WARD

JASPER LYLE

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Содержание

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Chapter One.
The Travellers

Kafirland!

People are beginning now-a-days to know where Kafirland is!

Verily they have paid dearly for their knowledge!

It is a beautiful land, with its open savannahs, its wooded glens, its heathy mountains, its green and undulating parks—nature's plantations! Pleasant to the eye is the sight of the colonists' sheltered farms, surrounded by waving cornfields, and backed by noble mountains, ascending in the distance, one above another, assuming every hue it is possible to imagine, and finally blending their purple heights with clouds all radiant with gold, or shaping themselves into canopies of sombre colouring, and veiling the glories of heaven from the upturned gaze of man.

But from these scenes the traveller may suddenly find himself translated to the most sterile moors, stretching out in apparently illimitable space, or bounded by bald rocks, which offer no "shadow from the heat," no "refuge from the storm." In these tracts, the earth, resembling lava, is bare of all but stones, except

where some bright-flowering bulb has struggled with its destiny, only to waste its beauty on the desert. There is nothing living to be seen in these inhospitable regions, save when the hungry travellers pause to "to kill and eat," and lo! as the scent of blood rises in the atmosphere, a solitary speck hovers in the sky, another, and another, and, like airy demons waiting for their prey, the asphogels, the gigantic vultures of South Africa, keep watch over the bivouac, in anticipation of the feast for which their instinct has prepared them.

It was in the centre of an unsightly plain that three travellers were arrested on their journey by one of those appalling storms which, in the loveliest spots of Southern Africa, disenchant the mind, impressed with the beauty of the wooded tracts, or the grandeur of even the solitary wastes, with the sweet influence of balmy mornings, or the nights serene and clear, sometimes shining more brilliantly than day.

All the morning symptoms in the air had warned the attendant of our travellers, a knowing little bush man, of an approaching storm, and he had urged his masters to advance with all the speed they could drive into their patient and active steeds. But the lightning soon played in all its horrible brightness, piles of clouds like snow began to rise in front; to the unpractised ear all was silent, but the bushman called a halt, and dismounting, led the others with their horses behind a heap of stones.

Thus partially screened, they awaited the mighty tempest.

The giant of the storm advanced as with a trumpet-blast from

that part of the horizon whence the lightning had telegraphed his approach. He came with a rushing sound resembling the passage of an invisible but powerful host, the desert shook with the terror of his presence, the clouds came slowly floating on, growing darker and darker, till their hue was of a leaden aspect, and in a few moments, as with a roar of many waters, the rains poured down their torrents, the winds whistled an unearthly chorus to the plashing of the floods, the great stones rocked and moaned, the thunder pealed, now muttering in ill-subdued wrath, and now clattering overhead in ungovernable fury, then passing by to burst its bolts on some far mountain-top, or on fair pasture-lands, where cattle stood huddled together in terror and dismay. There was silence at length upon the plain. "The earth trembled and was still," the horses lifted their heads and snuffed up the refreshing air; the little bushman groom, whom I shall describe by-and-by, drew the covers from the saddles, and the two young men, his masters, shook themselves like dogs on reaching land after a long swim.

"Well," said the younger, a man of slender frame, but not the less manly in his appearance for that, "here is a precious specimen of an African climate!"

"Yes, my good fellow; you are able to judge of it now," replied his companion, Major Frankfort, whose darkened complexion and tanned gloveless hands proved his experience in the country, and who solaced himself and his friend moderately with a *sopie* (dram), from the flask stuck in his leather waist-belt, to which

other appendages were fixed. Neither did he forget the shivering but smiling bushman, May. The name is not in keeping with this very original little groom, but he had been so named not without reason.

These two travellers, Major Frankfort and Mr Ormsby, were officers of an English regiment employed on the frontier of the British possessions in South Africa, and had obtained leave of absence for the purpose of journeying together on a shooting excursion beyond the Orange River.

The younger one had never seen any sport beyond his father's moors, and, albeit rather indolent and luxurious of habit, he found himself tempted to accompany Frankfort into the interior of the country, where he was told that droves of large game, of manifold species, were to be seen herding together on the mountain slopes and spacious plains to the north-east.

And now the sun burst forth, the clouds rolled away in heavy masses, the plain stretched wider and wider in the clear expanse, and in the distance the hills loomed large, till at length the peaks and tableland stood out strongly defined against the sky.

The horses were well rubbed down and re-saddled, the travellers resumed their route, and in another hour some signs of vegetation promised comfort and repose.

Clumps of bush adorned either side of the road, the large starry jessamine, the glowing geranium, the golden-blossomed green mimosa, emitting a delightful odour from the bowers formed by nature's graceful hand, were doubly agreeable to the

eye that ached with gazing on a barren space, and ere long the ripple of water sounded musically among the trees; in another moment a clear stream delighted the eyes of men and beasts.

Pleasant it was in that cool drift (ford) to feel the gentle gale fanning the heated brow, pleasant to lift even the light felt hat from the head, and halt beneath the over-arching boughs of willows and trees of statelier growth, in which the monkeys chattered, frightening the poor guanas from their hiding-places among the stones into the sanctuary of the tall grasses and plants, prodigal of beauty in the deep solitude.

They crossed the stream, and after threading a defile thickly studded with euphorbias and prickly-pear bushes, the honey-bird hovering about them and striving to beguile them to those delicious nooks where bees make their nests, and the coneys have colonies in the cliffs, they found themselves upon another plain, dotted like a park with clumps of trees. Here the bushman guide halted, and placing the open palm of his right hand above the left, he measured the space between the sun and the horizon, and, announcing that "it wanted one hour to sunset," gave his horse the rein, and cantering on at a smarter pace than before, was followed by his masters.

They soon came upon the track of waggon-wheels, next they found the remains of fire and the *débris* of a meal; at a little distance lay the carcase of a poor ox, which had died probably from exhaustion, and round it were assembled, in greedy conclave, what appeared to Ormsby's unpractised eye a

flock of sheep. It was a company of vultures, seated in a circle round their prey, and while some still ate, the rest, unwilling or unable to move from the scene of the repast, kept close order, and dosingly watched their hungry comrades with a ludicrously stupified air.

Unwilling to disturb these scavengers of nature, the three horsemen moved on, and soon looked down upon a valley, the quiet of which was relieved by a farm-house of regular proportions; but the shingle roof, bare white walls, and ill-tended garden had nothing picturesque about them, although the valley was rich in corn, and a grove of fruit-trees proved the capabilities of the soil; but these were planted without taste or order.

