umbulazi, in a kraal, with some of her relatives in this direction. On reaching it, I hurried her away, for I knew that ere long our enemies would attack it. Scarcely had we concealed ourselves in the woods overlooking the kraal, when a party of Cetchwayo's forces appeared, and burnt it to the ground, destroying all who remained within. We have since been journeying on, but have been compelled to proceed cautiously, for fear of being discovered; for, being known as opposed to Cetchwayo, I might have been captured, and delivered up to him."

"And where is your wife?" asked Denis.

"She is in a cave at no great distance, where I placed her while I came out to hunt; for, as game has been scarce in the country through which we travelled, we have been sorely pressed for food; but now we have this rhinoceros meat, we will at once return to her, as she will be frightened at my long absence."

Saying this, the chief, who had just placed Percy on the ground, commenced cutting through the tough hide of the rhinoceros, and was about to slice off some of the flesh, when, observing how ill Percy looked, he inquired what was

the matter with him.

"We want water," answered Denis; "and he will die, I fear, if it cannot soon be obtained."

"I will at once fetch some for him then," said Mangaleesu; and taking the two empty bottles, he started away in the direction of some rocks seen in the distance.

Percy continued murmuring, "Water, water!"

"It will come soon, and you'll be all right, old fellow," said Denis, sitting by his side, and supporting his head while he fanned his face.

Raff was, in the meantime, smelling round and round the rhinoceros, and would evidently have liked to get at the meat, but the tough hide resisted his efforts.

With deep thankfulness Denis observed Mangaleesu returning, this time accompanied by another person, whom he recognised, when they got nearer, as Kalinda. She seemed much concerned at seeing the condition in which poor Percy lay, and placing herself by his side, she fanned his face, while Denis poured the water down his throat. She continued tending him while he went to help Mangaleesu cut into the rhinoceros. A supply of meat was soon obtained, and Denis proposed to light a fire and cook it. To this, however, Mangaleesu objected.

"In this open spot we may be seen, for we cannot tell what enemies there may be in the neighbourhood," he observed. "Let us at once move on to the place where I concealed Kalinda. It will hold us all, and we shall there be safer than we are here, while there is water at hand, and we can light a fire in a hollow, without risk of its being seen in the distance."

It was very evident, however, that poor Percy, although somewhat revived, was utterly unable to walk. "Kalinda and I will carry him then," said Mangaleesu, "while you take his gun."

"But I cannot impose that task on you, for I ought to assist in carrying him myself," said Denis.

"No, no, you are not strong enough; we will easily manage it."

Mangaleesu and his wife set to work to construct a litter, which they quickly formed with some poles, and fastened together by creepers. They then placed Percy on it, and set off, stepping along at a brisk rate, showing that they considered him alight burden. Denis carried his gun; and Raff, to whom he had given some water, as well as an ample supply of meat, trotted after them perfectly revived. Reaching the rocks, they passed through a narrow defile, into which another smaller one opened, and at its farther extremity they came to some thick bushes, which Mangaleesu pulling aside, the mouth of a cavern was discovered.

"Here no one is likely to find us, and if they do we can defend ourselves against greatly superior numbers," said Mangaleesu. "Your friend therefore can remain in safety until he has recovered and is able to proceed on his journey."

The cavern was dry and of considerable height, so that a fire could have been lighted within; but as the smoke would have been annoying, Denis suggested that they should light it outside, as the neighbouring bushes afforded plenty of fuel. This was soon done, and the rhinoceros meat put on to cook.

Mangaleesu and his wife, not being very particular as to its being well done, were soon able to commence supper. Denis preferred waiting a little longer, when he took some in to Percy, who was by this time well able to eat it. They pronounced it rather tough, but remarkably well flavoured; indeed, the rhinoceros being an herbivorous animal, its flesh is not to be despised.

As soon as the meat was cooked, the fire was put out. "We need not keep up one during the night," observed Mangaleesu, "for no wild beast can make its way through the bushes which I will draw in front of the cave, and should any one come near, your dog will give us ample notice."

Among the first inquiries Denis made of Mangaleesu was whether he had seen the waggon, or could in any way calculate how far they were from it. Mangaleesu replied that he had not seen it or fallen in with any tracks to show that it had passed in that direction. On learning whence they had started, he led Denis to suspect that he and Percy had wandered much farther to the north-west than they had supposed, and that they were not likely for several days to meet with the waggon, supposing it had moved on.

"There is, however," he observed, "a white family living on the borders, the only one for many miles round, not more than two days' journey from this. As soon as your friend has recovered his strength, if you start at daybreak, and walk on briskly, you may reach it on the evening of the second day. Kalinda and I will accompany you, and we will then go into Natal, and bid farewell for ever to Zululand."

On telling Percy of the account given by Mangaleesu, he exclaimed, "Why that must be Falls Farm, where my father lives. I thought we were still a long way from it. How delightful! I wish that I could get up and set off immediately. I am sure by to-morrow morning I shall be strong enough."

Denis was as anxious as his friend to start; for Percy had often spoken to him about Falls Farm and its inmates, and he thought that it would be very pleasant to spend a day or two with them. Hendricks, if he had recovered the oxen, was very likely to be there, or would arrive shortly.

Denis and Percy were thankful to be able to rest securely without the risk of being carried off by a lion or leopard, or trampled upon by an elephant or rhinoceros. A hunter in Africa has no easy time of it, either by night or by day. He

has treacherous human foes and savage wild animals to contend with.

Although night had not commenced, Denis was glad to lie down by the side of his friend, so as to obtain a longer rest than he had enjoyed for many a night. Next morning Percy declared that he felt better, after he had had another meal off rhinoceros flesh and water. Still Denis saw that he was not at all able to walk far, and certainly not fit to attempt making a long journey. He persuaded him therefore to remain quiet, at all events for another day.

"I wish that we had something better than this rhinoceros meat," said Denis to Mangaleesu.

"You shall have it," was the answer; "but I must be cautious in going out, lest I fall in with any of my enemies. If I am killed, I will trust you to look after my wife. Let her accompany you to the farm, where I am sure the good white chief will take care of her, as he is kind, I am told, to all the people round."

"I promise to do as you desire; but if there is any danger, it would be better not to go out," said Denis. "We can rough it on the rhinoceros meat."

Mangaleesu, however, observing that there would not be enough meat to last them another day, insisted on going out to find a deer or antelope.

Having closed the mouth of the cavern, and charged his companions not to venture forth, he set out. Denis and Percy passed their time mostly in sleep, to make up, as Denis said, "for their want of rest for so many days." Kalinda sat watching them, having nothing else to do. A considerable part of the day had passed, and they began to grow anxious at Mangaleesu's not returning.

Kalinda waited patiently, but she now frequently got up and went close to the mouth of the cavern, where she stood in the attitude of listening. Poor creature, she had long been accustomed to that state of anxiety, but now she had begun to hope that they would soon get across the border. They had taken into the cave a supply of water, and had cooked the remainder of the rhinoceros meat. As Mangaleesu did not return, the pangs of hunger compelled them to eat a portion, although they kept some in case he should come back without having succeeded in obtaining any game.

The day was drawing on when Kalinda, who was standing at the entrance, started and said in a low voice to Denis—

"He is coming!"

Presently the bushes were drawn aside, and Mangaleesu appeared, carrying a small antelope on his back. He looked tired and excited; and throwing the animal down, he hurriedly again closed the bushes, and sank exhausted to the ground.

"We must speak low, lest any one outside may hear us," he whispered. "I have been seen and pursued, but eluded my enemies. They may not discover this retreat, for I pretended to go off in an opposite direction. As I came along I resolved that you, my young friends, should escape as soon as you can. If found with me, you may be killed; but if you are alone, should you be overtaken, and will explain where you are going, you will not be molested." Such, at all events, was the meaning of what Mangaleesu said. "I would advise you to set off before daylight to-morrow morning," he continued. "Make your way to the farm. With the directions I will give you, you will easily find it. You may very likely be seen and pursued: be not alarmed; invite these who overtake you to escort you to the farm."

"But what will you and your wife do?" asked Denis.

"We will remain here in concealment until our enemies have grown weary of searching for us. I will watch them until I see them go away, and then we will set out and get across the border as fast as possible. The country is thinly peopled, so that we shall have no difficulty in escaping notice."

Denis expressed his regret at having to go without his friends, but agreed that the plan would be the best to adopt.

Mangaleesu, before it grew dark, showed them the spring, and the direction they were to follow, and minutely described several points, so that they would run no risk of losing their way. The antelope meat was cut up, and a portion cooked at a fire kindled in the cave, which, though it created more smoke than was pleasant, was easily borne in consideration of the advantage obtained.

Mangaleesu and Kalinda, with the two white lads, sat round the fire, eating their supper of venison, washed down with cold water, and talking over in low voices plans for that future which it was very possible none of them might live to see. Raff, who formed one of the circle, watched them with the greatest gravity, as if he fully understood all that was said. They then lay down to seek the rest the two young travellers at all events so greatly needed.

The night passed quietly; and when they awoke, Percy declared that he was sufficiently strong to undertake a two days' march, and having breakfasted, they set off, followed by Raff, a short time before daybreak.

Mangaleesu accompanied them some distance, to put them in the right way. They felt rather anxious about his getting back in safety to the cave.

"No fear," he answered: "a Zulu can creep unseen where a white man would certainly be observed. Even if my enemies were near, they would not discover me; but they are some way from this, and you will, I hope, be a good distance on your road before they find you, so that they will not guess whence you set out."

They shook the chief warmly by the hand, and again thanked him for the assistance he had rendered them. Scarcely had he left them a minute, when, as they looked round, they could nowhere see him.

They trudged on as fast as they could venture to go in the gloom of morning. When daylight broke, they increased their speed. Percy kept up bravely, and Denis declared that he had never felt in better trim for a long march. As they fell in with no hostile Zulus, they more than ever regretted that Mangaleesu and Kalinda had not accompanied them. From the rate they went they felt sure that they had accomplished half the distance. Having a supply of cooked meat, they agreed that it would be wiser to spend the night in a tree. As darkness approached, they looked about and found one with wide-spreading branches; into this they climbed.

"But I say, we must not run the risk of letting Raff be carried off as poor Fangs was; we must get him with us," said Denis. "I cannot reach him as I did before with my pocket-handkerchief, but we'll fasten our rifle slings together, and he'll easily make his way up."

This was done. Raff caught hold of one end; they hauled away, and he, helping himself up with his claws, was soon seated near them on the forks of a tree.

"But what if a leopard should think of coming up here, like the one we saw the other day!" said Percy.

"Raff will give us due notice," answered Denis. "We'll keep our rifles ready, and send him back again with a shot through his skull."

Their beds were not very comfortable, but notwithstanding, knowing that Raff was keeping watch, they slept soundly till the next morning. Descending the tree, they breakfasted on the remains of their venison, and pushed forward, feeling in as good trim as they had when they started on the previous day.

Chapter Fourteen.

The first threatenings of danger.

A stream descending from the Drakensberg, that lofty range of mountains which runs across the whole of the south-eastern portion of the Transvaal, separates that province from the north of Zululand. The region is thickly wooded and picturesque, though in many places wild in the extreme, while the climate, from the elevation of the land, is pure and invigorating. The stream, after issuing from the mountain-side, increased by numerous feeders, rapidly assumes considerable proportions, and rushes on towards the edge of a precipice, over which it falls in masses of foam, to the depth of fifty feet or so, when it flows on towards the south in a more tranquil current, with a width which may well claim for it the title of a fine river.

"Those must be the mountains, and that must be the river, Mangaleesu told us we should see," said Denis, as towards the end of the second day they stood on the height overlooking the valley into which they were about to descend.

"I have no doubt about it, from the description my brother Rupert has sent me," answered Percy; "and I think we shall soon see Falls Farm, although on the opposite side of the river. From where we stand, it is hidden by the trees. Hark! I think I hear the sound of the falls. If we were more to the south, we should see them."

"Well, then, let's make haste, and we shall be able to get down to the bank before dark," said Denis; "though how we are to cross is a puzzle."

"Perhaps we shall see somebody, and get him to send a boat across for us," said Percy. "Come along."

They hurried forward, eagerly looking out for the house and the falls, which would assure them that they were not mistaken in their expectations.

"Yes, there are the falls," cried Percy. "I see the water falling like a sheet of snow to the right, though it's farther off than I supposed, and there's a wreath of smoke rising above a clump on the opposite side, that must come from a house. Yes, hurrah! there's no mistake about it. I see a verandah, or porch, peeping out on the slope of the hill."

"All right. I congratulate you, Percy, as well as myself," said Denis; "and now we must see how we can get across."

They soon reached the margin of the river. It was apparently not very deep; but on the possibility of crocodiles existing in it, they were not inclined to attempt swimming across. Presently, however, they saw a person running along the bank. They shouted and waved to him. He saw them, and waved in return.

"I shouldn't be surprised if that is my brother Rupert," cried Percy, "though I shall not know him to a certainty, even when I see him close; it is so long since we parted."

The person they had seen was lost to sight among the trees, but soon reappeared on board a boat, in which he quickly came paddling across.

"Who are you?" he asked, "though I am sure you are Englishmen."

"Yes, I am Percy Broderick, and this is my friend Denis Maloney."

"And I am Rupert Broderick," said the person in the boat, leaping out, and shaking hands warmly with his brother and then with Denis. "I am delighted to see you, and so will father and mother be, and the girls. We were beginning to grow anxious about you. How have you managed to get here all alone? and what has become of Hendricks the hunter, with whom we understood you were coming through Zululand?"

"I'll tell you all about it as we go along," answered Percy. "I know Denis here is very hungry, and I confess that my joy in getting home has not quite taken away my appetite."

"Well, get into the boat, and we'll soon be at the house; it isn't as grand a mansion as you might have expected to find, but it's big enough to hold us, and a few visitors besides."

They were soon across, Percy and Denis talking all the time, giving such bits of their adventures as they knew would be interesting to their hearer. No sooner did they land, than Percy set off running, eager to meet his father and mother and sisters.

"Stop, stop!" cried Rupert; "let me say that you are coming, or the sudden surprise may be too trying to our mother's nerves."

But Percy had been seen from the verandah, and a middle-aged lady and three young ones came rushing down the steps, followed by a tall, strongly built gentleman, who seemed well capable of wielding an axe or a broadsword, as occasion might require.

"Percy, Percy!" cried the lady. "I know you, my dear boy! It must be you. Say I am right!"

"Yes, mother, yes," answered Percy, and rushing forward he was soon receiving affectionate embraces from his mother and sisters. His father was not long behind them, and then Rupert brought up Denis, who was received in the kindest manner, faithful Raff coming in for a share of their attention.

Another person soon appeared upon the scene. A gaunt woman, her grey hair destitute of cap, a red shawl over her shoulders, came rushing down the steps, a basting ladle in her hand, which she threw unconsciously to the ground, while she stretched out her arms as she gazed at Percy, and throwing them round him, exclaimed—

"Sure it's Masther Percy himself come home at last. Welcome, welcome! It does my heart good to see you, although it's a mighty outlandish country you've come to."

"It's home, however, Biddy, for I'm sure you must be Biddy Gillooly; though so many years have passed since you carried me in your arms, I remember you perfectly," answered Percy, returning her embrace.

"Blessings on ye, Masther Percy, for saying that," cried Biddy; "and who is the other young gintleman?"

"A countryman of yours," answered Percy, introducing Denis. "He'll be glad to have a talk with you about the old country, although he's not seen much of it himself since he was a small boy."

Biddy was delighted to find that Denis was actually born in her native village.

"Come, Biddy, the lads want supper as soon as possible, and the pots may be boiling over during your absence," said Captain Broderick.

Biddy took the hint, and picking up her ladle, hastened back to her kitchen. As soon as the excitement of their first arrival was over, both Percy and Denis began to feel the fatigue of their long journey. Percy could scarcely keep his eyes open while he sat at table. Mrs Broderick advised that they should both go to bed, and they accordingly retired. Denis managed to attend to himself; but Percy could scarcely have got into his bed without the assistance of his mother and brother.

The next day Percy was unable to rise, and Denis did not turn out until the evening, when he declared that he felt sufficiently rested to start again, if it was necessary, although he had no wish to leave the farm. Percy was affectionately tended by his mother and sisters, and he assured them he hoped in another day or two to be all to rights. The three Miss Brodericks were very nice girls—Denis thought them especially so—but they were very far from being fine young ladies. Assisted by Biddy, their only domestic, they attended to all the household affairs, cooked and baked, milked the cows, made butter and cheese, fed the poultry, worked in the garden, but still found time to stitch, sew, and darn, and make their mother's and their own dresses, as well as clothes for their father and brother, while they did not neglect the culture of their minds, aided by their father, who had brought a small library with him, which had been increased from time to time as he was able to obtain books from England. They were all cheerful and happy; but a shade of melancholy occasionally passed over the countenance of Mrs Broderick, as if her thoughts were reverting to some cause of grief during the past.

Captain Broderick had now been settled at Falls Farm about twelve years. He had selected it on account of the beauty of its situation and the fertility of its soil, but had not sufficiently considered at the time its distance from a market. He had been over-persuaded by the Boer, from whom he purchased it, that settlers would speedily gather round him, and that navigation would be established on the river, by which his produce could be conveyed southward. But neither of these expectations had been fulfilled. Having a small annual income, he had struggled manfully on, had got up a good house, had planted an orchard of fruit trees, and brought numerous acres under cultivation, while his herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats had greatly increased. He had done his utmost also to win the confidence and affections of the natives in his neighbourhood, who looked up to him as a counsellor and a friend, on whose assistance they could always rely. When they would work, and he had employment to give them, he justly paid them the wages he promised, which were equal to any they could obtain by going farther in search of them. While they were thus friendly and ready to protect him and his family, there were others at a distance beyond his influence, who were as savage as the generality of the Kaffir tribes, and addicted to predatory excursions on the property of their neighbours. The captain was an old soldier, and when building his house, had had an eye to its defence. He therefore had enclosed the acre or so of ground in which it stood with a high palisade, on the outside of which ran a deep ditch, and this could be filled by diverting a stream from the falls above, inaccessible to an enemy.