Beyond, the scene was charmingly pastoral; a clear stream, a branch of the river they had lately forded, wound through the vale, and from the banks opposite the settlement was a gently-sloping hill, thickly wooded in some parts. On the open spaces cattle were browsing, unmindful of the call of the Hottentot herds, too indolent to climb the steep and drive them down. The call was unheeded till it was accompanied by the shrill whistle of a little Kafir boy, that whistle which acts like magic on the cattle of South Africa; with one accord the creatures paused, lifted up their heads to listen, and then the largest ox of the herd turning to descend the hill, the rest wended their way after him to meet these impish guards, while other herdsmen went to collect the great flocks of sheep and goats, whose approach along the course of the river was continuously audible enough to charm the most

Arcadian taste and ear. The lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the smaller but more numerous "creatures of the fold," the Kafir whistle, and the song and laughter of the Hottentot girls, floated together in a sort of wild harmony along the vale, and met the travellers in their descent; but not the least agreeable part of the picture to the latter, was the sight of their waggons drawn up upon a miniature prairie, or flat on the margin of the stream, and the smoke, curling upwards from the bush, announced the preparation for cookery, to which they were disposed to do ample justice. Their tents were pitched, they were evidently expected, and the Hottentot courier, who had preceded them by a day, had done his bidding and "made ready."

The hospitable Dutchman, the owner of the farm, was on the look-out for them, for he stood leaning over his wicker gate and watching their advance.

They cantered up, and replied to his "Good morrow,"—Frankfort cordially, Ormsby with cold civility; but the Dutchman invited them within, and Frankfort, feeling himself indebted for the permission to *outspan* (unyoke) on the farm-land, accepted the proffered attention, much to Ormsby's disgust, for he was hungry, tired, and thoroughly uncomfortable from the effects of the drenching he had got.

So was Major Frankfort; but these two men, though friends and companions, were very different in habits and opinions. Indeed, Ormsby, had it been practicable, would gladly have faced about and given up that expedition, so utterly annoyed

was he with many *désagrémens en route*; indeed, he had been first induced to accompany Frankfort, because his brother-officers had offended his manly pride by doubting his powers of endurance on a *trek* (journey) through the depopulated wilderness.

"You lazy dog, Ormsby," his colonel had observed to him one morning, "how can *you* talk of going up the country with Frankfort? he will never make a sportsman of you,—you are always late for parade."

"I am never *last*, sir," replied the youngster to his commanding officer, who happened that very day to have kept the parade waiting; a thing commanding officers constantly do themselves, though they punish their subordinates for the error.

"Humph!—You know nothing of sporting—you talk of the moors; why, Frankfort has shot his five-and-twenty lions; besides, you would be breakfasting at his dinner-hour, and grumbling that you have no cream for your coffee as muddy as the water of the Fish River. Tell us, now, what time you got up this morning."

"I confess, that is rather a poser, sir; but I will ask my servant, if you particularly desire to know," answered Ormsby, with a demure look, which set some of the subs laughing.

"Can you tell when the sun rose?" asked Colonel J.

"No, sir," replied the saucy Ormsby, gravely; "he was up before I was."

It was the manner, not the matter, that made every one laugh,

and Ormsby, running his hand through his shining, but carelessly-arranged hair, called to his servant to bring him his cigar-case, and the last new novel he had received from England, in Hookham's box; then, stretching himself at full length across a window-sill of the mess-room, he took up a paper, declaring it was too hot for billiards; next he ordered some pale ale, with which he solaced himself while he waited for his novel and cigar, and having obtained these, began to long for luncheon.

In great contrast to him was his friend Major Frankfort. Though possessed of attractions which would render many a man vain, Frankfort was sadly insensible to the charms of a society in which he would have been flattered and caressed. The principal features in his character were generosity, and its sister attribute, bravery; but there was withal a certain reserve in his nature, which prevented him from being appreciated, except by friends, and these were not numerous; for he was neither a person to seek, or be sought—he was one who could not be gratified by the commonplaces of every-day life. His love of adventure had its impulses, not in the excitement of the gay world, but in the beauties, harmonies, and sublimities of nature.

The winter season had passed away without realising the expectation formed by the colonists of a war with the savage tribes on their border, and the months succeeding the rains were looked forward to by sportsmen as a season of relief and enjoyments, after the *désagrémens* of a life "under arms," without the excitement of "an enemy in sight."

How often it happens, especially in the naval and military professions, that two men of totally opposite natures will become the most intimate friends of the community to which they belong. No two characters could be more strongly contrasted than those of Edward Frankfort and Charles Ormsby. Characters may differ where natures may have attributes in common.

Frankfort was generous and brave, so was Ormsby; but the latter was often more generous than just, for he had never been taught the value of money or opinion, nor how to discriminate between the faults arising from folly, or those originating in misfortune. Equally brave with Frankfort, he was hasty in his judgments and impetuous in his decisions, forgetting that fool-hardiness is no proof of courage, and that valour is not thought the less of for being coupled with discretion. But, unlike Frankfort, whose candour was never obtrusive, Ormsby's openness of manner often degenerated into egotism.

Frankfort was careless of appearances as far as mere fashion went; nevertheless, his attire was always suited to the occasion. Ormsby, while he affected to despise those outward adornings which render men effeminate, and consequently despicable in the eyes of those they most seek to please, displayed a certain affectation in the tie of the loose cravat which showed to advantage the beauty of his throat; the straw hat he wore in the morning lounge was coarse, but of becoming shape, and his shooting-coat, or loose jacket, hung on his shoulders as they would have hung on no other's.

Pretending to despise the uniform of the soldier, he "sported" a costume as little like an officer's and as much like a settler's as possible; but to see him enter a hall-room in all the pride of scarlet and gold, it was clear that he thought himself the finest there. So Colonel J said; but Ormsby was perpetually vexing Colonel J, the most selfish of men, the most exacting of commanding officers.

This dash of conceit, however, was rather becoming to one so handsome, so agreeable, and so open-hearted; and Major Frankfort found himself making allowances for the young sub's faults, and at last taking sufficient interest in him to endeavour to correct them. Early indulgences made this a difficult matter; but Frankfort saw, that though the surface was overrun with weeds and rubbish, there was something below worth getting at. Little rays of light gleamed up at times, and showed that there was good ore in the mine.

Unaccustomed to bestow his regard too readily, Frankfort might never have yielded to the outward attractions of this fine young man, but duty brought them together, and Major Frankfort began to like Ormsby against his will. Happily for the latter, the influence of such a character as Frankfort's was not thrown away upon him; for his nature, as I have shown, was capable of excellent impulses. These, like goodly fruits brought from shade to sunlight, soon ripened into sentiments, which might hereafter become principles; but the future must not be forestalled.

And all this time we have kept them at the gate of the poor

Dutchman's desolate-looking garden.

Major Frankfort shook hands with Vanbloem, or rather Vanbloem shook hands with Frankfort. Ormsby did not understand such familiarity, but he suffered it with a better grace than he would have done had some of his brother-officers been by, and permitting May to lead off his horse, followed the Dutchman to the entrance of his neglected-looking abode.

Vanbloem's wife was a mild-tempered woman, too indolent to scold the lazy Hottentot girls sitting in the garden, or rather yard, of the dwelling, awaiting the return of the herdsmen, and totally regardless of their charges, the children, who, rejoicing in the dirt, were busily employed, under the tuition of a little Fingo boy[1], in moulding most unclassical representations of elands, rhinoceroses, sea-cows, elephants, and various other denizens of the hunting-grounds.

The aspect of the principal apartment and only sitting-room of the house did not strike the travellers as inviting, and to Ormsby, the slaughtered sheep suspended from the roof, with his head downwards, and dripping with blood, was particularly revolting; turning his back to it in disgust, he found himself face to face with two enormous people, the grandfather and grandmother of the family. He might have doubted their being alive, but for the pipe in the patriarch's mouth. The ancient dame sat almost immovable, but a slight tremor in the head indicated palsy. A

[1] The Fingoes are the remnant of some powerful nations, conquered and enslaved by the Kafirs, whom they greatly resemble.

teapot stood on a little table beside her, and with her feet turned backwards round the legs of the chair, and her arms folded under her apron, she looked as if she had dressed herself in the round-eared cap and ample gown of *voerchitz*, a coarse print, manufactured in England, for once and for aye, never to be changed. A felt hat crowned the white head of the old man, and with more courtesy than the Boer usually exhibits, he lifted it from his brow, but replaced it ere he shook hands with Major Frankfort, who offered his palm at once. Two or three heads of round-faced Dutch girls, Vanbloem's elder daughters, peeped in from a door leading to a back room; they vanished with a giggle, and then one, less shy than the rest, came forward and ventured to offer the "tea-water." This was declined with thanks; but unwilling to treat the civilities of these poor people with coldness, Frankfort promised to say "Good night" before he and his friend retired for the night.

They then proceeded to the outspan, and gave orders for the preparation of their repast, while they bathed in the stream, yet warm from the effects of the sun.

The pools under the alders were clear and deep. How delicious it was to cast aside the heavy coat, saturated as it had been with wet; how refreshing to lave the weary limbs in the crystal bath!

Then what ample justice was done to the carbonatje (broiled mutton steaks), and the stewed buck, and the "remove" of quail, to say nothing of the glass of "warm stuff," when the sun went down and the cool breeze came up the river. Verily, our travellers

enjoyed their repose on that green bank with a greater zest than they could have done in a well-appointed foam, after a more luxurious feast in this quiet-going, "very comfortable" England.

It must be owned they had not a very military appearance, albeit they are "armed and accoutred" for "the road." Their jackets of drab duffle, reaching to the hip, were rendered more useful than ornamental by the capacious pockets; their felt hats were of that description long since adopted by the patriarchal Boers of Southern Africa, and of late become fashionable in England under the designation of "Jem Crows" and "wide-awakes;" and the ostrich plume, wound round these, not only shaded their brows from the fervid sun, but attracted the flies from their faces, somewhat blistered by the alternations of heat and wind and rain. Their trowsers of pliable brown leather stoutly resisted the thorns, or rather spikes, of the mimosa bushes; their *veldt scoons* (shoes) were of the same material, but stronger, and fitted the foot as easily as a glove; and their costume was rendered complete by the belt buckled round the waist, from which was slung, besides the flask, a small pouch of buckskin, containing gun-caps, a clasp-knife with numerous blades, and various other articles necessary for the journey,—a pair of long-barrelled pistols completing the equipment when starting for the *trek*. When riding without their waggons, they moved with a change of linen in a small sabretache of tiger-skin, appended to the saddle, while in a haversack was a good store of dried meat, hard-boiled eggs when they were to be had, and biscuit; in short,

sufficient, on a pinch, for a good day's meal.

They rose to pay their adieux to Vanbloem and his family. Frankfort was unarmed, but Ormsby had by chance stuck in his belt his six-barrelled pistol, then a great novelty in that far country. Frankfort remarked this on entering Vanbloem's gateway; but his companion explained that it was not loaded, which was satisfactory, for the Dutch, though kindly disposed towards English settlers, were no great friends to the government, and, alas! there were not wanting men of a bad faction to turn even a trifling action of this nature to bad account.

The glory of the sun had departed, but there was twilight, which makes the summer day of the Cape so much longer and pleasanter than that of the tropics. The door of the great room at Vanbloem's stood wide open, and the coarse, flaring, home-made candles shed their flickering rays on a group assembled to look at the two Englishmen. To the family party were now added three or four Hottentot servant-girls, their woolly locks concealed beneath bright-coloured *douks* (head-kerchiefs). They had a smart air, for they were arrayed in flaunting colours. Scarlet or yellow bodices set off a striped or elaborately-patched petticoat, ample in width and scanty in length, displaying ankles that fine ladies would have coveted and feet proportionally minute. A bevy of children, very merry, very noisy, and very dirty, were chattering together at play, and looking in at an open window, with the strong light falling on their dusky forms, round which, their blankets loosely and gracefully draped, were two Kafir

herdsmen. Their crisp hair, thicker than that of the Hottentots, was elaborately *coiffé*, being stiffened with red clay; round their well-shaped throats were necklaces of beads intermixed with wolves' teeth, and sundry rude ornaments adopted as charms, having been endued with certain magic powers by the witch doctors or rain-makers of the tribe. Their wrists were encircled by brazen bangles, and each carried his snuffbox, a miniature tortoise-shell, with its long ivory spoon appended by a brazen chain.

One of them was in the act of putting a spoonful of the mixture into his mouth, when Ormsby walked up to him, and with great deliberation began examining him with the same curiosity that a naturalist would have evinced on seeing some newly-discovered animal. Both Kafirs returned his survey with a steady gaze.

In strong contrast to these sculptured and dignified-looking beings, rose the noise of chattering among the other occupants of the house and *stoep* (the platform that runs along the front of all Dutch houses). The old patriarch and his wife indeed maintained their usual taciturnity, and sat just within the door, their chairs having been moved there by their son, for the filial deference of the Dutch is remarkable.

At last some of the Hottentots, who had retired to a corner of the stoep, after a due examination of the travellers, began singing in a soprano key; the men coming from the farm-yards and joining them in deeper tones, all in perfect harmony, and some of the voices exceedingly pleasing.

It was an old but popular air, one which had found its way, like an angel's voice, across the waters, into the wilderness. It was a hymn sung to the tune of "Home, sweet Home!"