The stream served amply to irrigate the grounds and fields beyond, and neither did it nor the palisade appear to have been formed so much with the view of serving as a fortification, as for the object of preventing the inroad of elephants or other wild animals. The height, however, of the palisade was such that even a lion or leopard would have found it difficult to leap over. Within it could be penned also a considerable number of cattle and horses and sheep. The front was, however, left open, a drawbridge only crossing the moat; but materials for filling up the gap were kept stored on either side, so that in a few hours the whole circle could be completed. The planks were of such a thickness, that neither assegais nor bullets could pierce them, and certainly no force such as was likely to attack the farm would be provided with guns. Captain Broderick felt confident that he could rely, in case of an inroad, on the assistance of the neighbouring inhabitants, who would eagerly hurry to the farm for their own protection. Here and there were a few white settlers, but the greater number were Kaffirs, who did not owe allegiance to the monarch of Zululand. Had not Captain Broderick carefully studied the habits and customs of the natives, and ingratiated himself with them, he would have been unable not only to put up his house or the palisade, but even to have cultivated the ground, and found herdsmen for his cattle. He had two faithful followers, of whom a description will hereafter be given, as also three Hottentots, who lived in huts outside the farm; and he occasionally obtained the assistance of a couple of other white men; but the rest of the labour was performed by the Kaffir natives. Indomitable perseverance and energy had enabled him to overcome numberless difficulties, and had there been a market at hand, he would by this time have become a rich man. But the expense and loss of driving his cattle even to the nearest town was very great, and the profit very small after their arrival, while the trader who occasionally came that way could afford to give but low prices for animals which might never reach their destination.

Provisions, however, were abundant; and Captain Broderick and his son Rupert seldom failed, when they went out hunting, to return without a good supply of game, as they could always depend upon the assistance of the Kaffirs and any of the white settlers whom they invited to join them.

A couple of days had passed since the arrival of Percy and Denis, and they began to grow anxious at hearing nothing of Hendricks. It was difficult to account for his delay, unless he had lost so many of his oxen as to be unable to proceed with his waggon. This, however, was not likely. The natives were not hostile, as they were always glad to have traders come among them to purchase their produce, and from whom they could obtain the articles they required. The tsetse fly, although destructive in some parts to cattle, was not supposed to exist in the district through which he was passing, and although one or two of the animals might have been killed by lions, that would not have hindered him for any length of time, as he might easily have supplied their places, or travelled on with a smaller team. At last, Captain Broderick resolved to send out a couple of trusty men in the direction it was supposed Hendricks would come.

One of these, Conrad Vermack by name, whose chief characteristic was his intense hatred of the Zulus, had at one time possessed a farm of his own, but it had been destroyed by the savages while he was absent on a hunting expedition. He had returned to find his house burned to the ground, and his wife, five children, and two servants massacred. He had attempted to avenge their death, and had narrowly escaped with his own life. With three assegai wounds in his body, utterly ruined in purse, and his health broken, he had received shelter and kind treatment from Captain Broderick, who pitied his misfortunes. He had in time recovered his health, but had no desire or energy to attempt again setting up for himself, though offered some stock with which to commence. He declined the offer, saying that he would infinitely prefer devoting the remainder of his life to the service of one from whom he had received so many benefits; and he had thus remained on year after year, without changing his resolution, apparently contented, if not happy. In appearance he was unlike most of his countrymen. His figure was tall and bulky, his face long and rugged. A smile never illumined his countenance. A mass of long coal-black hair fell straight over his forehead and down his back, giving him a strong resemblance, except in colour, to a North American Indian. On all occasions he wore a short shooting jacket, his arms sticking considerably beyond the sleeves, while it was darned and patched in all directions, as were his trowsers, which had once been of blue cloth, but had been mended with pieces of so many colours that it was difficult to say what had been their original hue. Though Captain Broderick had given him a good suit which he wore on Sundays, and had offered him another instead of the one which has been described, he could never be induced to leave it off. He had worn a portion of it at his marriage, and he hoped to live and die in it, he said. He was a first-rate hunter, and was more frequently out with his gun than labouring on the farm, which was evidently not much to his taste, though when his services were absolutely required he worked as hard as any one, and amply repaid his host for the support he received.

The other man was a Kaffir, called Matyana. He belonged to a tribe almost exterminated by Dingan, the predecessor of Panda, and consequently hated the Zulus as much as did the Dutchman. Having made his escape from his enemies, though desperately wounded, he had been found by Captain Broderick in an apparently dying condition; but being carried to the farm, and carefully tended, he recovered. Although his people are generally supposed to be destitute of gratitude, he showed that he possessed that virtue by willingly remaining on with his protector, and rendering him all the service in his power.

Both these men, being well acquainted with the country, and thoroughly trustworthy, were selected by the Captain for the proposed expedition. They willingly undertook the duty, and set out well-armed and well mounted, promising to discover Hendricks and his party if they were still in the land of the living.

Denis begged to go with them, but Mrs Broderick interfered, declaring that he was utterly unable to undertake the journey; he indeed confessed to Percy that he scarcely felt up to a gallop, while he certainly was in no hurry to quit Falls Farm.

Percy agreed with him, and thought indeed that he showed his good taste in enjoying the society of his mother and sisters.

The young ladies found time, after the day was over, to play and sing and talk, although they had nothing to say about their neighbours, and especially to listen to the accounts Denis and Percy gave them of their adventures.

By the bye, the three fair daughters of Captain and Mrs Broderick, Helen, Rose, and Maud, ought before this to have been formally introduced to the reader. The eldest was about two-and-twenty, Rose was just eighteen, and Maud was a year younger than Percy. Miss Broderick recollected a great deal about England, and it is just possible might have preferred living there to existing in the wilds of Africa, at the same time that she was contented with her lot, which many young ladies would have thought a hard one.

As Percy was unable to walk any distance, on the evening of the day the men had been sent off to look for Hendricks, Rupert proposed to Denis to take him a row, and Maud, hearing of it, begged that she might go also. The boat was the same in which Percy and Denis first crossed the river. It was kept on the bank of the river, concealed in a thicket from the view of passers-by, a short way from the house. They had just reached the place where the boat was kept, and Rupert and Denis were busy preparing her, when Maud exclaimed, "There are two people on the opposite bank. They are natives, and are waving to us."

Percy looking up cried out, "Yes, so there are, and they appear to me like Mangaleesu and Kalinda."

The two natives continued to wave still more vehemently, occasionally looking behind them, as if they expected to see some one coming from that direction. They then both stepped into the water, about apparently to swim across.

Rupert and Denis on this made signs to them to wait.

"You remain here, Maud, with Percy," said Rupert, as he shoved off the boat with his oar from the bank.

He and Denis rowed with all their might, for they saw that the natives were evidently in a great hurry.

"Yes, there is no doubt that the man is the Zulu chief who saved Percy's life, and who helped us on our way, and that the other is his wife," exclaimed Denis. "I would not have them on any account fall into the hands of their enemies, who would kill them to a certainty. Pull away! pull away!"

They quickly reached the opposite bank, when both Mangaleesu and his wife hurriedly stepping into the boat, sank down thoroughly exhausted.

"What has happened, my friend?" asked Denis.

"We are pursued by our enemies, and they will soon be here;" answered Mangaleesu. "Can the white chief give us shelter? or must we continue our flight? For myself I would not mind, but my wife is well-nigh exhausted, and I fear she would be overtaken."

"You do not, either of you, look as if you were capable of continuing on much longer," said Denis, as he and Rupert began to row back as fast as they could. "I am very sure that the white chief will protect you, especially when he hears that you saved his son's life, and helped us both so greatly. I may say that, may I not, Rupert? I am sure that your father will protect them."

"No doubt about that," answered Rupert. "Pull away then; and if we can get them concealed in the house before their pursuers see where they have gone, it will save a great deal of trouble."

There was not much time to settle any further plans before they reached the western bank. Immediately landing, they drew up the boat on shore, at a spot where she was completely concealed by the bushes.

Scarcely had they landed when a large body of Zulus were seen on the height of the opposite side of the river, waving their assegais, and rushing down as if they fully expected in a few minutes to come up with the fugitives.

"Come along, Mangaleesu. We must get into the house before those people out there see you," cried Rupert, taking the chief's hand.

Unfortunately they had an open space to cross. As they did so they were perceived by the Zulus, who broke into loud and savage shouts, which even at the distance they were off could clearly be heard.

"Don't be afraid, Kalinda. They shan't hurt you," said Percy; "I am sure my father will not let them take you away."

As they hurried on they saw the Zulus making signs to them to bring back the boat. It was evident that the savages had perceived how the fugitives had escaped them.

"You may beckon and shriek and howl as much as you like," cried Rupert. "We are not going to allow you to murder these people if we can help it."

Without paying further attention to the Zulus, they hurried on to the house, where they found Captain Broderick.

Percy at once introduced Kalinda and Mangaleesu to his father, telling him how much he and Denis were indebted to them.

"We come to crave your protection, O White Chief," said Mangaleesu. "Our enemies are seeking our death, and if we are turned away I fear that we shall be overtaken."

"I promise to afford it you, my friends," said Captain Broderick. "They dare not drag you from my house by force, and I will not allow them to enter."

"There is no time to be lost then, for they are very close to the bank," said Rupert. "I will go and see what they are about."

Captain Broderick led the chief and his wife into the house, while Rupert hastened to where he could watch the Zulus. They were doing as he feared they would; nearly half the band were already in the stream, stemming the current, shouting and shrieking, to keep away the crocodiles, while the other half were preparing to follow. The current was carrying them down, but not very rapidly, so that they would land at a point not far below that on the opposite bank from which they had started.

He at once returned to report what he had seen. Captain Broderick had by this time come back to the front of the house. There were fortunately two white men, as well as the Hottentots, and several faithful Kaffirs within call. He ordered Rupert at once to bring out the arms and put them into the hands of the Kaffirs, whom he knew he could trust. The white men had brought their rifles, and by the time the Zulus had landed, he had a dozen men, besides himself and Denis and his two sons, ready to defend those to whom he had promised protection, should their enemies attempt to take them. Having drawn them up on the inside of the moat in front of the house, he waited to see how the Zulus would proceed. As soon as they had landed and shaken themselves dry, they looked about as if expecting to see the fugitives; then guessing that they had taken shelter in the farm, they advanced towards it, until they came in sight of the force prepared to receive them. Their leader, a chief of some consideration, judging by the cow-tails hanging round his neck, and the feathers in his head-dress, advanced and began an address to Captain Broderick.

"The Zulus and the white men are brothers," he said. "The enemies of the one are the enemies of the other. How comes it then that I see the white chief in arms against us? We have long been seeking one who is a traitor to his country, and who has defied our king Panda, the lion of the world, and I desire to know whether he is still flying across the country, or has been received into the house of our friend. If he has, we demand that he may be delivered up to us forthwith, to be treated as he deserves."

Captain Broderick listened patiently until the chief had come to an end.

"I wish to be friends with the Zulus, as well as with all the people among whom I live," said the captain. "I have no desire to protect any one because he is an enemy to the Zulus, but I cannot allow any injury to be inflicted on persons who have rendered essential service to those dear to me. There is no one in this house I can consent to deliver up to you, and therefore if you expect it you must go away disappointed. I have said it, it is useless to ask more."

The chief, on hearing this, looked very angry, and muttered something which Captain Broderick could not understand. The Zulus appeared doubtful how to proceed; at length Captain Broderick spoke to them.

"To show you that I wish to be friends, if you are hungry, I will feed you," he said. "You shall have a heifer, which I was going to kill to-night, but you must retire with it across the river, where you can feast as you desire."

This promise had evidently a good effect on the Zulus. They saw, indeed, that they were not likely to gain anything by force from a white man, who was well prepared to repel it, and was not to be intimidated.

They accordingly shouted out, "Give us the heifer. We will go."

On this Captain Broderick ordered one of the Hottentots to bring out the animal from a shed at a short distance off. The Hottentot obeyed the order with evident unwillingness; indeed, the poor animal seemed to know, by the way it walked, the fate prepared for it. As it approached, the Zulus rushed forward to seize it, for they considered it rather gained by their own prowess than as a gift.

"We take the heifer because we want food; but understand, we do not abandon the right of search for the fugitives who have rebelled and deserve death," said the chief, turning to Captain Broderick.

Having thus delivered himself, he stalked off with his followers to the bank of the river, when, plunging in, they waded and swam across the stream, driving the heifer before them.

Rupert hurried down to watch them. They went on for some distance to a sheltered spot under the hill, where shortly a fire was seen blazing up, evidently for the purpose of cooking the heifer. As it continued burning brightly for some time after darkness had set in, there was no doubt that the Zulus were enjoying themselves, and intended to remain there till the morning. Captain Broderick was too well accustomed to Kaffir warfare to trust to them, and thinking it possible that they might attempt to surprise the farm during the night, he kept a vigilant watch, and ordered his little force to remain under arms until it was ascertained to a certainty that they had taken their departure from the neighbourhood.

Chapter Fifteen.

Unpleasant neighbours.

Some hours of the night had passed, but still the fire in the distance was seen burning as brightly as ever. It showed that the Zulus were awake, and probably banqueting on the meat of the heifer given to them. Whether they would go away or remain in the neighbourhood was doubtful. Although they had accepted the gift, Captain Broderick thought it probable that they had some treacherous intentions, and would, at all events, make an attempt to get hold of Mangaleesu and Kalinda: perhaps even now a party might be stealing across the river with that object in view, intending to make a sudden rush at the house, should they find the garrison off their guard.

Captain Broderick therefore ordered his men to keep under arms, while he sent two of the Kaffirs, on whom he could rely, to watch along the bank of the river. He had little fear of their crossing above the falls, as the current there ran

with great rapidity, and they would have had to make a wide circuit over difficult, almost impassable ground. Still, to escape the risk of being taken by surprise, he placed a sentry to watch on the northern side of the palisade, where a platform had been erected for the purpose. Meantime Percy, who had wished to keep guard with the rest, was persuaded by his mother to go to bed.

"You will better be able to do your duty, should any work be required, when you have regained your strength," she observed. "Should the Zulus attack us, which I don't think probable, I will call you. You can then take your part in the defence."

"And what are you and the girls going to do, mother?" he asked.

"We will load the muskets, and tend any who are wounded," she answered, in a firm voice. "Rose and Maud propose to keep a look-out round the palisade, lest any of the enemy should steal up and attempt to take them in the rear; while Bidy will not fail to play her part in some way or other."

"I wish that Hendricks and Crawford, with that gallant little fellow Lionel, had arrived," observed Percy. "I cannot help thinking that some accident may have happened to them, or they would have been here before now. They and the servants would have added greatly to our strength. Indeed, I don't think the Zulus, if they were here, would venture to attack us. I have not, by the bye, told you much about Lionel, mother."

"No; but your friend Denis has, and he described to us the gallant way in which you saved the boy from being drowned or destroyed by a crocodile," answered Mrs Broderick.

"I was too glad to be of service to Mr Hendricks, who had treated my friend Crawford and me so kindly in letting us accompany him, besides which, I had a strong liking for the young fellow, whom I should have been very sorry to have lost. I first fancied that he was either the son or nephew of Mr Hendricks, but he afterwards told me that he was neither the one nor the other, but that he had been rescued by Hendricks during a trip he made some years before into Zululand."

Percy went on to give an account of Lionel's history. Mrs Broderick listened with deep attention, and inquired the age and appearance of her son's friend, which Percy described.

"Did you ever hear, Percy, that your youngest brother, during the journey we made in coming here, was lost? We always supposed that he perished with his nurse, who was killed and thrown into the river by the savages. Her body was discovered some time afterwards, though our child's was never found."

"Do you know, mother, I cannot help thinking that Lionel must be that young brother of mine," exclaimed Percy. "I am aware that I ought not to raise your hopes, but I felt drawn towards him from the first; and, as Denis will tell you, he very soon learned to speak English. He remembered a lady he felt sure was his mother, and a tall gentleman he supposed to be his father, although he had no recollection of how he came into the hands of the Zulus. It is strange that he should have been found in the kraal of Mangaleesu, who is now here. He, however, can give very little information as to Lionel's history, as he was brought to the kraal by another tribe who were afterwards destroyed. Besides Lionel, Mangaleesu and his wife are the only inhabitants of the whole kraal who escaped. Denis, however, knows the exact particulars better than I do, as he joined Hendricks the very next day, and has been with Lionel nearly ever since."

Mrs Broderick, on hearing this, could scarcely restrain her agitation. She naturally at once felt sure that her child's life had by some wonderful means been preserved. Her impulse was to hurry forthwith to gain more particulars from Denis, and to talk over the subject with her husband, but she felt that it would be wrong to draw off their attention from their duties, engaged as they were in guarding the house. She then thought of visiting Mangaleesu and Kalinda, who had been placed in a small room at the back of the house. She knew enough of the language to speak to them; but Percy assured her that they would not be able to give her more information than he had done.

"I don't know that Denis can do so either," he added. "We must wait until Hendricks and Lionel himself arrive, and we are sure to hear of them in a day or two, unless some accident has happened, and I don't know why we should expect that."

Poor Mrs Broderick's heart sank within her as she thought of the possibility that such, notwithstanding Percy's hopes, might have been the case. She could not but believe that Lionel was her long-lost boy, and she longed with all her mother's heart for his arrival. She would know him by his features, and by the tone of his voice, and she recollected two small marks on the shoulders of her boy, which, if found upon Lionel, would leave no doubt as to his identity, as that must satisfy others as well as herself.

Though she wished Percy to go to sleep, she could scarcely refrain from continuing to talk with him on the subject. At last his incoherent answers, and finally his total silence, showed her that he was slumbering soundly. She went to her daughters' room to give them an account of what she had heard. They all three were unanimous in believing that the brave boy Denis had been speaking to them about was their brother. They had heard the history of little Walter's loss, although they never alluded to it, and they had often observed a shade of melancholy pass over their mother's countenance, which they guessed was owing to her thinking on the subject.