The sopranos were a little tremulous, to be sure, but true to time and tune, and the bass voices gave solemnity to the chorus.

The associations it called up were strangely contrasted with the scene. A rude dwelling, oddly peopled, standing in the midst of a wild garden, ill-tended, but perfumed by orange-trees, waving their scented boughs in the still air, while beyond, in dreamy profile, rose the boundary of hills with the spacious silent landscape between; but the far mountains, of brown and purple and pale blue, had faded utterly away into the clouds of night.

"Home, sweet Home!" Ormsby listened only to the air. He was not one accustomed to give way to those emotions of the soul which soften its impulses and direct its thoughts to the gentlest and most hallowed ties of earth; it must, indeed be confessed that he was too much inclined to discourage such emotions and to quiz them, as it is called, in others; but his heart, at this distance from the beloved and remembered faces which had shone upon him at home, was disturbed by its reminiscences.

The air was identified with a lost sister, the pet of his boyhood. There was a sudden vision of a long, narrow, day nursery, with many windows looking out upon green uplands and rich waving woods, where the fox-hounds used to meet; of another room, within, where old nurse Hetty used to sit and sing to his consumptive little sister, who died afterwards.

As he leaned against one of the rough pillars supporting a gable of the building, his thoughts wandered back to those early days; vividly he remembered that one on which his little favourite sister had been carried away dead; with what terror had he watched the dark and high-plumed hearse, with its fearful train of black carriages, all drawn by solemn, heavy sable horses, waiting for the small coffin, to bear it through the snow of the churchyard. He remembered it was midwinter; the ground and the trees and the hills and the roofs of the stables were all white with snow; it powdered the harness of the coal-black horses, and the carriages and hearse, as they wended their dreary way down the long avenue of leafless trees, and through the lodge-gates and along the road, till they were lost sight of below the slopes at the boundary of the park.

He remembered hearing his younger brother begin to sing the familiar tune, and nurse Hetty's dismay because she could not silence him, and his mother, in her white dressing-gown, looking into the nursery with eyes streaming with tears.

That air had long been forbidden in his father's house, and he had not heard it for years till now. Never had he been so nearly overcome by tender recollections; he mastered his emotions by a strong effort, and bowed civilly to Mrs Vanbloem's invitation to sit down.

The Kafirs had eyed him with some admiration, but were more attracted by the appearance of Frankfort. The Hottentot girls, having finished their hymn, came in from the stoep and

manifested their unqualified admiration of his wavy chestnut hair, his brilliant eyes, and the gold chain that peeked from the folds of his dress. One gazed first at his glossy locks, then felt her own scanty allowance of frizzled wool; another cried, "good," "pretty," as she walked round him with a mixed expression of surprise and delight, and the youngest of all laughed aloud, exhibiting teeth finer than his own.

The Kafirs, having followed the Hottentot servants into the house, seated themselves on the floor at a respectful distance. Frankfort begged Vanbloem to translate the remarks they were evidently making on himself and his friend. The handsome countenance and elegant figure of Ormsby did not make so strong to impression on them as the more powerful form of Frankfort, who was the taller of the two by some inches. They were, however, neither loud nor demonstrative, but eyeing him from head to foot, they passed their deliberate commendations in their own peculiar manner. "Ma-wo!" had been the first exclamation of the younger and more excitable Kafir, as the tall figure of Frankfort had cast its shadow upon the wall, against which they leaned in indolent fashion, as the travellers walked up the garden-path with Vanbloem—Ma-wo implying astonishment.

The other had taken his observations at first in silence; but now he observed to his companion, in a low musical voice, "Inkosi enkulu!"—"That is a great captain."

"Eurci!" was the reply, when the other had satisfied himself

that his friend's judgment was correct.

Frankfort saw the eyes of both the Kafirs fixed upon him, and returned their glances with such an expression of good-will, that they with one accord held out two pair of hands, uttering the old imperative demand peculiar to Kafirs, "Baseila,"—"Gift."

All savages are beggars, more or less; but the Kafir does not beg, he *demands*.

Frankfort laughed, and took some sticks of tobacco from the vast pockets of his duffle jacket, and would doubtless have been besieged for more, but that the light flashing on the six-barrelled weapon in Ormsby's belt drew the dark and gleaming eyes of the Kafirs upon him, and their exclamations brought the rest of the household round him in a circle.

He drew the pistol from the belt to gratify the surprise and curiosity of Vanbloem, who handed it to his father. The patriarch had the pleasure of exhibiting it to all, and so great was the astonishment and admiration displayed, that Ormsby would have offered it to the farmer, but Frankfort checked the generous intention.

The dissertation between the old man and his son was amusing; the patriarch remarking that where the pistol might *wound six*, the *roer*, the long gun of the Boers, *must* kill all it aimed at. The old man had a hearty contempt for all new-fashioned implements of war, but his son resigned the brilliantly-polished weapon with a sigh, which so touched Frankfort, that he promised to select a single-barrelled pistol from his collection

of small-arms, and send it from the bivouac, as an offering of good-will to the good-natured Boer.

Our sportsmen then took their leave, in spite of the kindly invitation to sit down to the homely but plentiful table with the family of four generations, beginning with the aged grandfather, and ending, for the present, with the grandchild of Vanbloem, junior.

They found the waggons made snug for the night, and the cattle safely fastened to the tressel-booms—poor things! they were liable to molestation from wolves, close as they were to a thriving homestead.

May threw additional billets on the fire as his masters drew near—the other attendants were fast asleep beneath the store-waggon, and Frankfort and Ormsby prepared to luxuriate on the karosses spread within their sleeping-tent, a species of pavilion, affixed to the ponderous vehicle, their dwelling-place in rude weather, lined throughout with baize, furnished with well-stuffed benches, and made complete with sundry pockets, slings, straps, and thick curtains at either end. Ormsby was sound asleep before Frankfort had inspected the preparations for the start at dawn. Having seen to the arrangements for replenishing the fire for warming the coffee, having ascertained that the curtains were closed against the invasion of an unexpected storm, that the arms were secure—the horses safely picqueted, and the oxen safely *reimed* (fastened with thongs of hide), he was just about to tie the last knot of the tent-flap, when he fancied he heard some

one breathing nearer to him than any of the sleeping groups, as Ormsby had thoughtlessly extinguished the light within the tent, and his low and steady breathing proved his insensibility to sight or sound—Frankfort stooped down, and, laying his ear to the ground, distinguished the pressure rather than the sound of a step upon the short turf.

Without rising, he whispered from the tent, "May."

"Does the sir call?" asked the bushman, awakened in a moment, and rolling himself down the mound, on which the store-waggon stood, to the tent.

"Hush!" said Frankfort softly; "some one breathed close by."

May put his hand to his ear, but all was still, with the exception of an occasional sigh from an over-tired ox or a muttered growl from one of the dogs. The ripple of the river tinkled pleasantly some yards off, but not a breath of wind stirred the boughs. The night was heavy, though the stars were coming out, and it was impossible to say what chance of discord existed among the elements.

May pricked up his ears like a little terrier, and Frankfort and he made a reconnoitring tour round the bivouac; but nothing was to be seen. The bushman retired to his mat and Major Frankfort to his tent.

The Hottentots slept sound, the huge oxen uttered their periodical sighs, the bats flitted about the tent, through which the moonlight began to peep, and at intervals the whine of the wolf came up the valley marring the silence, but too far off to

disturb the sleepers and rouse the dogs. Frankfort gave a last glance at the Dutchman's farm. It looked exceedingly picturesque by that mellow light. The whole scene had an air of peace, little in character with the original possessors of so lovely a soil. Ah! there came the jackal's cry again, destroying the illusion, and a responsive laugh followed, like mocking echoes from the gibbering hyena.

Chapter Two.
The Bushman

The little bushman, whom we have introduced as the attendant of our English officers, must be more particularly described ere we advance in a story in which he will frequently make his appearance.

The reader will consider his name—May—rather a misnomer for such a creature.

He is about three feet and a half high; his head would be bald, but for a few bead-like tufts of hair, scattered vaguely about the surface. His eyes are long, black, twinkling, and very merry, but his expression is less cunning than that of the Hottentot physiognomy. His nose! where is it? His mouth is wide, but his white teeth redeem this feature from its ugliness; his skin is of the hue of pale gingerbread.

The countenance, however, is far from unpleasing; his voice is odd, with occasional clicks in pronunciation, which May chooses to introduce, notwithstanding his education. The hands and feet are exquisitely small, and the frame lithe and agile as a monkey's. His costume is copied from his masters; the materials are coarser, but the "wide-awake" hath on him a more jaunty air, the feather a more "knowing" feel, and this is fastened to the hat with a gilt bugle, the gift of some light infantry officer, and much prized

by May, who had managed to coax from the same source an old red jacket, which he carries in the waggon-box, and wears on Sundays when they halt in the wilderness.

May is a capital mimic, takes off various members of the Graham's Town garrison, well-known as oddities; imitates with ludicrous gravity the imposing air of the governor's brother, and elicits peals of laughter from his Hottentot comrades, when, arrayed in Fitje's yellow petticoat, he caricatures the dancing of an affected young lady, whom he has watched through the windows of a ball-room. But I must give you May's origin, or you will wonder how this monkey came to see the world.

Behold a chain of mountains rising abruptly and with a bold sweep across a most lovely wilderness. From the colonial border these mountains look exquisitely, but faintly blue, in the haze which hangs about them. In that busy colony how faint an idea can its inhabitants have of the wild beings that dwell amid those distant solitary fastnesses. In the shelving rocks, in bowery nooks scented with the rich perfume of plants, which in our land a queen would prize in her conservatory, beside the clearest running waters, the little bushmen find their rest among the coneys, the bright-eyed lizards, and the treacherous snakes; brilliant birds flit round them as they lie at ease beneath umbrageous boughs or in cool shady caves, shrouded by luxurious creepers; from the flexile branches of the banian-trees the monkeys peer down upon what some would consider almost their fellow-apes, and on the plains thousands of

noble animals in herds are enjoying the gifts of nature, "feeding in large pastures." An army of elephants is moving through the bush, on a distant mountain; you cannot see them, but you can hear the loud trumpet-cry of their leader giving warning of some intruder's stealthy advance. In the valley the lions are ranged like soldiers awaiting the return of their scouts, and beyond, far beyond, just where the sunset reveals a spot which has lain in the shade all day, behold the advance-guard of the stately giraffe —two of them: the one with neck outstretched and eye and ear keenly intent, now upon the plain, now on the mountain-side, while his companion crops the fresh green herbage. A cloud crosses the sun, and the giraffes are seen no more; their momentary appearance has drawn the bushmen-hunters from their haunts, to gaze upon the shy and cautious animals.

There go the gnoos, tossing their manes, leaping, plunging, half in play, yet dangerous even to their fellows; see how they wheel round, advancing with eyes glaring through their shaggy forelocks. A herd of zebras are comparatively tune to these eager, restless things; but in greater contrast to the gnoos are the heavy eilands, fat and sleek, fit mark for the hunter's poisoned arrows. There are ostriches, too, stalking about; and nearer the bushmen's haunts, but wary of her neighbours, the pauw, or the wild turkey of South Africa, has her brood; far up in the air, between the clear sky and the fertile plain, rises the secretary-bird, with the doomed snake in his beak. The serpent writhes in its new element, swinging to and fro; up! up! above the rocks and

sea, the bird swoops higher and higher to drop its prey upon a table-rock; its back is broken. Lie there, powerless, terrible, and fatal, and doomed wretch, till your tormentor returns and finishes the deed begun!

Sunset. The plain is in a glow, except where the mountains cast a shade, and this will deepen, as the shield of gold dips behind them. The little honey-bird, which has been wandering in search of travellers to coax them to the sweet nest it dare not itself invade, goes back disappointed to await the morning splendour; the sprews, on wings of green and yellow, go glancing past to their embowered rest; the homely brown-looking canaries are silent in the golden-blossomed mimosa, the English swallow trills her way back to the mission-house on the other side the mountain range; the few goats possessed by the poor bushmen return bleating to their rude fold, and ere long the wild beasts of the forest and the valley will come boldly forth; the tiger from the dense bush in which he has lain stealthily all day; then the jackal's cry will startle the children lying on their miserable sheepskins, and the lion's roar will answer it, rousing the echoes and terrifying the horses and cattle of those who travel in the wilderness.

Such a scene as this presented itself one glowing evening many years ago to the eye of a wayfarer, whose appearance with his pack-horse and saddle-bags, and the somewhat lame condition of the animal he led, gave proof that he had journeyed far and fast. With home almost in sight, he had outspanned his waggon

in the valley, and ascending the hills had found that darkness would overshadow his path ere the object he had in view could be accomplished, if indeed it could be accomplished at all. A mist was rising in white wreaths over the plain, till the vapour became concentrated in a hazy shroud floating between the traveller and his people below; his beasts were weary, and would probably fell if he attempted the descent while yet it was light; besides, as I have said, he had an object in view; so he sat down among the shrubs and rocks, through which he had scrambled with some difficulty and much fatigue, and began to ponder on what steps he must take to insure a safe bivouac for himself and his jaded cattle during the night.