The night passed slowly away. Captain Broderick was unwilling to trust entirely to any one, except to himself and his son Rupert, or to his young guest, who he at once saw possessed all the qualifications of a good soldier. Either one or the other went occasionally to the point whence the Zulus' camp could be seen. Their fire was burning as brightly as ever, and for some time appeared to be increasing. It diminished however in size just before daybreak, when one of the scouts returned reporting that he had crossed the river, and not finding any of the enemy moving about as he had expected, had got so close to their camp as to be able to calculate the number of persons assembled. He was certain that a portion only of the force which had pursued Mangaleesu had crossed the river, or otherwise that their

numbers had since been greatly augmented.

Hearing this, Captain Broderick strongly suspected that they would again present themselves and demand the delivery of those whom he felt in honour bound not to give up. He counted the cost. He was aware that they might ravage his fields and carry off many of his cattle, but he had resolved not to yield to their demands. His first care was to put the farm in a more complete state of defence. He immediately sent off one of his men to obtain further help from any white settlers or Kaffirs who were able to come. With those remaining, he at once commenced putting up the palisades which have been mentioned, placed in readiness for the purpose. The uprights were so formed that the horizontal beams or planks could be fitted into them without the use of nails, while they were supported from the inside by beams placed at an angle to serve as buttresses. Near to the top of the wall was a platform which ran round the whole of the palisades, and served as a rampart from which to fire down on an enemy. Such a structure would have been easily destroyed by fire, but the deep trench which ran in front prevented that danger, and the wooden wall was thus well calculated to resist any attack which the Zulus were likely to make against it. Inside the fortifications, for so they might be called, was a large barn, containing a good supply of fodder for the cattle, while in the house provisions of various descriptions were stored. While some of the men were employed in putting up the defences, the Hottentots were sent off to drive in the more valuable of the cattle, so that they, at all events, might be preserved, while the Zulus in revenge might make a raid on the unprotected part of the farm, and destroy or carry off what they could lay their hands on. Considerable progress had been made before daybreak, but still much remained to be completed, and it was hoped that until this was done, the Zulus would not cross the river.

Captain Broderick at first contemplated the possibility, with the force he hoped to have under his command, of preventing them from crossing by attacking them while they were in the water; but then again, they might possibly, expecting to be opposed, divide into two or more parties, and while he was engaged with one party, the others might get across. He was also unwilling to commence hostilities, and considered it wise to throw the responsibility of so doing on the Zulus. He therefore with unabated energy continued the preparations for defence.

There was little doubt that if the Zulus meditated an attack, they would send scouts to watch what was taking place in the farm. He was thankful, therefore, when soon after daylight the Hottentots arrived with the choicest of his horses and oxen. In a short time also several Kaffirs came dropping in, two or three at a time; some with muskets, but others armed only with their assegais and shields, though they were mostly accustomed to the use of firearms. They immediately joined those labouring at the fortifications. They were followed by three white settlers, two of whom were Dutch Boers, the other an Englishman; hardy borderers of a low class, who, having suffered from the Zulus in former years, held them in utter detestation.

Before the day was many hours old, the fortifications on the farm were complete. Captain Broderick had a great desire to avoid hostilities, and he hoped, should the Zulus come, that they, on seeing at once they had no chance of success, would retire.

He had set an example to his men by working harder than any of them; and at length, overcome with fatigue, he had retired to the house, desiring Rupert to summon him immediately, should the scouts return, or anything of importance occur. Denis insisted on keeping company with Rupert on the platform, whence a good look-out could be obtained over the surrounding country.

"I got so sound a sleep the first two nights after I came here, that I did not feel at all inclined to go to bed," he said, as they walked to and fro. "Not that I think there is much chance of having a visit from those Zulus; for, from what I know of them, I suspect that as soon as they find we are prepared to give them a warm reception, they will turn tail and go the way they came."

"Probably they will, but I hope they will not fall in with your friend Hendricks and his party, or they may revenge themselves by murdering and robbing them," observed Rupert.

"They will not dare to do that," answered Denis. "They depend so much on the traders for supplying their wants, and enabling them to dispose of their produce, that they will not willingly quarrel with any of them; still I should be very thankful to see Hendricks arrive here in safety."

While they were speaking they were joined by Percy, who said he felt himself much better, and up to anything. He had not been with them more than a minute, when he asked Rupert for his spyglass. Directing it towards the opposite shore, he exclaimed—

"I thought I saw some horsemen, and I am right, I see four, but only one is a white man, the other three are black. Two of them look very like those we sent away from here, and the other is apparently a chief."

Rupert took the glass from his brother. "You are right!" he exclaimed. "They are riding fast, and keeping clear of the Zulu camp, which they probably discovered from the height, and think it prudent to avoid. We will go down and meet them. Percy, do you remain here on guard. You need not rouse up our father, but if you see anything suspicious, send down and let him know."

Saying this, Rupert, followed by Denis, hurried down. They made their way over the drawbridge to the spot where the boat was concealed, and pulled across to the opposite bank, towards which the horsemen came galloping at full speed.

"Why, there's our friend Crawford," cried Denis, "and there are Umgolo, old Vermack, and Matyana. They'll bring us news, I hope, of Hendricks and Lionel."

Crawford, immediately dismounting, began to take the saddle off his horse. "Thank you, my friends, for coming to meet me," he said; "you've saved me from a wetting, and perhaps from the jaws of a crocodile. Excuse me for being somewhat in a hurry; but the fact is that the old Dutchman who escorted me here thinks that the Zulus out there

would like to get hold of our party, to retain us as hostages till you deliver up a runaway chief who has taken refuge here." He was unbuckling the girths as he spoke, and now, with the saddle on his arm, was stepping into the boat when he recognised Denis. "What, my dear fellow, is it you yourself, safe and sound!" he exclaimed, as they warmly shook hands, "I am delighted to see you. The messengers who came from this place told us of your arrival; for until then we were in great anxiety about you and Percy. How did you get here?"

"I'll tell you all about it as we pull across," answered Denis; "but we have no time to lose. See, there come a whole party of Zulus scampering towards us, and whether or not old Vermack was right in his conjectures, I don't suppose that they are coming with any friendly intentions."

As he spoke, he and Rupert shoved off, the Boer and the Kaffirs, who did not dismount, driving his horse before them across the river.

While Rupert and Denis pulled, Crawford sat in the sternsheets, more than once turning his head to ascertain how near the Zulus had got. He and his companions on horseback had distanced them so much that he and Denis had time to exchange a few words.

"You gave us a tremendous fright, I can assure you, Denis," said Crawford. "Hendricks sent in all directions to look for you; and when the body of poor Gozo was found, it was feared that you had met with the same fate. He was so dreadfully cut up, that I thought he would have abandoned his expedition and gone back to Maritzburg."

"I am sorry to have caused the fine old boy so much trouble," answered Denis. "He may be certain that it was very much against our wish, and I know that I wouldn't again go through what we did for a good deal. But, faith, those black fellows are getting mighty near; and if they happen to have a musket or two among them, they may shoot one of us. Pull away, Rupert!"

"You are right, Paddy," said Rupert. "Though I doubt if they have firearms, I don't wish to run the chance."

They accordingly both gave way with a will. Instead of returning to the place where the boat was usually kept, Rupert directed her upstream until they came to a point where the moat communicated with the river. Landing, they quickly towed her through the moat to the entrance, where she could lie protected from an enemy. Here they found Captain Broderick, who had risen on hearing that the Zulus had been seen moving towards the river. After welcoming Crawford, whom he was prepared to receive, as Percy had mentioned the invitation he had given him, he eagerly asked what had become of Hendricks.

"He begged me to express his regret at not being able to pay you a visit; for he has been so long detained during the search for your son and Maloney, and by various other misadventures, that he is anxious to push on northward without further delay," answered Crawford. "He has, however, sent his chief hunter to escort back our Irish friend, who is of course desirous of proceeding in search of his father."

"Had Hendricks known how anxious I am to see him and young Lionel, he would have paid me his promised visit," exclaimed Captain Broderick. "I would at once set off with Maloney, but I dare not leave the farm with these Zulus in the neighbourhood, even could I get away without being observed by them. I doubt, indeed, whether it will be safe for our friend here and his guide, to set off while they remain; for if seen leaving the farm, the Zulus will certainly endeavour to capture them, and hold them hostages until I deliver up the fugitives who have sought my protection; and that I am bound not to do."

Crawford expressed his delight at seeing Percy, who now came down from the platform.

"We will tell you all about our adventures by-and-by; and I shall be glad to hear yours," said Percy, as they cordially shook hands. "Come in. I want to introduce you to my mother and sisters. I have been talking to them about you, so that they will not look upon you as a stranger."

Crawford was soon made at home. Mrs Broderick liked his looks, and the young ladies thought him very agreeable.

In a short time, Rupert, who had taken Percy's place on the platform, came down with the information that the Zulus, who had attempted to cut off the horsemen, had retired to their camp. It was uncertain what their intentions had been; but Captain Broderick believed that they were hostile.

Crawford said that Hendricks intended to travel by slow stages, so as to allow Denis and Umgolo quickly to overtake him. He was, indeed, unable to move fast, as he had lost several of his oxen, and had not hitherto replaced them, though he hoped to do so shortly. The Zulus had shown a less friendly disposition than formerly, and this also made him anxious to get out of their country as soon as possible.

The message from Hendricks to him much perplexed Denis. He wished to accompany him in the search of his father; but he was unwilling to desert his new friends at a time when they were placed in danger, and required all the assistance to be obtained; besides which, he had become attached to Percy, and was greatly interested in the whole family.

The young ladies he thought charming, superior to any he had ever met before. His interest in the family was still further increased when the Captain and Mrs Broderick begged him to give an account of the finding of Lionel. Next to Hendricks, he was better able to do this than any other person; and on their telling him that they had lost a child, whom they had hitherto thought had been destroyed with his nurse, and who would now be about the same age that Lionel was supposed to be, he exclaimed, in his usual impulsive manner—

"Then I am ready to stake anything that Lionel is your son. He has the same look and features as Miss Maud, more ruddy to be sure. Though I never thought him much like Percy, he greatly resembles Rupert, and he has often told

me he remembers his mother, and the tall gentleman he supposed to be his father, who there can be no doubt must be Captain Broderick."

Captain and Mrs Broderick were as fully persuaded that Lionel was their son, as Denis. How they longed to see him, and to thank Hendricks for the care he had bestowed on the boy. Still there was the difficulty of reaching him, and bringing him back in safety to the farm, should the Zulus remain on the watch for Mangaleesu. Peace might be established at once by delivering him up, but that was not to be thought of, neither would Captain Broderick express any wish that he and his wife would quit the farm, and relieve him from the responsibility of protecting them. Percy offered to accompany Denis to bring back Lionel; but although he had plenty of spirit, he was not strong enough to undertake the journey. Rupert also begged that he might go, but it was a question whether Hendricks, who was so greatly attached to Lionel, would deliver him up without further proof that Captain Broderick had a right to him.

By making a wide circuit to the west, the Zulus, although they continued on the watch, might be avoided; but the mountain would have to be twice crossed before Hendricks could be reached, and it would be difficult to find him. Crawford then offered to go; but being much knocked up by his journey, he would be unable to start for a couple of days. On further consideration, Captain Broderick came to the conclusion that the longer route was not to be thought of, as there would be a great risk of missing Hendricks altogether.

The day was already too far spent for any one to set off until the next morning. Possibly by that time the Zulus, finding that the garrison had been further increased, would consider that they had no chance of success, and would take their departure. If so, Captain Broderick was determined to set off himself with Denis and the two men he had before despatched to look for Hendricks. A party of five, well-armed and mounted, might travel without difficulty, and would, he hoped, soon overtake the slow-moving waggon; while, although there would be only four to return, Denis assured him that Lionel was worth any grown man.

Captain Broderick again sent out a couple of scouts to watch the enemy; and should they move, to ascertain in what direction they went. They returned after dark, saying that the Zulus were still encamped, and that they had scouts out in all directions, evidently on the watch for Mangaleesu, whom they probably supposed would try to make his escape.

This was a great disappointment. Though Captain Broderick knew that he might easily evade them, they would certainly discover that he and his party had left the farm, and might be tempted, on finding that its garrison had been decreased, to attack it.

Chapter Sixteen.

An important expedition.

The delay caused by the presence of the Zulus was excessively trying to Captain and Mrs Broderick. The more they heard from Denis about Lionel, the more they were convinced that he was their lost child. Ellen and Rose were persuaded that they should know him at once, as they had often carried him about and nursed him, though the rest were too young to recollect more than that they had had a little brother, who had disappeared while a baby. Bidy declared that she could pick him out from among a thousand if she could once set eyes on him. She recollected what Master Rupert had been, and looking at him as he now was, she was positive as to what Master Walter would have become.

"Sure, if Master would let me, I'd start off at once by meself, an' not care for the Zulus, or lions, or other bastes in the way, and soon bring him back safe an' sound in me arms," she exclaimed in her enthusiasm.

"You would find it a more difficult task than you suppose, Bidy, to make your way all alone through the wilds," said Percy. "It was no easy matter for Denis and me, with our rifles in our hands, and well accustomed to tramping. If my father will let me go, with Vermack, and Matyana, and Denis, and Umgolo, I am sure I can persuade Hendricks to let Lionel return with me."

To this Mrs Broderick objected. She was sure that Percy was unfit to perform the journey, which might be of considerable length, as Hendricks, it was supposed, was travelling almost in an opposite direction, and might before they could overtake him, be several days ahead. She dreaded also the danger to which he might be exposed; besides which, it was doubtful whether Hendricks, deeply attached as he was known to be to the boy, would give him up to any one but to his father, who alone could be certain that Lionel really was his son. It was possible, after all, that the child might belong to a family of Boers, slaughtered by the Zulus, and that Denis might have been mistaken in the idea he had formed, when trying to instruct him, that he had previously known English.

Mangaleesu and Kalinda, though they both were cross-questioned and examined over and over again, could throw no further light on the subject than they had already done. They only knew that the boy had been brought to the kraal by another tribe, all of whom were now dead; and although they had taken an interest in the child, they had made no further inquiries about him. Captain Broderick therefore kept to his resolution of setting out with his two attendants as soon as it was ascertained that the Zulus had left the neighbourhood. In the meantime the defences of the farm were increased as much as possible, in case the Zulus should venture to attack it.

The night was passing by quietly. Crawford volunteered to keep watch, Mangaleesu also offered his services, so that those who had been on foot the previous night might obtain the rest they required. Rupert and Denis joined them shortly after midnight. They were continually going round the whole circuit of the stockade to see that the men who were ported at the different angles had their eyes open, and that the enemy were not stealing up, as it was thought possible they might attempt to do, to take them by surprise.

Crawford had just returned to the platform in front of the house, when Mangaleesu pointed across the river, towards the Zulu camp. No fire was to be seen, and Crawford remarked that the flames had sunk completely down, although there was still a glow as if from hot embers.

Rupert and Denis soon afterwards came up.

"That looks as if they had gone away at last," observed Rupert, "and I hope that my father will be able to set out to-morrow."

"Don't be too sure of that," observed Denis. "The fellows are up to all sorts of tricks. They may have crossed the river lower down, and we may see their ugly faces in the morning, or hear their shrieks and yells before then, or it is just as likely that they have crossed to the north, and will try to make their way down from above the falls. I have heard a great deal of their devices from my father and Hendricks, and the other traders, and it never does to trust them."

Mangaleesu did not understand what was said, but perhaps he would have considered the remarks rather complimentary than otherwise, although made about those who were now his deadly enemies. Denis asked him what he thought upon the subject; he replied, that he believed they had gone away to the eastward, finding that the garrison of the farm were keeping a vigilant watch, and that they could not hope to succeed, unless at the risk of losing a number of men, with the comparatively small force they possessed. He expressed his regret at causing his friends so much trouble and anxiety, and offered the next morning to make his way with Kalinda to a distance from the frontier.

"I do not suppose that Captain Broderick will allow you to do that, for Kalinda has not yet recovered from the hardships she went through, and you yourself are scarcely able to make a long journey," said Denis. "Even if the Zulus have gone away, and have no intention of attacking the farm, they may have sent scouts to watch for you, so that should you try to escape, you and your wife may lose your lives after all."

Rupert was of the same opinion as Denis.

"My father is a man who always means what he says, and as he has promised to protect you, he will not, even though you yourself might offer to go, allow you to run the risk of being killed."

Mangaleesu acknowledged that he should grieve to expose Kalinda to the dangers she must go through, and proposed to leave her, if Captain Broderick would still afford her protection, and to go away by himself.

"That would not mend matters," observed Rupert; "for if the Zulus should again venture to come to the farm under a belief that they were strong enough to capture it, they would insist upon her being given to them as a hostage until you deliver yourself up. No, no! you and she must stay here until there is time to send to Natal, to complain of the proceedings of the Zulus; and Cetchwayo, if he instigated them, must be taught that he cannot attack English settlers with impunity."

Although it was very possible that the Zulus had gone away altogether, Crawford and his companions agreed that it would be prudent to keep as vigilant a watch round the stockade as ever. They therefore continued their rounds, but they could discover nothing to indicate that an enemy was in the neighbourhood. When at length the sun rising lighted up the beautiful landscape, all around was as calm and smiling as ever. The scouts who had been on the look-out now came in, and reported that the Zulu force had really retired, and that the road to the north-east was clear. Captain Broderick, who had previously made all arrangements, at once prepared to start.

Percy felt very sad as he shook hands with Denis. "I wish that you had been able to stay on with us, old fellow," he said. "I cannot help thinking of all the dangers and hardships you will have to go through, though, if I were not at home, I should be glad to go with you, and help you get through them. However, you must try to come back, and take a long spell with us, if Hendricks will let you, or your father, if you find him, as I hope you will. The girls, too, will be glad to see you, as you are a favourite with them, I can tell you that."

Denis had reason to flatter himself that such was the case. All the family had been pleased with his hearty, unaffected manner, and thankful to him for the service he had rendered Percy.