He was a good man, and would have had no personal fear even if he had not been acquainted with the nature of the locality and its inhabitants; but he had no mind to have his horses torn limb from limb by wild beasts, and pitying them as their ears moved nervously backwards and forwards, their eyeballs starting from their sockets, he regretted that he had not delayed his expedition till the following morning.

There was no help for it now; the sinking horses looked piteously at him, and he longed to take their saddles from their galled backs, but he needed to look about him ere yet there was daylight: he regretted he had not brought his waggon-driver with him, but always thinking of others, he had overlooked his own necessities. He grieved for his horses, not for himself.

James Trail was the occupant of the mission-house, whither

our English swallow had trilled her contented way. He was a childless widower, and, bent on conquering his sorrow for his lost Mary by earnest attention to his duties "in that path of life in which it had pleased God to call him," he had made way for a married friend at his former station, and with a few native herds, a faithful Hottentot servant, and a distant relative, a trader in skins, ivory, horns, etc, had established a little location in the lovely but uncivilised part of the country through which he hoped to preach glad tidings of the Gospel; but the untameable race of bushmen, whom he longed to attach to himself, looked at him from their coverts like startled apes, and yelled, and shrieked, and chattered, and once shot at him with their poisoned arrows, happily without effect.

A trifling circumstance brought these mountain sprites to better terms. One of a hunting-party was severely bitten by a puff-adder while lingering behind his comrades, and Trail had discovered him, helpless and terrified, and "like to die," by the side of a stream, to which he had crawled with the vain wish to ford it. The good Samaritan placed his neighbour on his own beast, after applying a remedy he always carried with him to the deadly wound; he took him home, and would have kept him, but the wild creature had been a rover all his life, and longed for liberty; as soon as he recovered, he fled to the hills to join his fellows. At times he would return, accompanied by a mate of his own tribe. One day he brought his children with him; another, two or three wild hunters, clothed in fitting skins, sat

down in front of the mission-house, but would not draw near. They waited for their share of beads, their meal of mutton and bread and milk, and then scurried off to their nooks to send down others. Wretched creatures! these came in the dead of night as thieves, and Trail, wearied with their depredations, and grieved at his want of success among them, made such a compact as he could, by means of signs, assisted by his knowledge of the Dutch and Kafir languages. On condition that they would permit his flocks to feed in peace, he agreed to furnish them with game, Indian corn, and beads. The bushmen, knowing that if after this compact the pastor's sheep were lessened in number, mutilated, or poisoned, their messengers would be sent empty-handed from his door, each kept a constant watch upon his neighbour, and this sort of truce had been kept between Trail and the pigmies up to the time when the former was making arrangements for a journey on business into the colony.

For a week previously to leaving his house to the trader's care with two herds only, all, however, well provided with arms, the missionary had seen and heard nothing of his wild neighbours, and learning from his cousin, who had occasion to follow him, that they had not come down from the mountains since his departure, our good minister resolved, when on his homeward route, on penetrating the fastnesses which he had at first visited with pious intentions, but from which he had been driven, in such a fashion as would have made most men hesitate ere they set foot on such dangerous ground again: he felt it was his duty to seek

these creatures.

He would have made a fine picture, seated on a grey rock which jutted out in an angle from the great mountain, which from base to summit, was seven thousand feet above the level of the ocean. The plain lay some hundred feet below, but the haze obscured it from the view. Trail felt very solitary between the sky and this shroud-like vapour; he looked at the poor brutes still panting beside him, and deliberated, as he took a survey from the rock on which he was perched.

There was not a sound now; even that restless caller, the whip-poor-will, was quiet. On each side of the traveller was a comparatively clear space, behind was a scarp of rock overhung with trees. Securing his horses, he relieved them of their saddles and bridles, laid his saddle-bags against the rock, and having seen that the animals had length of *reim* (thong of leather) to give them room to roll at full length upon the moist grass, he determined to climb higher up in search of the little colony, whose condition he had long deplored.

Trail was a man of about three-and-thirty; the features were homely, but the expression of the whole was highly benevolent; the frame was thin, and could not be called graceful, but it was neither ungainly nor vulgarly awkward; the eyes were large, and when lifted up, shone with a pleasant, not a sparkling, light; the hair was thinning on the temples, and the brow alone showed that by nature he was a man of a clear and fair complexion. The rest was bronzed by climate.

There he stood alone, alone in that magnificent solitude; the purpose for which he had come faded for a time from his memory, a gust of wind swept the mist away from the side of the hill to which he turned, and a part of the valley "lay smiling before him;" a stream of sunlight shot athwart it, and he saw the wild tenants of the wilderness, disporting and luxuriating as I have described; another gust opened the landscape wide, and as Trail's eye swept the scene, his heart was lifted up in admiration. He turned the angle of the hill again, but the plain was hidden from his sight on that side, he could see nothing of his people and the bivouac below. He paused under a tall yellow-wood tree, and sat down again, his heart melting at the thought of what? his loneliness! His head rested on his hands, and he went back, back to his wedding-day at home in England, in the old church. There he stood, hand in hand with Mary (his old playmate) at the altar: by her side his sister cried bitterly, behind him her mother sobbed aloud, and the father's silence was most eloquent, for the lips were firmly closed, and the eyes blinded with tears. Younger children gazed sorrowfully on—and then—there came the last parting. A ship in full sail, James and Mary Trail leaning over the side of the vessel while she is lying-to at Spithead; a boat below, from which many last gifts are handed up. A little sister weeping heavily, the mother with her face buried in her handkerchief, a young brother hastily wiping his eyes with the back of his hand, an elder sister trying to sooth the father, who "would not be comforted."

They are all again before him: the boat pushes off; the old man stretches forth his hands, blessing the voyagers; the sister waves her handkerchief, the brother his hat, the mother tries to rise, but cannot, as the boat is swayed between the white-crested waves, which soon part the little vessel from the gallant ship; the yards are swung round, the boat has faded to a speck, the bows dash through the sparkling waters, churches, forts, and towers of the old town Mary Trail has never left before, glide away from her aching sight, and she lies down like a child to cry in her bridegroom's sheltering arms.

And lo! there is a grave, the first grave hollowed in the mound on which a little chapel stands between two hills in Africa. There are others near it now, and a deep-toned bell sends out its hallowed call across the river, and up the kloof and on Sabbath days there is a gathering from many homesteads; but Trail has left this peopled spot for another. He visits it sometimes, and sits by Mary's grave, but he can no longer bear it as a dwelling: nevertheless, he would have stayed there had there not been one at hand to take charge of the district.