He bade them all a friendly good-bye; and Maud, who was generally so merry and smiling, looked unusually grave and burst into tears as soon as he was gone, though she tried hard to hide them.

The horses having been sent across, Captain Broderick and his party proceeded down to the boat, accompanied by the inmates of the farm. There were more leave-takings, the nature of which can be imagined, and further charges given by the captain, as he and Denis stepped into the boat, pulled by Rupert and Crawford. At once mounting, he led his party at a rapid rate to the north-east, those on the opposite bank watching them with anxious eyes until they were lost to sight behind a grove of trees.

"My father charged me at the last to keep a vigilant watch in our fortress, lest after all any Zulus should be lurking in the neighbourhood," said Rupert to his brother. "We must not let Mangaleesu go outside, or he may be seen by one of the enemy's scouts, in which case they would be certain to return in the hopes of capturing him. At present they probably fancy that he has gone away, and that they have therefore no excuse for attacking us."

Crawford and Rupert did not fail to carry out Captain Broderick's directions; and Percy, who was rapidly recovering his strength, was soon able to assist them. Although the drawbridge was let down, it was constantly watched, while one of the three was always looking out from the platform, with a good telescope, so that any objects moving could be discovered at a considerable distance on three sides of the farm; for the hills rising abruptly in the rear shut out the view in that direction. A scout occasionally sent out by Rupert reported that he was certain no Zulus in any number could possibly be in the neighbourhood, although he could not be positive that one or two might not be

lurking about, on the watch for Mangaleesu. They therefore kept the chief and his young wife carefully concealed as before. Mrs Broderick bestowed much attention on them. She could speak the Zulu language sufficiently well to make herself understood, and she called in Rupert, who had studied it thoroughly, to assist her. Her great desire was to impart a knowledge of Christian truth to them, of which they were at present utterly ignorant. Kalinda's countenance brightened as she first heard the story of redeeming love, and she begged Mrs Broderick to tell her more and more of it.

Mangaleesu listened attentively to all that was said. Though Kalinda appeared inclined to accept the truth, yet when he was asked what he thought, he only shook his head, saying, "It may be so; but if I become the sort of Christian you wish me, I shall no longer be able to revenge myself on my enemies."

"Most certainly not!" answered Mrs Broderick. "God has said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' You must leave all in His hands. It would be your duty to forgive your enemies. If He thinks fit to punish them, He will do so."

"But you English punish evil-doers, don't you?" asked Mangaleesu.

"Certainly, the government do; but that is to prevent others committing the same acts, and to teach by the most forcible means possible that those acts are wrong."

"I will consider the matter," answered Mangaleesu, and for a long time afterwards he scarcely spoke to any one, and appeared to be in a very thoughtful mood.

Affairs at the farm went on in their usual way. The cattle could no longer be kept in the kraal, and had to be driven out to their pastures, under charge of the Kaffir herdsmen who tended them, with arms in their hands, and who were ordered to keep a watchful eye on every side to prevent being surprised. They had the advantage of the river on one side and the mountains on the other, so that the enemy could not come upon them without making a wide circuit. In consequence of the absence of the captain and two of the best men, while two others were engaged in scouting, the labour of the rest was much increased. Crawford and Percy did their best to supply the deficiency, but they were, of course, as yet unaccustomed to the various duties required of them. The ladies took upon themselves the care of the dairy, which was far more successful than is generally the case in Natal, where the farmers have mostly to depend upon their Kaffir servants, by whom the animals are treated very roughly, and consequently are excessively wild. Under the instruction of Bidy, the three young ladies had learned to milk the cows, and very successfully they performed this operation, seldom or never allowing a pail to be upset, or losing a drop of the milk. They had some pet animals which they had taught to feed out of their hands, and which were consequently as tame and gentle with them as could be desired, although they would allow no one else, with the exception of Bidy, to approach them. They would come at their call, and allow themselves to be milked with perfect docility. The contrast between their cows and those tended by the Kaffirs was very great. The Kaffir process of milking was barbarous in the extreme. The animal to be operated on, being driven into the kraal, was made fast by the horns to one of the posts. Her hind legs were then tied together, and the calf was permitted to take a draught, when a Kaffir stood ready to haul him aside, and the rest of the milk was yielded into the pail.

Bidy acted not only as cook for the family, but also for all the men on the farm, who assembled in a hut close to the house, with a long table in the centre, at which they sat in primitive fashion, the master taking the head. The fare generally consisted of beef, game, meal cakes, capital bread, pumpkins and other vegetables, and a variety of fruits; among others, when they were in season, there were figs and pomegranates, which grew in the greatest profusion on the farm. The family generally retired at an early hour, and rose at dawn, when they went about their respective avocations for a couple of hours before breakfast. As soon as the cows were milked, they and the heifers and calves were driven off to the pastures, while the ploughman yoked a span of ten oxen to the plough, and set out to break up some new land, and very hard work it was. Although the soil was tolerably rich, it was baked by the sun, and as hard as a rock, and in some places the whole strength of the oxen was required to draw the share through it. Two of the labourers were employed in hoeing the young mealies, and, strange as it may seem, others at the same time were engaged in picking off the ripe cobs, stripping back their leafy covering, and hanging them in pairs across rails, where they could further dry, until they were carried to the granary. In the mealy fields, indeed, can be seen the corn in all stages, some just rising above the ground, and the full-grown stalks of others bending with the weight of their yellow heads.

Crawford undertook all carpentry business, having, as he said, practised the art when he made up his mind to become a settler. He had also learned to mow, and he and Rupert spent some hours, scythe in hand, cutting down the tall grass for the purpose of securing fodder for the horses through the winter months, as also to prevent the necessity of burning close round the homestead, as it is necessary to do, in case one of the fires, which are constantly occurring, should spread in that direction. Should this precaution not be taken, the crops to a certainty would be destroyed, and the buildings themselves be in great danger. Captain Broderick had surrounded his cultivated fields with hedges, either of the prickly cactus or the mimosa, whose hooked thorns were well calculated to prevent any animals from breaking through.

Crawford was much amused on seeing one of the Kaffirs dig. Instead of using the spade in the English fashion, he grasped the handle with both hands, holding it at arm's length, with the face turned towards him, and then stuck it into the ground with a swing of his arms, never pressing it with his foot. He used the handle as a lever to shovel out the loose earth, all being done with a jerk, and yet he managed to dig into the hard ground with extraordinary rapidity. When Crawford, taking a spade, wished to show him his mode of digging, the Kaffir shook his head, saying, "No good," and went on in his own way.

To Percy, who was not fit for hard work, was allotted the duty of picking the ripe cobs in the mealies, as has been described, but he begged his brother to find him some more interesting employment.

"All in good time," answered Rupert, "you will learn to plough and mow, put up a fence, and drive the waggon."

"I can do that already," answered Percy; "I learned that from old Dos on the journey, and I flatter myself I could manage a span of twelve oxen with perhaps a little assistance."

There were so many duties to be performed on the farm, that there was no time for hunting, which Crawford and Percy had looked forward to as one of their most interesting employments. Rupert promised, however, as soon as Captain Broderick returned, to give them a day's sport.

"You have not seen our preserve yet. We may have time, before dark, to take a gallop down to it," said Rupert.

"Is it a deer park or a pheasant preserve?" asked Crawford.

"Far larger game than even the largest deer," was the reply.

"What do you mean to say you keep, tame elephants?" inquired Crawford.

"No, our game is somewhat smaller than the usual run of elephants; but come along."

They had been taking a circuit of the farm on horseback. They now turned down along the bank of the river. After going a couple of miles, they reached a small lake, filled by the overflowing of the stream. It was mostly surrounded by a thick border of reeds, but there was one spot which enabled them to approach close to the water. Presently a huge head rose above the surface, then another appeared.

"Why those are hippopotami!" exclaimed Crawford.

"Yes, they are the game I spoke of," said Rupert. "They have been born since we came here, and have been so accustomed to us from their infancy, that they are now as tame as cows, and never think of attacking us, although I do not know what they would do to a stranger. Many will come when we call them, as they have been used to be fed by us, though when provisions have occasionally been scarce we have been compelled to kill a few of them. The rest, however, do not resent the death of their relatives; indeed, they benefit by it; for were they to increase much above their present number, they would not find sufficient food, and would be obliged to migrate, with the risk of being trapped."

"Do you mean to say that the flesh of those huge beasts is fit for food?" asked Crawford.

"Most certainly; it is equal to the best beef, or rather veal, which it more nearly resembles."

As they were leaving the neighbourhood of the pool, Crawford exclaimed, "Did you see any one stealing behind those bushes out there? I am nearly certain I did."

"Yes, I caught a glimpse, not only of one black fellow, but of two, and there may be more," said Rupert.

"Let us rout out the rascals," cried Crawford; and on the impulse of the moment he was about to stick spurs into the flanks of his horse, and to dash on towards the bush, behind which the natives had concealed themselves.

"Stay, it would be better to ride forward as if we had not noticed them," answered Rupert.

"But ought we not to watch them, and insist on their telling us why they are skulking in this place?" asked Crawford.

"The attempt would be dangerous in the extreme, for they are probably ready to hurl their assegais at us, should we approach them near enough," answered Rupert. "Our only prudent course will be to get away from them, and to keep a look-out lest they should steal on, concealed by the underwood, and manage to get ahead, when they may salute us with a shower of assegais before we can get a glimpse of them. My father, who knows all their tricks, has enjoined me never to trust them, and considers that though they are savages they are much cleverer than we are when fighting in their own country."

Crawford, somewhat reluctantly, agreed to follow Rupert's wise advice, though he did not like the idea of running away from a foe for whom he felt the utmost contempt.

While they were speaking, a loud clap of thunder burst on their ears, and looking back they observed a dark bank of clouds rising from behind the trees, which had hitherto concealed it from sight.

"We have ample reason for galloping on, even though there were no Zulus in the neighbourhood," exclaimed Rupert. "We shall ere long have a storm burst upon us, which it will be no joke to be caught in. We may, however, manage to distance it, as well as the Zulus."

A second peal, louder than the first, made the horses start, and away they galloped at full speed. As they went on, the raindrops could be heard pattering on the ground behind them, but by urging on the horses they managed to keep ahead of the deluge.

As the gloom of evening drew on, the lightning grew more and more vivid, and the thunder rattled louder and louder.

"It is fortunate that we caught sight of those fellows; for they are very likely, while the herdsman are keeping under shelter from the storm, to try and carry off some of the cattle," said Rupert. "I'll ride round and put the men on their guard; but as there is no necessity for you to get a wet jacket, you had better go on direct to the farm."

"No, no," answered Crawford; "I'll accompany you; I don't mind a wetting; and though the Zulus we saw cannot yet have got as far as this, even should they have pursued us, there may be others concealed near at hand, who, if they find you alone, might venture to attack you."

They accordingly turned their horses' heads as Rupert proposed. The cattle had only just reached the kraal, and the herdsmen were closing the gates. Rupert told them of the strange Zulus he had seen, and warned them to be on the alert. They scorned the idea, however, that a few Zulus would venture to attempt stealing any of the captain's cattle, but they promised, notwithstanding the approaching storm, to be on the watch, and to punish the marauders, should they appear.

"Good-night, my friends!" said Rupert; "and now, Crawford, we must ride for it."

The rain, at length overtaking them, seemed to come down in a perfect sheet of water, and in a few seconds they were wet to the skin.

They quickly, however, reached the farm, and unsaddling turned their horses into the kraal, where a shed afforded the animals some protection from the pitiless shower, while they themselves hurried into the house for shelter. The gate was regularly closed at night, so that neither Zulus nor wild beasts could steal in. Falls Farm had in this respect an immense advantage over nearly all others in the colony, which were perfectly unfortified, and open to the depredations of all descriptions of animals. Had Captain Broderick expended the same amount of labour on a farm near town, as he had bestowed on his present property, he would ere this have become a rich man. It was the instinct of an old soldier which had induced him to fortify it, although his great object was to live at peace with his neighbours.

By the time the supper Rupert and Crawford found prepared for them was over, the rain had ceased, and they went out as usual to make the round of the walls.

Nothing could be seen moving outside, but the hideous howls and cries of the jackals and hyenas came down from a distance on the night air.

"Those brutes are enticed into the neighbourhood by the scent of our cattle, and they howl with disappointment at not being able to get at them," observed Rupert to his companion. "We cannot drive them away, and the hyenas especially are such cunning rogues, that it is a hard matter to get a shot at them. We find that the only successful plan is to form traps, in which, with all their cunning, they frequently lose their lives."

Rupert and Crawford having seen that the men on the ramparts were keeping a vigilant watch, returned to the house.

The night passed away without interruption. When daylight returned, and the sun shed a bright light over the landscape, Crawford expressed his belief that no treacherous enemy could be lurking in the neighbourhood. It seemed probable that he was right, for when two of the Kaffir servants, who had been out as scouts returned, they reported that they had seen no one, nor had they discovered the traces of any strangers in the neighbourhood.

"The chances are, the men we saw were merely passers-by, who were seeking shelter from the storm under a bush, and had we ridden up to them we should probably have found them to be very harmless characters," observed Crawford.

"I am not fully persuaded of that," answered Rupert. "They probably, finding that they were discovered, thought it prudent, if they had any sinister design, to beat a retreat for the present."

Chapter Seventeen.

The Master absent.

Four days had passed since Captain Broderick had started on his expedition. His family were now hoping every hour to see him return. It was difficult, however, to calculate how far Hendricks might have got before he was overtaken, and what delays might have occurred. Perhaps he might be unwilling to give up Lionel, and would not be satisfied that he was Captain Broderick's son. He was deeply attached to the boy, and looked forward to having him as his companion during his travels, and making him his successor in his arduous, though interesting and lucrative, calling. Captain Broderick was only slightly acquainted with Hendricks, and had from the first been doubtful how he might be received. He had therefore resolved to go himself, instead of sending any one else, to bring his supposed son to the farm. It is more easy to imagine than describe Mrs Broderick's state of anxiety. Was her long-lost boy to be restored to her? or were the anticipations she had formed to be fallacious? Her daughters shared her feelings, but they were so much occupied from morning till night in their various duties, that their minds consequently dwelt less on the subject than did hers. Rupert had satisfied himself that there was no doubt about the matter, and that Hendricks would immediately give up his young brother, as he called him, to his father.

The evening of the fourth day was coming to a close, when a Kaffir was seen on the opposite side of the river, making signals. Rupert and Percy, who were together, instantly hurried down to the boat to ascertain what he wanted.

"I wonder whether he brings a message from our father," said Percy; "if so, I am afraid he has been delayed."

"Yes, I am sure he does," answered Rupert. "See, he carries a stick, with a letter stuck in a cleft in the end. That's the way the Kaffirs always carry written messages. We shall soon know its contents."

They were quickly across, and the Kaffir, stepping into the boat, presented the letter at the end of the stick to Rupert. It was addressed, however, to Mrs Broderick, in his father's handwriting, so that he could not open it, and he and Percy had to repress their curiosity until its contents could be communicated by their mother. They eagerly questioned the Kaffir messenger as they pulled across. He, however, could give them but little information beyond

the fact that the white chief had overtaken the hunter and his waggon about five days' journey from the border of Zululand; that two horses had been lost, and that one of the party had been severely injured or killed; and as they could obtain no animals to supply the places of those they had lost, they were likely to be detained some time. He was, he said, the only inhabitant of his native village who knew the country in that direction, and he had therefore been selected to bring the message, but he had had no other communication with the camp, and was unable to give more particulars.

As soon as they landed, they hurried up, accompanied by the messenger, to the farm. They found Mrs Broderick in the sitting-room. She eagerly opened the letter, while they anxiously watched her countenance.

"Is our father well?" inquired Helen.

"What does he say about Lionel?" asked Percy.

"I hope no one has come to grief," exclaimed Rupert.

Mrs Broderick did not reply until she had read through the letter, and then, holding it in her hands, and still glancing at its contents, she said—

"Your father is well, though his journey was a dangerous one. Hendricks seemed much surprised, but received him in a friendly way, until he explained the object of his visit, when the hunter appeared very unwilling to believe that Lionel is the child we lost. He is evidently deeply attached to the boy, and does not wish to part with him. He said, however, that he should be satisfied if Mangaleesu could produce any one of the tribe who was present at the attack on our party, when the nurse was murdered and the child carried off. This, from Mangaleesu's account, seems impossible, as he declares that the whole of the tribe had joined him, and that every person in the kraal was put to death, with the exception of himself, his wife, and the child. Your father writes, 'I cannot come away without the boy; for the more I look at him, the more convinced I am that he is our son. A certain expression in the countenance, which all our children possess, is there, though it is difficult to make Hendricks understand this. Still, as he is an honourable and right-minded man, I am convinced that he only requires to be persuaded I have a just claim on the boy, to give him up. He assures me—and I believe him when he says that he loves the boy as if he were his own child—that he has made him his heir, and that he will, he hopes, inherit a fair estate and a good sum at the bank. Of course I am unwilling to deprive the boy of these advantages, which are superior to any I can hope to give him. At the same time, if he accompanies Hendricks, he will be exposed to many dangers, and might not live to enjoy them. I hope, however, that Hendricks will allow me to bring the boy away, when I promise to restore him should he not prove to be our son, or should he desire to return; and I trust he will not under any circumstances alter his intentions towards him. The boy, as it is, has no real claim upon the hunter, who might at any time change his mind, and leave him destitute, though I do not, judging from his character, see any likelihood of his doing that. I however must, at all events, remain here some days, for I have lost two horses on the journey, and my faithful follower, Vermack, has been so severely injured by a lion, narrowly escaping with his life, that he is at present utterly unable to travel, though he declares he shall be as soon as I am prepared to start. He received the injury from which he is suffering on the morning of the day we reached this place. He had got off to tighten the girths of his saddle, but had again mounted, and was following some way behind, when a monstrous animal rushed out from behind a thicket, and sprang on his horse. His side and leg were much lacerated as he threw himself from his saddle, and before he could get on his feet and unsling his rifle, the lion had killed his horse, and was about to leap on him, but the brave old Dutchman was up to the emergency. The sound of his shot, as he fired at the brute's head, was the first indication we had of his danger.