He had not long left this spot when I introduced him to the reader at the early part of this chapter. He rises, but not without effort: his steeds are quietly enjoying the crisp herbage, and above, the baboons are looking out from their hiding-places, and shouting aloud. Trail began to fancy his "little people" had caught sight of him, and were calling to him from the rocks overhanging the platform on which he stood.

He determined on seeking at once for some sheltered corner, where he could kindle a fire, picquet his horses near him, and eat such provision as he had brought, deferring his further search till dawn. The non-appearance of a single living being puzzled him, the more when he discovered the remains of a fire, over which the wind had passed, scattering the ashes. It was evident that a meal of locusts had been here cooked and eaten, probably some three or four days before. Some had been rejected, and some were mingled with corn lying amid the ashes. A stray arrow or two was also to be found, and a bow, unstrung, rested against a stone. Whilst examining these evidences of human existence, something rose heavily from a stunted bush: a huge asphogel, scared at last from its lethargy, flapped its wings, rose slowly over Trail's head, and floated down the mountain-side; another and another followed, and our missionary felt assured that, dead or dying, some members of the barbarian community were not far off. He discovered a fearful group at last. It would be a sad task to describe the scene as it was depicted by him to one who related the circumstances to me. It was probable that some part of the community had been absent on a hunting expedition when the fatality occurred, which had destroyed three aged bushmen, four or five women, old and young, all inconceivably hideous in death, and several children. One poor baby lay across its miserable mother's bosom, apparently the victim of a snake, for the creature lay coiled up beside the dead body, and a wretched little object had been mangled by vultures at the entrance to the

grot or cave into which the party had apparently crawled to suffer and die together.

Trail had heard of whole families of bushmen dying from a surfeit of a hearty meal of locusts,—from poisonous roots being mingled in their cookery with the larvae of ants,—and of their sometimes falling victims to the deadly enmity of some adverse tribes; but he saw it would be dangerous as well as useless to penetrate the charnel-house further; indeed he had taken as sharp a survey of the interior as the light falling through a chasm would allow, and he shrunk from ascertaining whether an inner cave existed.

Struck with horror, he had made up his mind to move some distance down the mountain in spite of the coming darkness, when a feeble moan drew his attention to a cleft in the rock, just at the entrance or mouth of the cavern.

He knew it was the moan of a living being, and began to examine the corner whence it proceeded, but all was in darkness; stretching out his arm, he groped among the stones, and at length touched a clammy hand, the fingers of which closed round his with a cold convulsive grasp. He drew the creature forth, and found it to be a little bushboy, probably five or six years old.

It was our friend May. He derived his name from the month in which he had been brought into the Christian world, as Trail said. Truly the good man's laying his hand upon the little creature was a wondrous and providential circumstance. Poor, degraded, barbarous imp, thou wert a frightful object; but the good minister

looked on thee with the deep anxiety and affection that those only feel who love their neighbour in the true spirit of a Christian, and helpless and hideous as thou wert, doubtless there were angels singing triumphantly through the golden aisles of heaven as a herald on bright wings came among them with glad tidings of a soul rescued from darkness. It was thine, poor May, lying lonely and desolate, and apparently forgotten, in that fearful darkness; the day-star from on high was ready to shed its light upon thee, and there was great rejoicing among the ministering spirits of the upper world!

We cannot trace the melancholy facts of the deaths alluded to to their sources; nine or ten unredeemed souls had passed the outer threshold of this world, to that mysterious region whence none return with a record; but whether the cause arose from accidental poison, or by the agency of vicious neighbours, Trail never ascertained. How the imp May had escaped appeared a miracle; mayhap he had been absent gathering honey or digging for roots; the goats had disappeared, if there had ever been any; there was sheep wool on the bushes, but there were no sheep, and the missionary concluded that the hunters had probably returned after the calamity had befallen their fellows, and, in superstitious dread of the locality, had hurried to change their quarters without any closer examination of the spot than they had been induced to make from curiosity or rapacity.

Speculation was fruitless, useless; May was rescued, and Trail, carrying him to the bushes where the horses were picqueted, gave

him such nourishment as he could. It revived him, and as soon as he could manage it, our traveller descended with his steed and the child to a convenient spot, where he lit a fire at the opening of a natural alcove. Here he again fastened his horse to a tree, happy in having found a spot watered by a rill, which trickled down a channel among the rocks, and spreading his *veldt combass*, a large rug made of dressed sheepskins, upon the sward, he laid his saddle beneath his head, and not far from him he did not disdain to place the weary and frightened being, whose sleep was soon as peaceful as a Christian child's within "a fair ancestral hall."

The night passed without further adventure, for Trail's sleep was light, and he kept up the fire at his feet, so as to prevent the intrusion of the wild beasts of the neighbourhood. At dawn he found his *protégé* still sleeping; and by the time he had made further but unavailing search for some living evidence of the sad spectacle he had beheld, the mist had cleared away from the hill-side, and he descended with his child of the wilderness to the bivouac, where he found his people in some alarm and uncertainty about his safety.

To untravelled readers the idea of leaving the dead unburied among the rocks and caves must appear rather unseemly, to say the least of it; but, in the first place, Trail's party could not have accomplished such an undertaking by themselves; and, in the next, leaving the waggon and its contents together with the oxen, would have been madness. Add to this, the chances were that a horde of bushmen might return to the spot unexpectedly,

and there was dearly no alternative but to make the best of the early part of the day; for, although the mission-house was only nine miles distant, the way lay between narrow and rocky passes, wound up the steepest acclivities, and was at times difficult to penetrate, owing to intervening clumps of bush, connected by a tangled growth of underwood.

So the child was called May, in memory of the period of his rescue. The bewildered creature's language was utterly untranslatable; but, with the keenness of perception so peculiar to his race, he soon learned to express his wants in a curiously-mixed dialect of Hottentot, Dutch, Kafir, and English, and this part of his education accomplished, Mr Trail sent him to his friends at the larger mission station to be trained into something like civilisation by good Mrs Cheslyn.

And now it may be told, in a few words, how May progressed in his education; how he learned to sing hymns in a truer voice than the Kafir children, whose notes, however, far surpassed his in melody; how he loved to dance in the moonlight with the Fingo herds, when Mrs Cheslyn thought they were all fast asleep in an old school-house, till their unearthly chant brought Mr Cheslyn out among them; how when the truant was punished, he would escape, stay away for days, and come back afterwards with ostrich eggs; how he would sulk sometimes with his lips out, and his eyes almost hid by the low frowning brow, run away again, and again return; how he stood in awe of no one but Mr Trail; how, if he was saucy to Ellen Cheslyn, it was for her sake

he usually returned from his wanderings; how he would watch her in the doorway, looking up the road on those days when Mr Trail was expected; then as he caught a glimpse of horse and rider, winding down the hill, he would ask her, in Kafir, "Uza kangala nina? uza lunguzela nina apa?"—"What are you looking for? What are you peeping there for?" Then, with a low chuckle, he would spring over the *stoep*, topple head over heels down the garden walk and through the gateway, and, with distorted limbs and visage, hasten to give his friend and benefactor the "Good morrow," pointing back to the house to call attention to the watchful Ellen, and then plunging into the thicket, laughing and singing, and as merry as a cricket.