"Galloping back, we saw him on the ground, while the lion lay dead on the top of the horse, close to him. Fortunately, Hendricks had outspanned at no great distance off, and had sent out some hunters, who, coming up directly afterwards, assisted us in carrying the wounded man to the camp. That very night the horses which Denis Maloney and the Kaffir had ridden were attacked by a troop of hyenas, and one was so severely injured that we were obliged to put him out of his misery. Hendricks cannot spare us any of his horses, and it may be some days before I can obtain any fresh ones, though I have sent in all directions. Let me know by bearer of this—Omkomo—who will be ready to set off after a few hours' rest, how you are all getting on. Bid Rupert not to relax his vigilance, although, from information I picked up on the road, I trust that the Zulus who are in search of Mangaleesu have given up the pursuit, and have returned to their own district. This necessitates a long delay, for which I had not reckoned when I left the farm."

Though deeply thankful to hear of her husband's safety, Mrs Broderick was left in the same state as before regarding Lionel. Her mother's heart, and the account Percy had given her, convinced her that he was her son.

"I knew my father would see the likeness as soon as he set eyes on him!" exclaimed Percy. "Didn't you, Crawford? Wouldn't you be ready to swear that he was our brother?"

Crawford could scarcely help smiling. He thought Lionel something like Rupert and Maud, but he did not consider him to resemble either Helen or Rose.

Mrs Broderick at once wrote an answer to her husband's letter, which was delivered to Omkomo. After a hearty meal he went to sleep. Rising when it was nearly daylight, he took some more food, and declared that he was ready to set out. Rupert and Crawford ferried him across the river.

"In case the white chief should not be ready to begin his journey when you arrive at the hunter's camp, will you promise to return with any message he may have to send?" asked Rupert as he put the Kaffir on shore.

"Yes, for the same reward I will come," was the answer.

Farewells were exchanged, and the messenger quickly disappeared in the gloom.

The day passed by, the inmates of the farm being engaged in their usual occupation. Rupert obeyed his father's injunctions, and had a strict look-out kept, that he might obtain early notice of the approach of strangers. An active scout was also employed in scouring the country round on the east side of the river, keeping himself concealed while he made his way to spots from whence he could take a wide survey, and ascertain if any persons were moving about. The country on that side was entirely depopulated; Panda, as has before been said, not allowing any of his subjects to live near the borders. So far the farm was favourably situated, for there were thus no natives likely to prove hostile in its immediate neighbourhood, as there were no flocks, or herds, or game to tempt them, and savage wild beasts were comparatively rare.

Some days had passed since Rupert and Crawford caught sight of the strange natives, on their visit to the hippopotamus pond, and they had ceased to think about the subject. They were indeed fully convinced that none of the party of Zulus who had threatened to attack them remained.

Mangaleesu, they considered, might without risk take his departure; but he expressed no wish to go, and Mrs Broderick was anxious to keep him, that he might give such particulars as he possessed with regard to Lionel. It has been said that the inhabitants of the farm depended greatly on the chase for their supply of meat, and as no hunters had gone out for several days, their stock had run short.

Rupert was always ready for a hunting expedition, and Crawford, who had come out to Africa under the belief that the chase would form one of his chief occupations, was eager to engage in the sport.

"I don't think there can be any objection to our going away for a few hours," said Rupert. "I can leave Percy in charge during our absence, as he will have nothing to do except to see that the men keep at their work. You and I, with our two Kaffir guides, will start to-morrow morning, and I hope that we shall bring back meat enough to supply us until my father returns."

Crawford eagerly agreed to the proposal, and Percy was pleased at the thought of being left in sole charge, although it was to be but a few hours.

"Try and not be absent longer than you can help," said Mrs Broderick, as she wished her son good-night—for the party were to start the next morning. "Although I apprehend no danger, we cannot tell what may occur."

"There is nothing to fear," answered Rupert, "and meat we must have, that's very certain. My father would not object to my going under the circumstances; for if I sent the Kaffirs alone, they are such bad shots that they may bring back nothing, though they are very useful in finding the game and helping me to kill it."

Before daybreak Rupert and Crawford were in their saddles, and Percy was up to see them off, as were his sisters, who had insisted on rising to give them breakfast before starting, a delicate attention which Crawford duly appreciated.

Followed by two Zulus, also well mounted, they directed their course to the lower ground in the south-west, where game most abounded. The air was pure and fresh when they started, coming from the hills, and both young men felt in the highest possible spirits, and ready for the sport. As the sun rose, however, and they got on the lower ground, the heat increased, and they appeared to have passed into a different region. Occasionally from the woods came the cheerful chirp of the feathered tribe, but otherwise, all around was hot, silent, and lonely.

"We shall be in sight of some game soon, or I am much mistaken," observed Rupert. "I'll send the Kaffirs out on either side to turn them towards us, and it will be hard if we don't manage to knock over some before long. I ordered the two Hottentot boys to bring on the light waggon to take home the game, for we can carry back but a small portion on our horses."

Just as he spoke, a troop of graceful pallahs appeared bounding along in the distance. They stopped gazing in wonder and terror at the strangers, while the two Kaffirs, making a wide circuit, galloped on in the hope of cutting them off. Still the animals stood gazing until Rupert and Crawford got considerably nearer, when two or three of them were seen to change their places; then suddenly the whole herd, each leaping high in the air, started off as fast as they could go, apparently endeavouring to avoid one of the Zulus who was coming up. The effect was singularly pretty, as they made bound after bound, the red on their backs and sides, and the white on the under parts of their bodies, alternately appearing and disappearing. In vain the hunters rode after them.

"We may have some of those fellows yet, though," observed Rupert; "but we must be more careful how we approach them."

Almost immediately afterwards some loud sneezes were heard, and looking to the right they caught sight of a troop of mingled gnus and quaggas, passing and repassing without a pause. Every now and then a gnu would rush out from among the crowd, whisk his tail, give a sneeze, and then rush back again amongst his comrades. Now and then a young gnu was seen to fall behind with its mother, or the bull would drop out of the ranks, and switching it severely with its long tail, compel it to keep up. The older quaggas also seemed to keep their youngsters in excellent order.

Frequently, for some misdemeanour, one of the elder animals, with its ears back, would make a rush at one of the smaller ones, and give it a severe bite as a hint to it to keep in its place. As the hunters got near the herd, the animals, turning their heads towards them for an instant, suddenly whisked round, giving a glance back as they did so, with a cunning expression, as much as to say, "You'll not catch me this time," and off they set.

The quaggas and gnus, however, soon after separated, going off in different directions. As the ground appeared more favourable in the direction the quaggas had taken, Rupert proposed that they should give chase to them.

The two Kaffirs dashed over all impediments for the sake of turning the herd and giving the gentlemen an

opportunity of shooting some of them. A cloud of dust marked their course. On the animals dashed at a slashing pace, but very soon relaxed their efforts, as they are no match for a horse. The two Kaffirs now appeared ahead of them, and shouting and shrieking, drove them back towards Rupert and Crawford, who had drawn up out of sight behind a clump of bushes. Both firing at the same time, each brought down a quagga, and before the herd had recovered sufficiently to go off in another direction, they had reloaded, and two more lay struggling on the ground. Just then Crawford saw a young filly which had missed its mother and got separated from the herd.

"I heard your sister Helen say she should so much like to have a young quagga to try and tame it," exclaimed Crawford, riding up to the little animal, which seemed in no way alarmed at the appearance of the horse, but apparently mistaking it for its parent, trotted alongside.

"If you like, we'll endeavour to keep it between us till we can give it in charge of one of the Kaffirs," said Rupert, coming up.

The little animal at first appeared perfectly contented with its new companions, and galloped between them. Suddenly, however, finding that it had made a mistake, it attempted to bolt; but Rupert, expecting this, had prepared a noose at the end of his halter. Finding itself caught, the filly made a most determined resistance, kicking, snapping its jaws, in which not a tooth was to be seen, dashing round and round, and hanging back with its whole weight, altogether exhibiting its ferocious nature.

Fortunately the Kaffir soon came up, and applying his water bottle to its lips, quickly brought it to a more amiable state of mind. Crawford now stroked its back and spoke gently to it, till the little creature appeared perfectly at its ease.

"I should so much like to keep the small animal alive, for I am sure it would please your sister to have it, and I am afraid that the Kaffir might not treat it properly," he observed to Rupert. "If you don't object, I'll lead it back to the farm, while you and your men continue the chase."

"With all my heart," answered Rupert, who guessed that Crawford, as yet inexperienced in hunting, would not be of much use.

Crawford, therefore, leading his horse with one hand and the animal by the other, set off for the farm, while Rupert and his men, having covered up the dead quaggas with bushes, to guard them from the vultures and jackals until the arrival of the waggon, continued on in pursuit of further game.

Rupert was fully as successful as he expected; a couple of pallahs, three springbocs, and a buffalo being the result of the expedition, in addition to the quaggas, and all within the radius of a couple of miles. The waggon appeared in due time, and being loaded, he and his men set off to escort it back to the farm.

Chapter Eighteen.

Preparations for the defence.

Mrs Broderick did not feel quite satisfied with herself at having allowed Rupert and so many men to quit the farm. Percy noticed that she was less at her ease than usual. She at length desired him to take a look-out on the platform to ascertain if his brother and Crawford were returning.

"They are not likely to be back for some time," he answered, "so that I am afraid I shall not be able to report their appearance in the distance."

"Then, my dear Percy, take a survey of the country round, especially on the opposite side of the river. Perhaps the Zulus may be coming back; and should they find out how few persons there are at the farm, they may demand Mangaleesu, and threaten us with an attack should we refuse to give him up."

"Pray set your heart at rest on that point, mother," answered Percy. "I will, as you desire it, take a look round, though I am pretty sure not to see any one. Supposing the Zulus were to come, we would close the gates and keep them out."

"But when they see only you on the platform they would force it open," said Mrs Broderick.

"They would find that no easy matter, while I should be peppering them from above," said Percy, laughing. "I will mount the two swivel guns on the platform above the gate, and I will carry up all our spare rifles, so that I can pop away briskly at the fellows if they approach with hostile intent."

"Were you to do that, you would expose yourself, and they would soon find out that there was only one person defending the walls," said Mrs Broderick.

"I have a bright idea," exclaimed Percy. "What do you say to letting the girls dress up in Rupert's and my clothes? Perhaps we shall also find some among my father's and Crawford's which would suit them. They might show themselves while the enemy appeared at a distance, and then get out of harm's way."

Mrs Broderick could not help smiling, notwithstanding her anxiety at Percy's proposal.

"The girls will be ready to do anything that is necessary, but I trust that after all no enemies will come near us, and I only wish you, as a precautionary measure, to convince yourself that none are in the neighbourhood," she said.

"Very well, mother, I will go, and shout out loud enough for you all to hear, if I see any one," answered Percy. "Then let the girls put on their male attire and hurry up, with muskets in their hands, to the ramparts. They need not put on any lower garments, as the Zulus would only see their heads and shoulders. By the bye, if they were to rig up a few dummies, it might assist to deceive the enemy, and they might be left to be shot at in case they should have firearms among them."

On leaving his mother, Percy shouted to his sisters to come and hear the proposal he had to make.

The young ladies, who had been employed in various ways at the back of the premises, hearing his voice, hurried round to ascertain what he wanted. He had by this time reached the platform.

"I was telling mother that, should any enemy appear, I would advise you all to rig up in our clothes. I forgot Biddy; she would be a host in herself, if she will rout out father's old uniform coat and his cocked hat and sword. If she flourishes the blade in the rays of the sun, and rushes about here and there, she'll make the enemy believe that we have a large garrison, and they will hesitate to approach us. Tell Mangaleesu that he must disguise himself, and that he will not be recognised in a round hat and big necktie; and his wife too, she will prove useful. 'We shall do finely,' as Denis would say, and now I'll just look out and see if any enemy is at hand. In all probability the Zulus have given up their search for Mangaleesu as hopeless, supposing him by this time to be miles away from the frontier, so you need not begin your preparations just yet, though I should like to see Biddy dressed up in our father's cocked hat and uniform coat, with a sword by her side. She'd make a fine picture of an Amazon."

Having thus delivered himself, Percy placed his telescope at his eye, and slowly sweeping it round, took in every spot between the farm and the most distant part of the landscape.

"Do you see any one?" asked Maud, who had climbed up and stood by his side.

"Nothing moving that I can make out," he answered; "but that, of course, does not prove that no one is coming. Perhaps a whole army of Zulus may be advancing behind the trees, and it will be only by a lucky chance that my glass is pointed at them at the moment they are crossing some open space."

"You don't really think they are coming, do you?" asked Maud, in a somewhat anxious tone.

"Of course not; but I almost wish they would, that we might have an opportunity of putting my admirable plan of defence into execution. I'd give anything to see Biddy hurling defiance at the savages from the ramparts. I'm confident that we should make an heroic defence, and immortalise our names."

"I wish you would not joke about so serious a matter," exclaimed Maud. "What would be the use of immortalising our names if we were all to be killed?"

"I don't mean that we should be killed," said Percy. "My idea is that we should drive them back defeated and discomfited. I confess that I should like to have old Vermack and a few of our other men to follow up the enemy. Depend upon it, they would give a good account of all they caught sight of. The Dutchman, who hates the Zulus with all his heart, would knock them over like ninepins."

"Oh, don't speak in that way!" said Maud. "But are you sure that you do not see any one coming? Pray do take another look round with your glass. I daresay you are right. But mother is unusually anxious, and I don't think she would be so unless there was a strong impression on her mind that danger is at hand."

"Well, I'll make another examination of the surrounding world," said Percy; and he again took up the glass, and resting it on the top of the wall, swept the country. "Don't start back with terror if I say that I see a regiment of Zulus in the distance. They may not be intending to come here. Perhaps Cetchwayo is at their head, and he may merely be making a visit of inspection round his father's territories."

"But do you really mean to say that you see a regiment crossing the river?" asked Maud, in a somewhat alarmed tone.

"No; I was only supposing the matter," said Percy, laughing. "In case any may have crossed over, and be creeping up on our side, I'll now turn my glass in that direction."

He was for some time silent, while Maud watched his countenance. Suddenly he exclaimed—

"Yes, I do see something moving. Now don't tumble down off the platform, Maud; for whether they are men or beasts I cannot yet clearly make out. Yes, I see now; there is a man leading a horse with one hand and a small animal with the other. I do believe it is Crawford. The animal is a quagga. Every now and then the creature begins to frisk about and pull away from him. He has a hard matter to get it along, that is very evident. Now he stops and is patting the creature, now they are coming on again. Now the little brute is kicking and plunging, trying to bite him; but he holds on manfully. I wish that I could go and help him; but I must not desert my post. I guess how it is; he has managed to catch the quagga, and is bringing it in to try and tame it, very likely to present to one of you girls."

"Not for me or Rose. If it's for one of us, it's for Helen," exclaimed Maud. "He evidently admires her, though she is too busy to admire him in return. At all events, we shall have him as an addition to the garrison, should the Zulus come before Rupert and the men with him return."

"I have been looking out for them, but I don't see them. Crawford, however, will be here presently, and tell us what they are about, so that we may know when to expect them."

Percy had taken two or three turns on the platform, when he suddenly exclaimed, "I do believe there are some people coming down the mountain, but who they are I cannot make out, though there appear to be a good many of

them. Maud, do you go down and tell Helen and Rose and Biddy to get ready. I'll fire the signals to let the men know they are to drive in the cattle. Crawford will be here long before the Zulus can cross the river, even if he doesn't mount his horse and let the young quagga go. Don't alarm our mother, that's all. I say, Maud," he added, as his sister was hastening away, "before you do anything else, send Biddy here with the swivel guns. One at a time is as much as she can carry, and I have got a rope to hoist them up. There are places already fitted to fix them in; and then tell her to bring along the muskets and a good store of ammunition. Let Mangaleesu know what is wanted, and he'll help her, and his wife too. As long as they do not show themselves, there is no reason why they should not come out of their retreat."

Maud hastened away to obey these directions, and Percy resumed his look-out through the telescope. He was more than ever sure that a considerable force was coming over the hill,—a force, too, which took no pains to conceal itself. This might prove that they came with no hostile intentions, or it might be that, confident in their own strength, they were indifferent to being discovered.

"I wish that Rupert and the hunters were not away," said Percy to himself. "This may be no joking matter; at the same time we must put on a bold face, and not allow the savages to suppose that we are daunted by their numbers. I only hope that Rupert will be back before they cross the river, for it would be serious were he to be caught by them; and then perhaps my father and Lionel will be coming, and they may be surprised by the cunning rascals."

Again and again Percy turned his glass to the eastward.

"Hurrah! that's one good thing; the fellows have halted just about the spot where they were before encamped."

His remarks to himself were interrupted by Biddy's voice.

"Sure, we've been after bringing yer one of thim big pop guns, Mather Percy; but how will ye git it up there?"

And, looking down, he saw her and Mangaleesu carrying a swivel gun between them. The Zulu showed himself to be more of an adept in securing a rope than was Biddy, who at once climbed up to the platform. The swivel was soon hoisted up, and mounted in the place intended for it. Mangaleesu in the meantime had brought out the other, which in like manner was quickly got into position.

"Now for the muskets, Biddy," cried Percy, who felt himself of no slight importance at being actually in command of the fort; his spirits rose accordingly.

Biddy, Mangaleesu, and Kalinda quickly returned with muskets and ammunition.

"Now go and rig yourselves out in the fashion I told Maud that you must all do; and be ready to come up here as soon as the Zulus reach the bank of the river, from which they can see us clearly."

Percy had at first made the proposal half in fun, but his sisters and Biddy took it in right down earnest, although he scarcely supposed that they would really do as he proposed. He had made Mangaleesu understand that he must be ready to assist in hoisting up the drawbridge, as it would require the strength of the whole party to perform the operation. He did not, however, intend to hoist it up until the Zulus approached nearer, as he hoped before that time that not only Crawford would have arrived, but that his brother and the men would have reached the farm. As far as he could judge, when looking through the telescope, the Zulus were preparing to encamp, although they might have had some other reason for halting.

He had kept his glass continually fixed on them to watch



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their movements; it now occurred to him to turn it in the opposite direction, when to his satisfaction he saw that Crawford had almost got up to the farm. He waved to him to come, and then made signs to Mangaleesu, who was waiting below, to open the gate.

Just as Crawford, leading his horse and the quagga filly—as tame as a dog—crossed the drawbridge, Biddy and the three young ladies came out of the house, dressed exactly as Percy had suggested, with hats and coats, sashes round their waists, and rifles in their hands. He started with astonishment, unable to comprehend the cause of their strange masquerading.

"I beg your pardon, young ladies," he said, "but I did not at first know you in your disguise. Did you take me for an enemy?"

"We should not have let you in so easily," answered Helen. "Percy has seen the Zulus approaching, and being afraid that they would attack the fort before you and Rupert had returned, we have got ready to defend it to the best of our power."

"I consider that Percy is mistaken, although I have no doubt that you have made the best preparations for defence," said Crawford, inclined to treat the whole affair as a joke.

"Sure, if the inemy do show themselves near this, we will put them to the right about," cried Bidy, flourishing the captain's sword.

"Let me secure my horse and this little zebra filly which I have brought for you, Miss Helen; I will then join Percy, and ascertain what is likely to happen," said Crawford.

Helen duly thanked the young Englishman for his intended gift, but as the little animal at that moment took it into its head to grow restive, and kick, scream, and prance about, she did not show any inclination to approach it.

Crawford having taken his horse and little captive round to the yard, hurried up to the platform, where Percy was standing. Looking through the telescope, he was satisfied Percy was right in supposing that the people he saw below the hill were Zulus. They were probably not aware that they could be distinguished at so great a distance. He then turned his glass in the direction he hoped Rupert and his men would be coming.

"I see their waggon," he exclaimed, "although they appear to me to be moving very slowly. I tell you what, Percy, the best thing I can do is to set off and hasten Rupert and his men. It will be better to lose the waggon than to have them cut off. Depend upon it, I'll not spare whip or spur."

"Thank you, Mr Crawford; pray go by all means," said Mrs Broderick, who had just then come out of the house. "I was wrong in letting Rupert start, but I pray that he may be back before the Zulus reach the river."

"No fear of that, mother, as Crawford is going for him," said Percy. "We'll get in the waggon too, with its load of meat, which will better enable us to stand a siege."

Crawford, without further delay, threw himself on his horse, while Percy returned to the platform to watch what the Zulus were about.

"They are still halting," he shouted out, "though I suspect they will send forward scouts to reconnoitre our fortifications. Come up, girls; come up, Bidy, and show yourselves on the ramparts. I am half inclined to fire off the guns, but it may be wiser not to let them know that we are prepared for them until they come nearer, as they probably expect to take us by surprise, and the disappointment will be the greater when they see armed men on the walls."

The young ladies and Bidy quickly climbed up, and Percy placed them at intervals, with muskets on their shoulders, and told them to walk about like sentinels.

"Now, Bidy, flourish your sword, and make it flash in the sun. That will do famously. They'll see it in the distance, and suppose that we have a dozen men with bayonets, at least."

The girls, forgetting any alarm they might at first have felt, laughed heartily at Bidy's vehement gestures, as she carried out Percy's directions to the full. Now she rushed to one end of the platform, now to the other, giving vent to her feelings by various war shouts in her native Celtic.

"You, Helen, keep a look-out on Crawford, and tell me how he gets on," said Percy, handing her the glass, having first taken a glance through it himself.

"Yes, I can see him clearly," said Helen. "He is galloping along at a tremendous rate, and I fancy that I can make out Rupert and the waggon in the distance."

Helen, who had put down her musket, showed no inclination to take her eye from the telescope.

"Hurrah!" cried Percy, "here come the herdsman with the cattle. I thought they would not be long after they heard the signal. They will help us to defend the walls. Perhaps Crawford will fall in with some settlers, and we shall soon have a sufficient number of men to dispense with your services, girls."

"But we don't wish to have our services dispensed with," cried Rose. "We want to make ourselves useful."

"But I don't want you to get killed or wounded," said Percy. "Some of the Zulus may have firearms, or they may venture near enough to hurl their assegais. You will have done all that is necessary by showing yourselves as at present in martial array, and I feel very sure that the enemy, when they see you, will defer their attack until they come up under cover of the darkness to try and take us by surprise."

Percy allowed Helen to keep the glass while he was employed in loading the swivels, and pointing them in the direction the Zulus would probably attempt to approach the gate. She in the meantime was watching Crawford's progress; though he and his horse looked no larger than an ant crossing over a large field, she still kept her eye upon him until she could report that he had joined Rupert. The latter was riding ahead of the waggon till Crawford got up to him, when she saw both of them, followed by the two Kaffir hunters, come galloping at headlong speed towards the farm, while the waggon still kept moving on as before, though at a faster rate.

As soon as the cattle had been driven into the kraal, Percy supplied the Hottentots with fresh ammunition, and posted them in different parts of the walls, that they might make as great a show as possible, taking care to keep his

white warriors, as he called his three sisters and Biddy, in the front.

"Wouldn't Denis be in his element, if he were here!" he said to Maud, as he passed her. "He would be flying about in all directions, and putting spirit into every one. By the bye, I quite forgot the dummies. Do go down to mother, and see if she cannot rig out half a dozen, and hand them up as soon as they are ready. She might also make Mangaleesu understand what we want, and he'll manufacture a whole army of Kaffir warriors with assegais and shields. It would make the enemy suppose that we had a strong force of natives inside, in addition to our own men."

Maud did not like leaving the platform until Percy assured her that he was in earnest, and that such an array of dummies as he proposed would, he was certain, have a good effect in preventing the Zulus from coming close to the walls.

"They are cunning fellows, and would soon detect the dummies, if they were to remain stationary; but we will outwit them by moving them about and putting them in different positions," he said to Helen. "I must, however, take another look through the telescope. Here come Crawford and Rupert, so that you don't want it any longer."

The horsemen indeed could now be seen clearly by the naked eye, galloping towards the fort. Percy turned his glass towards the party of Zulus.

"As far as I can make out they are considerably diminished in numbers, and I suspect that some of them have been stealing along towards the river, intending to cross lower down. If so, we must keep a watch upon them. I can see the channel of the river over a considerable distance, and they won't get over without being detected." Percy watched for some time, and at length said, "I can see nothing on the surface of the stream, not even a crocodile or hippopotamus. The Zulus, knowing that they have a chance of meeting one of those creatures, won't venture to cross unless in considerable numbers."

"Here come Rupert and Mr Crawford!" cried Helen in a joyful tone. "We shall be safe now, at all events."

The horsemen soon rode in at the gate, which had not yet been closed. Rupert was as much amused as Crawford had been at seeing his sisters in their military attire. He fully approved of all Percy had done; and when he heard of the proposed dummies, he thought the idea excellent. While Crawford, who possessed a great deal of mechanical ingenuity, went in to assist Mrs Broderick, he hurried to the back of the house, where he found Mangaleesu and Kalinda employed in manufacturing Kaffir warriors. They had collected a number of poles and sticks, and had obtained from the storehouse a sufficient quantity of skins for dressing up their figures. Kalinda had brought in from the garden about a dozen pumpkins and melons. These served admirably for heads, while some other skins, bent over oblong hoops, formed shields. Indeed, Mangaleesu had already put together a sufficient supply of shields and bundles of seeming assegais, to arm the whole of the dummies. They had not forgotten to obtain some pigment, with which to darken the faces of their figures.

"Very good, indeed. The enemy will fully believe that these are real Kaffirs," said Rupert. "Your idea of pumpkins for heads is capital. I'll take some in for my mother; but we'll paint them white to suit the dresses of the figures."

"I suppose I must give up the command to you," said Percy to Rupert, when the latter returned to the platform.

"You have succeeded so well, that I should not think of superseding you," answered his brother. "I'll obey your orders, although I will exert my own wits, and consider what is best to be done."

"The most important object that I can see at present is to prevent the Zulus from capturing the waggon," said Percy. "If any of them go towards it, we must make a dash out and drive them back. I'll go, if you like, with Crawford and four men; six of us would keep a hundred at bay."

"No, if any one goes, I will," said Rupert. "You are in command remember, and must not leave the fortress. I am not quite certain that it would be prudent, but the two Hottentots with the waggon have their arms, and as they will fight bravely enough from behind a waggon, we may reckon that our force will consist of eight men. It will assist to convince the enemy that we have a large garrison in the fort."

As yet, however, no Zulus had appeared, and there seemed every probability that the waggon would get in without being attacked. Though Percy kept his glass turned generally towards the river, fully expecting to catch sight of the Zulus passing across it, he occasionally directed it towards their main body, which remained as before, stationary. He had just pointed it in that direction, when he observed a movement among the dark-skinned warriors. He saw several go to a height, and then set off running at full speed towards the north. He pointed them out to Rupert, who, as he looked through the telescope, exclaimed—

"What if they should be going to meet our father, who very likely may be coming; or, if not, they may have caught sight of some messenger he has sent. I trust that either one or the other may have seen them in time and pushed on."

"I feel sure you are right," said Percy. "We must not let our mother know, however, it will agitate her too much. I am very glad you did not set off to meet the waggon. I'll tell you what we ought to do. We must pull across in the boat, and be ready to receive whoever is coming. It will be some time before the Zulus can reach the river; and I would suggest that you and Crawford, with four men, go down, and while you and he take the boat across, the others with their muskets can cover your passage, and keep the Zulus in check."

"I agree with you that is the best thing to be done," said Rupert. "You're a soldier, every inch of you."

Percy was flattered at his brother's compliment, and his readiness to follow his suggestions, without showing the slightest tinge of jealousy.

"In the meantime," continued Rupert, "we had better get up the dummies, and post them in the most conspicuous places, so as to make the greatest show possible."

"I advise that they be fixed a little way from the ramparts, so that we can pass in front of them," said Percy. "Although they should be placed where they can be seen by the enemy, it would be as well to conceal as much of them as possible, or their real character may be detected."

"Well, do you continue to keep a look-out," said Rupert; "and I will go down and carry out our proposed plan."

Rupert found Crawford and Mangaleesu on their way with some of the dummies, which at a little distance had greatly the appearance of living people. Mangaleesu's were decidedly the best, his figures admirably representing Kaffir warriors in various attitudes, prepared for battle.

Under Percy's and Rupert's directions they were placed as had been proposed.

"But we ought to be going down to the boat," cried Rupert; and he summoned the men he had collected. "Percy, you fire a musket if you see any Zulus approaching the river, who may be shut out from our view, and another, if you observe any crossing in the distance; then we shall know how to act. Come along, Crawford!"

They hurried out, running at full speed, as they were convinced that there was no time to be lost. On reaching the bank of the river, they could see farther up the stream than they could from the farm.

Percy was in the meantime watching to catch sight of the Zulus who had gone to the northward. They were still visible as they made their way among the trees. By this he knew that if his father was coming, they had not yet succeeded in cutting him off. While still watching them, he heard the shouts of the Hottentot drivers and the crack of their whips, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the waggon approaching, the poor oxen covered with foam, and trotting at a speed at which they had probably never before moved when yoked. In a few minutes the waggon drove over the drawbridge into the farm, greatly to the satisfaction of Percy, both on account of the drivers, who, had they been overtaken, would have run a great risk of losing their lives, and of the store of meat which they were bringing in.

Rupert and his party lost no time in launching the boat. As yet, as he looked to the north, he could see no one, nor were the Zulus visible to the naked eye. Confident, however, that Percy would give warning, should any approach the river, he and Crawford agreed to pull across, and having stationed their men under cover, they at once shoved off. They were soon over. Rupert landed, and ran up the bank that he might obtain a more extensive view than he could in the boat.

"Hurrah! here come four horsemen, and one of them, I am sure, is my father, and another must be Lionel," he cried. "They are dashing along at a tremendous rate. They have seen the Zulus, depend upon it, and probably expect to have to swim their horses across. How fortunate we came over for them!"

Just as he spoke the report of a musket from the fort was heard, it was followed immediately afterwards by another.

"That shows that the Zulus are coming this way," he shouted. "Yes, I see them, a whole band of yelling savages. On they come, clashing their shields and shaking their assegais, fully expecting to gain an easy victory; but my father and Lionel will be here first."

Rupert stood ready to rush down to the boat, should it be necessary to save his life; for, brave as he was, he knew that it would be wrong to run any risk of throwing it needlessly away. He calculated that there were twenty or thirty Zulus approaching, running at their utmost speed; but the ground was rough in the extreme, and in many places their progress was impeded by thorny bushes, through which they could not force their way. Though they were coming on at a fearfully rapid rate, the horsemen were moving still faster. Another shot was fired from the fort. This Rupert took to be a signal that some more Zulus were crossing the river lower down. If they made good speed, they might cut off his men stationed on the western bank. He became doubly anxious, therefore, for the arrival of his father. He could now distinguish him clearly, as he could also Lionel and Vermack and the trusty Matyana. The Zulus would, he hoped, after all be disappointed. Standing on the highest part of the bank, he waved his hat and then bounded down to the boat, which Captain Broderick and his companions could not see, to show them that she was there, ready to carry them across. The only fear was that one of their horses might fall, for it was evident by the way they kept their whips moving that they were hard pressed. On they came, surrounded by a cloud of dust, as they passed over a sandy tract.

"They'll do it! they'll do it!" cried Rupert. "Stand by, Crawford, to shove off the moment we get into the boat. I'm half inclined to send a shot among those Zulus. I should knock over one of them if they come much nearer."

Crawford stood holding the oar ready, and watching his companion. Presently he saw Rupert springing down the bank; directly afterwards Captain Broderick and Lionel's heads appeared above it, followed by those of the Dutchman and the Kaffir.

The first two threw themselves from their horses. "Well done, my dear boy! well done!" exclaimed Captain Broderick. "We will drive our horses into the water, and they will swim after the boat."

The Dutchman and Kaffir, however, disdaining this mode of crossing, kept their saddles, urging on the other two steeds, while the Captain and Lionel took their seats in the boat. There was no time to ask questions or give answers. Rupert could only say, as he gave a gripe of the hand to Lionel, "I am sure that you must be my brother Walter. I am delighted to see you. Now, Crawford, shove off."

Rupert, as he spoke, grasped his oar, and he and Crawford strained every nerve to urge the boat through the water.

Scarcely had they got half-way across when a body of Zulus appeared on the top of the bank, and began to hurl their assegais at them; but the moment they did so a volley from the west bank poured in among them, making them rapidly spring back, for every shot had told, and they probably expected a much larger dose to follow. Captain Broderick and Lionel, having unslung their rifles, also opened fire on the enemy. This gave the men time to reload, as also to enable Vermack and the Kaffir to get out of the reach of the assegais, they and the horses having fortunately escaped the first shower.

“What! did you expect the farm to be attacked?” asked Captain Broderick, looking up at the walls. “How did you manage to collect so large a body of defenders?”

“We originated them, sir,” answered Crawford. “You’ll see who they are as we get nearer.” He could not manage to say more, exerting himself as he was at the moment, nor did Captain Broderick ask further questions.

Landing, they drew up the boat, for they had no time to carry her to the harbour under the walls. They immediately joined the men, and as the Zulus again appeared on the bank, drove them back, enabling Vermack and Matyana to get to land with the horses.

The moment they had fired the volley another shot from the fort summoned Rupert to look down the stream, where he caught sight, though still, however, at some distance, of another body of the enemy who were coming up on the western bank.

“There’s no time to be lost, sir,” he said to his father. “We must get into the fort and haul up the drawbridge, or we shall have a number of those fellows upon us.”

Captain Broderick, seeing the importance of this advice, called out to Vermack and the Kaffir, to drive up the horses. The whole party then hurried on as fast as they could move towards the farm. Percy had thoughtfully stationed several men at the ropes to haul up the drawbridge as soon as they were over.

They were not a moment too soon. Scarcely was the drawbridge secured when the Zulus who had been coming up the west bank and the party who had pursued Captain Broderick, and who had now crossed, uniting, made a desperate rush to get in.

No sooner, however, had they got within range of Percy’s swivels, than both were fired in rapid succession, throwing their ranks into confusion, while he, picking up musket after musket, began to blaze away at them. This kept them in check and enabled Captain Broderick and the rest of the men to reach the ramparts, who immediately opened so hot a fire, that the Zulus, wanting courage to face it, hastily retreated, believing that the farm was defended by a far larger garrison than they had supposed.

Chapter Nineteen.

The attack.

As soon as the Zulus appeared, Percy had insisted on his sisters retiring from the ramparts.

“You have performed your parts, girls, and I cannot allow you to run the risk of being hit by one of those black fellow’s assegais. Down with you! down, quick!” he shouted.

Heroines as they were, they perhaps not very unwillingly obeyed; but when Percy told Bidy that she must retire, she exclaimed—

“What! me a ginerel, an’ goin’ to desert me post! Sure, I don’t mind the niggers’ long spikes more than if they wor mop-handles.” And levelling a rifle, of which she had possessed herself, she fired down on the still advancing Zulus. Then picking up one after the other, she blazed away with deadly effect, bringing down a Zulu at every shot, until Percy told her to begin reloading, while he, with the other men who had now mounted to the platform, kept up the fire. Meantime Captain Broderick, with Lionel, had entered the fort. Mrs Broderick, who had been waiting with feelings it would be difficult to describe, seeing her husband and the young stranger appear at the gate, hurried forward to meet them. A brief embrace was all Captain Broderick had time to give his wife, before he, with Rupert and Crawford, climbed up on the platform, he having scarcely recognised his daughters in their strange attire. Lionel thought it was his duty to follow them. He was about to do so, when his eyes met those of the lady approaching him.

“Yes!” he exclaimed, “you must be—I know you are—my mother.”

Mrs Broderick threw her arms round his neck, and pressing him to her heart, kissed him again and again, as she exclaimed, in a voice choking with emotion, “You are my long-lost Walter: I need no one to tell me that; I remember every lineament of your countenance.”

For the moment, as she clasped her boy in her arms, she heard not the rattling of the musketry, the shrieks and yells of the assailants, the shouts of the defenders, the din of battle; every feeling, every sense was absorbed in contemplating her recovered child. She would scarcely release him from her embrace to receive the welcome which his sisters, who now came up, showed their eagerness to give him.

He looked at them with no little astonishment at first, not comprehending who they were, until they told him that Percy had persuaded them to dress up in order to deceive the enemy.

“But I must not let the rest be fighting on the walls while I remain down here in safety,” he said at length. “I don’t like to leave you, mother; but while others are exposed to danger, it is a disgrace to me to keep out of harm’s way.”

"But, my dear boy, I cannot let you go," exclaimed Mrs Broderick. "You have only just been restored to me, and the assegais of the cruel Zulus might reach you on the platform. Percy has sent your sisters down, which shows that he considers there must be danger."

"The same kind Being who has hitherto preserved me will take care of me still," answered Lionel; "and my father and my brothers are exposed to the same peril."

Mrs Broderick had a severe struggle, but his arguments prevailed, and she at length allowed him to join the defenders on the walls. The Zulus in the meantime had only retreated beyond musket shot.

Percy had pointed out to Captain Broderick where the main body were encamped. Taking the telescope, he looked through it in that direction.

"They have heard the firing, and are marching down towards the river," he observed. "They little expect to find the farm so well garrisoned. Percy, you have acted admirably; for I believe, had our assailants not been led to suppose that a large number of men were posted round the walls to give them a warm reception, they would have come on much more boldly. It would be as well now to get rid of the dummies, lest their keen eyes should discover how they have been deceived, and they should then fancy that we have even fewer men than is really the case."

"I don't like so summarily dismissing my garrison, but of course you are right, father," said Percy; and he and Rupert went round and began to throw the dummy warriors off the platform, two of the pumpkins splitting, however, in falling.

"I say, we must lower them more gently," observed Percy, "for we may want them again, and it won't do to place them in position with cracked skulls."

They accordingly fastened them to the rope by which the swivels had been hoisted up, and let them all quietly down, one by one.

"Sure, cap'in, ye don't want me to go down," cried Bidy. "Whether they take me for a ginerel or an old woman, it won't much matter, for they'll find that an old woman can fight as well as many a ginerel. Let thim come on as fierce as they may, I'll not be after showin' the white feather."

"We mustn't tell my sisters what you say, Bidy, or they'll think you are throwing reflections on them," said Percy. "However, after the way in which you have handled a musket, I'm sure you will prove an able defender of our farm, should the Zulus venture again to attack it."

Besides Captain Broderick, his three sons and Crawford, the garrison consisted of Vermack and Matyana, and six Kaffir and Hottentot servants. They were but few in number to oppose the host of warriors threatening them. Mangaleesu seeing this, begged that he and Kalinda might be allowed to come up on the ramparts to assist in the defence.

"If the white chief thinks we shall be recognised, we can soon so disguise ourselves that the enemy will not know us," he said.

"Of course you can fight, as you desire it; but unless your wife insists, as Bidy does, in joining in the defence, I don't wish to expose her to danger, answered the captain."

Kalinda, however, declared that her desire was to join her husband, and in a short time both of them came up, their countenances so concealed by the hats and the plumes of feathers which adorned their heads, that it would have been difficult for those outside to have discovered who they were. The other Kaffirs, who usually wore scanty attire, dressed themselves in the same fashion, and thus the enemy might easily have supposed that a native contingent had arrived to assist in the defence of the fort.

Captain Broderick, however, feared that although the apparent strength of his garrison might keep the Zulus at a distance, they would ravage his fields, and carry off the cattle and sheep which had been left outside. They might also lay siege to the place, and attempt to starve him out. He anxiously watched the movements of the main body. Instead of directing their course towards the usual crossing place near the farm, they marched to a spot much lower down the river, showing that they had some dread of being opposed by the garrison, had they attempted the passage higher up. The party which had made the first attack had now gone in the same direction to cover their passage.

"We cannot save the crops, if the fellows are determined to destroy them," he observed to Rupert; "but we may preserve the cattle and sheep, by driving some into the fort, and others among the hills, where the Zulus will not dare to follow them."

"We have time to do that, if we don't lose a moment. I'll go at once," cried Percy.

"No, let me go," said Rupert. "Percy is not accustomed to the cattle. I will take Vermack and Matyana, and we will bring in as many as we can, while the herdsmen who remain with the rest drive them off in the meantime to the mountains. If we are seen by the Zulus, they will suppose that the whole have been driven into the fort, and will not go and look after the others."

Captain Broderick, although he would gladly have avoided employing his son in so dangerous an expedition, did not think it right to forbid it. And Rupert, calling the two men, immediately set off, all three carrying their rifles as well as their long stock whips, required for driving the cattle. As they made their way towards the meadows where the cattle were feeding, they bent down and kept as much as possible under cover, so as not to be seen by the Zulus. They

were watched anxiously from the ramparts. Captain Broderick could not help wishing that he had not let Rupert go, when he saw through his glass the horde of savages assembling, and who might come rushing up to the farm before there was time for him and his companions to get back. The drawbridge was kept down and the gate open ready for their return. Fortunately the ground was sufficiently clear in front of the farm to prevent any of the Zulus coming near enough to make a sudden rush.

While he kept a look-out on their movements, several men were stationed at the drawbridge to haul it up, should they again draw near. He had charged Rupert, to whom he had given his own pocket telescope, carefully to observe what they were about, and should he feel doubtful as to being able to bring the cattle into the farm in time, not to attempt returning; but to drive them all off into the mountains. He should thus lose three of his best men for the defence of the fort; but it would be better than to allow them to risk losing their lives and the cattle into the bargain. Fortunately Mrs Broderick was not aware that Rupert had gone out, so that she was saved much anxiety on his account. When the Zulus had retreated, the captain sent Lionel down to remain with his mother and sisters.

"They will wish to hear more about my expedition to bring you back," he said. "You can tell them all you know, and how unwilling my friend Hendricks was to give you up, although he hesitated no longer, when convinced that you were really my son."

Lionel, or rather Walter, gladly obeyed. His mother's thoughts were thus drawn off from the dangerous position in which the farm was placed. Walter spoke in the warmest terms of the kindness of Hendricks, and his regret at leaving him.

"He told me," he added, smiling, "should you ever get tired of me, that he will be glad to receive me back, though I don't think that will ever happen. I am sure that I don't wish to go, for I have often and often thought of you, and fancied I saw your loving eyes looking down upon me. I am very sorry for Denis, who will be all alone. If it had not been for his wish to go in search of his father, he would gladly have come back with me. He told me to say so, and to ask leave for him to return, should his father not be found."

"I shall be glad if he comes back," said Maud; "he was as much at home here with us as Rupert and Percy are, and I liked him almost as much as I do them."

"He is a capital fellow!" exclaimed Walter warmly, "and I too should be very glad if he were able to live with us always; for I don't think he would ever grow tired of the life here, although he has been so long accustomed to travelling and hunting."

Maud hoped that the buoyant and spirited young Irishman would some day return to the farm. Meantime Captain Broderick, with Percy and Crawford, kept watch on the platform, while Bidy marched about flourishing her sword, of which the captain had not thought fit to deprive her. Every now and then she gave vent to her feelings by shouting out defiance to the enemy, who still kept at a distance from them. Why they did not come on at once to attack the fort it was impossible to say. Captain Broderick was thankful for the delay, as it gave Rupert a better chance of being able to drive in the cattle. They appeared to be holding a council of war, he suspected for the object of forming some plan of attack. His mind was greatly relieved when at length he saw the heads of the cattle coming round a wood to the north-west, and heard the crack of the stock whips. Presently Rupert and Vermack appeared, urging on the slow-moving and obstinate animals with all their might.

Just then Percy, who was looking through the glass, cried out—

"The Zulus are moving. They are marching this way. I can see them clashing their shields and shaking their assegais over their heads, with their chiefs leading them. I must let Rupert know, that he may hasten on with the animals. He will understand what is meant if I fire a musket."

"By all means," said Captain Broderick. "Fire a second if they do not attend to the first signal."

Percy fired as he proposed.

Directly afterwards Rupert and Vermack were seen, accompanied by two of the herdsman, who were flourishing their whips and leaping from side to side to urge on the still lagging animals. It seemed doubtful whether they or the Zulus would first reach the farm. There could be no doubt that as soon as they were seen, the latter would hasten on and attempt to cut them off. Their friends earnestly hoped that rather than run the risk of this, they would leave the cattle to their fate, and would make their way into the fort.

Percy again fired, and pointed in the direction the Zulus were coming, trusting that he might be seen. The men in the meantime were standing at the drawbridge ready to admit the cattle, and then to raise it.

Presently Matyana and a shepherd, with a flock of sheep, appeared. It seemed scarcely possible that they, at all events, would escape being cut off. Though sheep, under ordinary circumstances, walk slowly, they do occasionally put their best feet foremost. Should they get in, a great advantage would be gained, for the Zulus would naturally suppose that the whole of the cattle and sheep belonging to the farm had been driven inside, and would not go in search of the remainder.

More than once Rupert looked towards the advancing Zulus, as if to calculate the distance; still he was evidently unwilling to abandon his charge, and exerted all his skill to drive them on. Suddenly the animals seemed to be seized with a desire to rush forward. Whether or not they observed the Zulus, it is difficult to say, but kicking up their heels, and whisking their tails, they made towards the drawbridge, and came rushing in pell-mell, the sheep at the same time following their example, when they, with their drivers, panting from their exertions, were safe inside before the Zulus had got within rifle shot of the fort.

"Well done, Rupert! well done, Vermack! you succeeded admirably," shouted the captain.

The drawbridge was hauled up, the door closed, and the cattle being driven into the kraal, which was pretty well crowded by this time, Rupert and Vermack, with the other men, were enabled to assist in the defence.

The judgment exhibited by Captain Broderick in his selection of the spot for his farm buildings was now more than ever evident. One side was protected by the river, and the other by inaccessible rocks. It could only be assailed either in front or the right side, where it was enfiladed by a projecting tower.

The Zulus had had no experience in attacking forts, and it was very evident that they looked upon the stockaded farm as they would upon one of their own kraals. They might have seen the cattle driven in, but they considered, as they were sure to capture the place, that it would be an advantage to have them all together, caught as it were in one net. As Captain Broderick looked through his telescope, he could observe their countenances, and it struck him they looked very much astonished at seeing the drawbridge hoisted up.

The front ranks halted just beyond musket range, to allow the others to come up, and then giving vent to the most terrific shrieks and yells, they rushed forward to the attack.

Chapter Twenty.

The relief.

Captain Broderick possessed but a small garrison to defend such extensive fortifications as those of Falls Farm against the numerous horde of savages now threatening to assault it. But he could trust thoroughly to the vigilance and courage of most of his men, and old Vermack was a host in himself, while his sons and Crawford had already shown the stuff they were made of. As to Bidy, he was very sure she would fight to the last, but he had to charge her not to expose herself, as she showed an inclination to do.

He possessed sufficient firearms to furnish each man, including Bidy, with a couple of rifles or muskets, besides the two swivels, but he had reason to fear, should the siege be protracted, that, his ammunition might run short. He had therefore warned his men not to throw a shot away.

Percy, ever fertile in resources, proposed that they should carry up to the platform a quantity of stones, a large heap of which had been collected to erect a storehouse which might be impervious to the attacks of ants. No sooner did the idea occur to him, than he told his sisters what he wanted. Wheelbarrows had been introduced on the farm, and a couple were standing ready. Getting three or four big baskets with strong handles, the young ladies, glad to find occupation, at once set to work, as did their mother, and exerting more strength than they fancied they possessed, they quickly filled the baskets, and brought them under the platform, when they were speedily hoisted up, each man being soon supplied with a heap. This was done before the Zulus had recommenced their advance.

When Captain Broderick saw the enemy coming, he directed his wife and daughters to retire into the house.

"If the fellows venture to come near enough, they may hurl their assegais over the wall, and you will run the risk of being hurt," he shouted. "Remember we are fighting for you, and it would be a poor satisfaction to drive off the enemy, and find that you had been injured. We will call you if you are wanted, but I enjoin you to keep under shelter until then."

Mrs Broderick and the young ladies obeyed the captain's orders. Although they were not allowed to fight, they could pray for the safety of those they loved.

Captain Broderick had the satisfaction of feeling that he had not provoked the attack by any unjust act on his part. It might possibly have been avoided, had he ungratefully refused to afford protection to Mangaleesu and his wife, who had been of essential service to Percy and Denis, but not for a moment did he regret having performed the duty he had taken on himself.

On and on came the Zulus, confident in their numbers, evidently believing that the fortifications of Falls Farm would afford no greater resistance than the stockades of their kraals. Captain Broderick would even now thankfully have avoided bloodshed, if the savages would have given him the opportunity. He had hitherto lived at peace with his neighbours, and had proved the result of judicious kindness to a large number of Kaffirs, not further advanced in civilisation than those now arrayed in arms against him. He ordered his men not to fire a shot until he should give the command. As soon as the enemy got within hail, he shouted, at the top of his voice—

"Why do you thus come to attack me? Beware before it is too late! I am prepared to receive you, and make you repent that you come as enemies instead of as friends."

He was well aware that the principal object of the Zulu chiefs was the destruction of the farm, they having become jealous of its existence so close to their own borders, for they considered that it afforded protection to others besides Mangaleesu who desired to escape from their tyranny, and who, from being kindly treated, became firm friends to the English.

As soon as they understood the tenor of Captain Broderick's address they began shouting and clashing their shields to drown his voice.

"Their blood be upon their own heads," he cried out to his own men. "Remember to pick off the fellows with tall plumes. If we kill the chiefs, their followers will quickly take to flight."

"We will see to that," answered Vermack with a grin, as he tapped the lock of his rifle.

The other men, in various tones, responded to the same effect.

Although the Zulus shouted and shrieked, and rushed on as if resolved that nothing should stop their progress until they were inside the stockade, the resolute front exhibited by Captain Broderick and his men evidently damped their ardour as they approached. Had the guns been fired while they were at a distance, when the shot would have produced comparatively little effect, they would have come on more boldly, but the perfect silence maintained by the defenders puzzled them. They observed also that there were fewer men on the walls than they had before seen, and they began to fancy that an ambuscade had been formed, by which they might suddenly be attacked on the flank. So Captain Broderick suspected. He remarked that the rear ranks were not coming on at the same speed as those in front, while many of the men were looking uneasily over their left shoulders. He still waited, however, until the front rank, led by the most daring of their chiefs, had got within half-musket range.

The discharge of one of the swivels was the signal for opening fire. Captain Broderick pulled the trigger, and the next instant his men were blazing away as fast as they could fire and reload.

When the smoke had cleared off, the whole Zulu force was seen hastily retreating, dragging off several of their number killed or wounded. Bidy, as she saw them scampering off, gave vent to a truly Irish shout of triumph, which was taken up by Percy, and echoed by most of the defenders of the fort.

"All very well," observed Vermack, in his usual dry way; "but, friends, don't be trusting those fellows. They have found us better prepared than they expected, but they're not beaten yet. They'll bide their time, and wait till they can see a chance of getting in with less risk to themselves."

"Vermack gives you good advice, my lads," said Captain Broderick. "I agree with him entirely: we must not relax our vigilance, but keep on the watch day and night."

"For my part, I wish that they had come on again and let us finish the business off hand," exclaimed Percy. "What do you say, father, to our sallying out and pursuing them? I should like to do it, for the chances are they would take to flight, and not stop until we had driven them across the river."

"No, no; we must not despise them too much," answered Captain Broderick. "If they saw a small force coming, they would to a certainty turn, and probably surround and cut us off. We are secure within our stockade as long as we keep a watch to prevent surprise, and here we must remain until our enemies grow tired and give up the attempt to destroy us, or until the authorities at Natal hear of the position in which we are placed, and send a sufficient force to our relief. But as the messenger I despatched cannot yet have got to Maritzburg, I fear it will be many a long day before we can rely on assistance from that quarter."

The movements of the Zulus were watched with considerable anxiety. They continued to retreat until they were completely out of sight, but whether or not they had recrossed the river it was impossible to ascertain without sending out scouts. This Captain Broderick was unwilling to do, as they would run a great risk of being cut off by the enemy, who would, to a certainty, be on the watch for them, and good men could ill be spared from the garrison.

The hours went by. Night came on. Nothing more had been seen of the enemy. The captain, as he went his rounds, charged the sentries to keep a bright look-out. It was arranged that Rupert and Crawford should keep one watch, while Percy and Lionel, or rather Walter, as his family called him, kept the other. Bidy was very indignant at being sent back to the kitchen.

"Sure I've bin a gineral all day, an' fought as well as the best of ye, and now I'm to be turned back into a cook an' an old woman, when I'd be watching as sharply as any of the men lest those spalpeens of black-a-moors should be coming back at night to attack us," she exclaimed, as she sheathed her sword and doffed the captain's coat and hat.

The young ladies had long before put off their martial attire. They now set to work to assist Bidy in preparing supper, of which the garrison stood greatly in need. Only one portion could partake of it at a time, so that Bidy and the young ladies had work enough in running backwards and forwards with the dishes. The fare was ample, there being no lack of food in the fort; and as soon as the men had supped, they returned, some to their posts and others to lie down until it was their turn for duty.

Rupert and Crawford kept the first watch, but no enemies were seen, nor did even the dogs give warning that any strangers were in the neighbourhood. They then aroused Percy and Lionel, who sprang from their couches with all the zeal of young soldiers.

"This reminds me of many a night's watch we have had together when travelling with Hendricks," said Percy. "I thought when I came to the farm that I should have had too quiet a life of it, but I like this sort of thing, and I hope we shall give the Zulus a lesson which will teach them we are not to be molested with impunity."

"We must keep a very strict watch, then," said Lionel. "I know how cunning they are, and that their great object will be to throw us off our guard. I have not the slightest expectation that they will come to-night or to-morrow night either. They may wait days and weeks until they think they can catch us unawares, and then they will come down like a thunder-clap on the farm. They are not aware, however, that our father has sent to Maritzburg, and my hope is that they will put off the attack until we get assistance, and they will have to hurry away as fast as they can run. I have no wish to see the poor savages killed. They are urged on by their chiefs, and know no better."

Lionel was right in his conjectures that the fort would not be attacked, for the sun rose once more, and the whole country looked peaceful and smiling as ever. Not a Zulu was to be seen with the naked eye, and the only sign of their having been near the fort was the trampled grass, stained here and there with the blood of their wounded warriors.

Percy took a look through the telescope. He observed that a body of men remained at their former camping-place at the foot of the hills to the eastward, and in the distance to the south he made out several black heads on the move, showing that the Zulus were still waiting for an opportunity either of attacking the farm to advantage, or of capturing the fugitives. They were of course not aware of the powerful instrument which enabled the garrison to watch their movements, while their sharp eyes could scarcely see even the fort itself.

Percy having taken his observations, called his father, as he had been desired to do. The captain's first thought was about the cattle. The fodder stored in the farm was barely sufficient to last more than a couple of days. It would be necessary to collect a further supply. The grass, however, in the neighbourhood of the farm had already been cut for that purpose, or had been trampled down by the Zulus, and the men must therefore go to a considerable distance to obtain it.

This undertaking would be hazardous; for should they be perceived by the Zulus, attempts would certainly be made to cut them off.

Crawford, on hearing what was required, at once volunteered to go out in charge of a party, promising to keep strict watch, and should any enemies be seen, at once to return.

Captain Broderick accepted his offer. He thought it wiser to go mounted; and the waggon, with horses harnessed to it, was sent to bring back the grass.

Vermack went as driver, and four other men accompanied him to cut and load the waggon. The captain gave Crawford his field glass, to assist him in keeping a watch on the enemy. Percy promised also to be on the look-out, and to fire guns as signals, should he observe any movement among them.

As there was no time to be lost, the party immediately set off. They were watched anxiously from the fort until they were out of sight.

A couple of hours quickly passed, during which time Percy, accompanied by Lionel, had kept constant watch from the platform. Suddenly Lionel, who was looking through the glass, exclaimed—

"I see some of the Zulus moving to the westward. Depend upon it they have discovered Crawford, and from where he is he cannot see them."

Percy, taking a look through the glass, exclaimed—

"There is no doubt about it. I must give the first warning signal to Crawford;" and he fired off a musket.

As there was no reply, he soon afterwards discharged another and another.

Captain Broderick and Rupert came hurrying up to ascertain what was happening. The Zulus were no longer in sight, but he feared that his sons were right in their conjecture. All eyes were turned in the direction it was expected that Crawford would appear.

They had not long to wait before the waggon came in sight. Old Vermack lashing the horses, which tore along at a tremendous rate, the rest of the men being seated in the vehicle, while Crawford, who followed, every now and then turned a glance behind, as if aware that an enemy was in pursuit. That such was the case was soon evident. The Zulus were seen scampering as fast as their legs could carry them, hoping apparently that the roughness of the ground or some accident might place the fugitives at their mercy. There indeed seemed even now a great probability that they would be overtaken. Crawford still gallantly brought up the rear. He was seen holding his rifle ready to fire, so as to keep them in check, should they come nearer. The horses' hoofs and the waggon wheels, however, threw up so much dust from the dry ground they were now passing over, that he was soon completely shut out from view. The men were summoned to the ramparts, with the exception of those required to haul up the drawbridge. Percy got his swivels ready. Biddy made her appearance with the captain's hat, which she had just time to stick on her head, and a couple of muskets in her hand.

Again the horses could be distinguished still coming at the same rate as before. But what had become of Crawford? A shot was heard, it was hoped that he had fired it, and not one of his pursuers.

"There he is, there he is!" cried Lionel, whose sharp eyes had pierced the cloud of dust. Presently he emerged from the cloud a short distance behind the waggon, sitting his horse as if uninjured. The Zulus could also be seen, with their assegais poised, eager to hurl them at him; but he still kept ahead of them. The pursuers, excited by the ardour of the chase, at length got within musket range of the west angle of the fort, from whence a warm fire was opened upon them. They appeared not to be aware of their danger until the bullets came flying about their ears, when turning tail they ran off as fast as they had before been going in an opposite direction, and Vermack drove his panting steeds up to the drawbridge. They were quickly over, bringing in a considerable load of grass.

Captain Broderick descended to thank Crawford for the service he had rendered.

"I should have been caught, however, had I not heard your signal guns," he answered; "for the Zulus were creeping up so noiselessly, that they were almost upon us before the men had time to jump into the waggon; and even though Vermack lashed on his horses, we had great difficulty in keeping ahead of them."

It is needless to say that Crawford received a further reward from the way he was greeted by Helen, who had been more anxious, probably, than any one else during his absence.

The supply of grass thus brought in was of great assistance in feeding the cattle, but it had to be husbanded to the utmost, as the Zulus were certain not to let the waggon go out again without making an attempt to capture it.

Another and another day passed as the first had done. The Zulus kept carefully out of sight. The scouts, who went cautiously out, reported that they had fallen in with the enemy's scouts in the neighbourhood, evidently keeping a strict watch on the fort, so that no one would be able to leave it without a risk of being cut off.

The fodder was now running very short. There was scarcely enough for the animals for another day. They might, to be sure, yet live a day or two without food, although they would suffer in consequence; but that was better than allowing them to fall into the enemy's hands.

Two days more passed. Every particle of food was gone. It was determined as a last resource to turn out the cattle at night. Two of the Hottentots bravely volunteered to drive them towards the mountains; but Vermack expressed his opinion that that was more than they could do, as the poor animals, having been so long starved, were certain to remain feeding on the first pasture land they came to. "It would be better to slaughter them at once than to let them fall into the hands of the savages," he added.

It was resolved therefore to keep them another day. Crawford had not neglected his little zebra, which, as it was able to live on milk, was better off than any other of the creatures, although the supply afforded by the poor cows, for whom a small amount of fodder had been reserved, was becoming less and less.

Another night approached. The garrison were beginning to get worn out with watching, although they had to make no great exertions in other respects.

"I suppose we shall have another night's useless watching," observed Crawford; "I don't believe that the Zulus will venture to attack the fort."

"Don't trust to that belief, Mr Crawford," said Vermack. "If they don't come to-night, they will to-morrow or the next day; perhaps in the day-time, if they think that we are off our guard; but it is our business to expect that they will come to-night."

The old Dutchman refused to turn in, though it was not his watch, and wrapped in his blanket he took his post on the platform.

The night was cloudy and unusually dark. Denis had bestowed Raff as a parting gift on Percy, who had taken the dog up with him.

For some time Raff lay perfectly still, but at length he rose from his recumbent position, and began to move away to the right side of the fort.

Percy observing this followed him, and on his way he found Vermack going in the same direction. Presently Raff gave a low growl, then another, and began to run backwards and forwards.

"Go, Mr Percy, and call out all the men: depend upon it the Zulus are not far off," whispered Vermack. "I'll keep post here. They think to take us by surprise."

Percy rushed off to do as he was requested. He fortunately met Lionel, who hastened to call his father. He had just aroused the garrison, when the sound of Vermack's gun showed that he had seen something to fire at.

Most of the men, led by Captain Broderick, sprang up to that side of the fort, just in time to encounter a shower of assegais, and to see a dozen dark heads rising above the stockade. Few, however, got higher; for Vermack, clubbing his musket, struck out right and left, hurling down the greater number into the ditch, while the rest were shot or struck down by the other men in the same fashion. The garrison now opened fire on the mass of dark objects moving about below them. While thus engaged, Percy's voice was heard shouting—

"Come to the front! come to the front! They are trying to get in over the gate."

Rupert, Crawford, Lionel and Mangaleesu, with several men, hastened to his assistance. They were barely in time to drive back the assailants, who, while their companions had been engaged at the right side, had managed to place some rudely constructed ladders against the stockade. At the same time showers of assegais came hurtling through the air. Mangaleesu had thrown aside his shield, that he might use a club, with which he had supplied himself, with better effect. He was followed closely by a light active figure, whom Percy recognised as Kalinda. Where the Zulus appeared the thickest, there they were to be found, and many an assegai was caught by the young Zulu woman, and hurled back at the assailants of the fort. At length a piercing cry was heard above the shouts of the combatants.

Mangaleesu was no longer seen wielding his club, and Percy caught sight of a number of Zulus attempting to climb up at the spot he had hitherto been defending. Ever prompt in action, he immediately turned one of the swivel guns, loaded to the muzzle with bullets, and directed it so as to sweep the wall.

Groans and cries followed the discharge, and the dark mass of human beings, with the ladders on which they had stood, fell crashing below. Still others came on, evidently determined to gain an entrance at all costs.

Although the muskets of the defenders had performed their deadly work, they themselves had not escaped unscathed from the assegais of the Zulus. Several had been hurt, and Crawford had a severe wound in his left shoulder.

Frequently old Vermack's voice had been heard shouting, "Fire away, boys! fire away! don't spare the savages." There was little necessity for this advice, however. Every man knew that should their assailants once get in, the lives of all would be sacrificed.

It would have been well had the captain's orders not to throw a shot away been obeyed. As it was, however, every

one loaded and fired as fast as possible, often over the heads of the enemy.

Percy, who had been employing his swivels with great effect, at length shouted out to Lionel to go and get some more powder. "I've nearly come to the end of mine," he said.

Lionel hurried off, but just as Percy fired his last shot he came back with the alarming intelligence that the magazine was empty.

"Our father and Crawford, and some of the men, have a few rounds; but I have none, nor has Rupert."

"Then we must use the stones. Fortunately I thought of them," cried Percy, undaunted. "I only hope that the Zulus won't suspect that our ammunition is exhausted."

No sooner did the besiegers again venture under the walls, than the showers of stones which clattered down on their heads made them once more beat a rapid retreat; but those who threw them had to expose themselves far more than before, and many were wounded by the assegais of the savages, who kept hurling them from a distance which the stones could not reach.

Captain Broderick had escaped unhurt. He was seen everywhere firing his rifle as long as he had a round left, encouraging his men, and finally taking to stone-throwing.

But the Zulus were not long in discovering the want of ammunition among the garrison; and now, confident of success, the main body, which had hitherto been kept in reserve, rushed up to the attack, carrying ladders for crossing the ditch and mounting the walls. Still Captain Broderick encouraged his men to hold out.

"We will drive them back, my boys, notwithstanding," he shouted. He sent Lionel with Bidy and two men to bring up a further supply of the stones. "And tell your mother and sisters, on no account to leave the house," he added. "Let them keep up their courage; for depend on it we shall succeed in driving back the savages."

Although he said this, he could not help feeling how desperate was their situation. On every side the Zulus appeared, their numbers greatly increased since the last attack. They had in all probability been waiting for reinforcements. They now thickly thronged round the walls, and his fear was that they might even find their way to the rear of the fort. Already nearly half the garrison had been wounded, two of whom he had seen fall to the ground, while others, weakened by loss of blood, had scarcely strength to hurl the stones down on the heads of their assailants. At length for the first time he began to despair of successfully defending the fort. As a last resource he resolved to summon the whole of the garrison, and to retire into the house, which he hoped to be able to defend with fixed bayonets and the assegais thrown into the fort. Still, as yet, not a Zulu had got inside, but at any moment they might make their way over the stockade.

Just then loud shouts were heard on the left, followed by a rattling fire of musketry, and the Zulus, who had nearly gained the stockade, dropped down, almost together, some falling into the water, others scrambling back by the way they had come. The shouts increased.

"Erin-go-bragh!" cried a voice from below.

"It's Denis, I'm sure of it," exclaimed Percy. "Hurrah! he must have come with Hendricks, and they have managed to cross the river unseen by the savages. The Zulus have evidently been seized with a panic. I daresay they fancy that a larger force has come to our relief, so thought it wise to bolt without stopping to count heads."

Percy was right in his conjecture.

"Let down the drawbridge!" cried Denis; "the enemy have scampered off like wild fowl, though only Hendricks, my father, and our men, with myself, have been peppering them."

The drawbridge was quickly lowered, and Denis was the first to cross, followed by the hunter and Mr Maloney, together with twenty well-armed Kaffirs and Hottentots.

"Having arrived soon after nightfall on the opposite side of the river, and camped, we were aroused by the sound of the firing, and guessing what was occurring, we managed to push across the stream just in time, it appears, to render you the assistance which I am delighted to have afforded," said Hendricks. "We must take care, however, that the enemy do not attack our waggons, although I don't think they'll have the heart to do that. We'll bring them across the first thing to-morrow morning; meantime we must follow up the rascals, and prevent them from rallying. If any of your men can accompany us, we shall be glad of their aid; but if not, we are sufficiently strong to do the work ourselves."

"There's one will go with you," exclaimed Vermack, "and that's myself. Give me some ammunition, and let me get sight of the fellows, and I'll make every bullet do its work." Four of the garrison only were capable of accompanying Hendricks, who without loss of time led his party out of the fort. They pushed forward at a rapid rate; but had not got far before daylight broke, and the enemy were seen far ahead, evidently intending to recross the river a considerable way from the farm. He judged, consequently, that there would be ample time to pass over the waggons and the rest of his party, before they could make their way up the east bank to impede the operation.

Few braver or more enterprising men than Hendricks the hunter were to be found, but at the same time he was ever anxious to avoid bloodshed; he therefore, greatly to old Vermack's disappointment, returned at once to the farm.

A sad scene was revealed by the light of day inside the fort. Two of the defenders lay dead, fallen from the platform to the ground, and a third desperately wounded with an assegai through his breast, and who had hitherto been unobserved, lay gasping out his life. But sadder still was the spectacle near the gateway. There lay the Zulu chief,

Mangaleesu, with his faithful Kalinda leaning over him, the blood flowing from a wound in her side mingling with his, which, regardless of her own injury, she had been endeavouring to stanch. Just as she was discovered she fell forward lifeless on the body of her husband.

“Och! the poor creature’s kilt intirely,” cried Bidy, who with Percy and Lionel had hurried to assist her. “Och ahone! it’s cruel to see one so loving and true struck down. Yet it’s better so than for her to have lived and mourned the loss of her husband.”

Bidy said this as she raised the inanimate body of the young Zulu woman, and found, on placing a hand on her heart, that her spirit had fled.

Percy and Lionel knelt by the side of their friend, whom they at first hoped might have merely fainted from loss of blood; but after feeling his pulse and heart, with unfeigned sorrow they were convinced that he was dead. Others soon joined them, and carried the two corpses into the room they had inhabited, there to wait their burial.

There had hitherto been but little time to welcome Denis, or to hear how his father had been recovered.

“Sure we didn’t recover him, he recovered himself,” answered Denis to the questions put to him. “He had been far away to the north of Oliphants river, where, after having lost his oxen and fallen sick, he was detained by an Amatonga chief, a regular savage, who from mere wantonness used once a month to threaten to put him to death if his friends did not send the heavy ransom he demanded, while all the time he was detaining the messengers my father endeavoured to despatch to Maritzburg. Wonderful however to relate, the savage chief became a Christian through the influence of a native missionary, who had made his way into that region. On this he at once released my father, supplied him with fresh oxen, and enabled him to fill up his waggon with tusks and skins. He had a long journey south, and reached Hendricks’ camp the very day after Captain Broderick left it. I was about to return with him to Maritzburg, while Hendricks intended to proceed on to the north-west, when, just as we were separating, Onoko, the same Kaffir who brought the message to you a short time ago, came to our camp with the information that a large body of Zulus were marching, bent on the destruction of this farm, in consequence of Mangaleesu and his wife having found refuge here.

“Hendricks, who would scarcely believe the report, sent out a couple of scouts to ascertain its truth, which, however, on their return they fully confirmed. We immediately, therefore, set out in this direction. Hendricks, I suspect, was not slightly influenced by remembering that Lionel was with you, and that should the Zulus succeed in their attempt he would be sacrificed with the rest of you.”

Some time was occupied by Hendricks and Maloney in passing over their waggons, which were brought within the fortifications, when the oxen and horses under a strong guard were turned out to graze, all the men who could be spared being employed in burying the dead at some distance from the farm.

A grave was dug for Mangaleesu and Kalinda, on a tree-shaded mound, a short distance from the farm. Mrs Broderick, while sincerely grieving for their death, had the satisfaction of knowing from the testimony they had given, that they had both become true, if not very enlightened, Christians, and would there rest in peace in the sure hope of a glorious resurrection.

Hendricks, who was known and respected throughout Zululand, anxious for the safety of his friends, considered it a wise course to send an envoy to the Zulu chief, Mapeetu, who had led, he ascertained, the attack on the farm, to ask why he had thus endeavoured to injure his neighbours the English. The envoy was directed at the same time casually to refer to the death of Mangaleesu and Kalinda.

Mapeetu, attended by two of his counsellors, three days afterwards made his appearance at Falls Farm. He expressed his regret at what had happened, and he hoped, he said, now the cause of enmity had ceased, that they might live in future on friendly terms with the white chief and his retainers.

Captain Broderick replied that he felt much satisfaction at hearing this; but he observed to Hendricks—

“I don’t intend to trust the fellow a bit the more for all his protestations; but shall be as much on the watch as ever, and will take care to have an ample supply of arms and ammunition, while I will keep up the stockade which have just done such good service.”

While Hendricks, not wishing again to enter Zululand, set off to cross the Drakensberg, Mr Maloney proceeded towards Maritzburg, promising, to the great delight of Denis, that having disposed of his goods, he would return to settle in the neighbourhood of Falls Farm.

The Zulus were shortly after this confined to a narrower space of territory, and Falls Farm, the scene of the stirring events lately described, became the centre of a thriving agricultural district. Helen and Maud married respectively Crawford and Denis, who settled on farms of their own, and Lionel with his brothers, in course of time also established themselves in the district. They all succeeded, though like other settlers subjected to various ups and downs, and Lionel had the satisfaction of watching over the declining years of his foster-father, Hendricks the hunter.

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