May's life had been comparatively free from care. True, an outburst from the savage tribes of Kafirs, to whom Mr Trail had been a gentle and a kind teacher, laid his station, Westleyfield, even with the dust. It was burnt to ashes, and all his little property with it, but his wife, Ellen, escaped with her husband and infant to a Dutch lazar, or encampment. May accompanied them, sometimes as nurse, sometimes as caterer, with a knob-kierrie (club), knocking down a buck or a bird occasionally, and cooking the same as opportunity offered. So they passed on afterwards to the colony; but May, lingering behind one day, looking for corn, which he believed to be buried in what appeared to him a deserted *kraal*, or hamlet of huts, was pounced upon by the enemy, who would have despatched him at once, but that one, more humane than the rest, listened to the poor bushman's

appeal, that he might be permitted to say his prayer. After a brutal laugh from the wretches, who boasted that "God Almighty was dead in their land," they consented.

This circumstance saved his life. As May cast himself prostrate on the earth, a little party of *roed batjes* (red jackets), commanded by a sergeant, who happened to be reconnoitring in the neighbourhood, and who had crept along the banks of a river, suddenly reared their heads, above the cliffs of the Keiskama. There lay poor May, praying aloud, while the savages danced round him, declaiming on the greatness of their leader, on his bravery, his prowess, flight or ten Kafirs leaped and howled about the helpless bushman, flourishing their knob-kierries, shaking their assegais, and varying their war-cries with imitations of the wild beasts, to which they compared their leader: "Behold," said one, "he is a tiger!" and there was a chorus, accompanied by the vicious whispering growl of the stealthy brute: "he is terrible as a lion, keen-eyed as an eagle, wise as the serpent." Then the chorus-master roared and shook his assegai, while the rest made their spears shiver like the wings of passing birds, and the hiss of the serpent was followed by the wild shout of attack upon their victim.

"The *roed batjes*!" cried the chorus-master, and the soldiers sprung into the midst of the enemy with a hearty English cheer: the Kafirs gave a yell of fear and disappointment, and May jumped up to find himself surrounded by men he felt to be his friends, though they were almost as strange to him, as regarded

their appearance, as the foes from whom he was rescued. He gave an answering yell of triumph in imitation of the chorus-master, as he saw the latter, with his kaross flying in the wind, stop, mount on a stone, and fling back an assegai, which quivered through the air, and fell within a few inches of the sergeant's feet, who drew it up from the ground as a trophy.

"Well," said the sergeant, turning May round and round, "you are a nice little article, ain't you, to make such a confounded row about: and where the – did you spring from, you small chap?"

"From Westleyfield, sir," answered the bushboy, in a very tolerable English accent.

To be brief, he related his story, and followed the soldiers. An old officer of the corps placed him in the service of his family; and, on their departure for England, May was handed over to some one else, and from his last master had been recommended to our travellers, Frankfort and Ormsby, as an intelligent guide and trusty servant.

He had never rested after his rescue till he traced out the Trails, who had terrible misgivings about him; but they could not prevail upon him to return to Westleyfield; their settled mode of life was by no means so agreeable to him as the one he led with the troops. He could seldom be coaxed from head-quarters, the band acted upon him as a spell; but he grew attached to Captain Frankfort before he became his servant, and hung about the stable with the groom, who was happy to find his recommendation of May confirmed in a way that satisfied the

sportsman. The English groom remained at head-quarters while trusty May went up the country with Frankfort and Ormsby.

He had married in the colony, and made a bridal tour into the Winterberg mountains with his wife—a Christian Hottentot gin with a dash of white blood on her father's side, of which she was justly proud!—to introduce her to his friends the Trails, and repeated his visit on the birth of his child, when Mr Trail christened the creature Ellen, after his wife. They did not return to Westleyfield; that station was handed over to the charge of an older missionary, whose tall sons made almost a garrison of defence among themselves.

May returned to the colony with Fitje and his child. Fitje, like himself, had been brought up among people from whom she had imbibed habits of civilisation,—would I could say, industry! but this would be contrary to the nature of the Hottentot, however utter idleness and vice may be overcome by good example: but they worked when they were penniless, and, in spite of indolent propensities, Fitje made a good and tender mother, and a most kind wife. She loved gossiping in the sunshine, she could not resist a dance to the music of the drums and fifes; but she did not smoke a pipe, she was an excellent washerwoman, and she was a regular attendant at the Dutch chapel. She had a Hottentot taste for smart *douks*, but she never tasted Cape brandy; and when May fell under Captain Frankfort's care, she was so proud, that she would not associate with her earlier acquaintance. She and May had a little Kafir hut to themselves near Frankfort's garden,

and the family of the bushman, his merry-hearted wife and good-tempered baby, presented a picture as agreeable to look at, in a moral point of view, as that of any independent gentleman on earth.

I think we left him retiring to his mat under the store-waggon of the sportsmen. Fitje and the child slept beside him soundly, albeit at midnight the moon's rays slanted right across their swarthy faces.

Morning in Kafirland! The air is filled with delicious perfume. The toman is spinning about in the hazy atmosphere, the jackals are quietly wending their way across the plains, looking back at times, in brute wonderment, perhaps at that great sun; the spider has spread her silver tissue across the pathways to ensnare the unwary; and

> "Jocund Day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain's top."

What a carpet of green and gold, variegated with the scarlet "monkey-foot," the lonely, trembling, drooping gladiola, the agapanthus, the geranium, brilliantly red as the lip of fabled Venus; the wreath of jessamine and myrtle, and laurel boughs, in which the birds are awaking to a world lovely to them!

Ah, what exquisite things hath Nature in her bounty spread before the heathen! They cannot be counted, they dazzle the eye and set the heart bounding in the plenitude of a pure, inartificial

enjoyment.

The Dutchman's settlement was beginning to teem with signs of life. The gates of the kraals were thrown open, and sheep and goats and oxen were blending their voices with the incessant, uneasy chorus of the dogs, while the herds divided the multitude to lead them to their separate pastures.

The waggons of our party were already prepared to start; the hot coffee had been thankfully enjoyed, the Kafirs paid in tobacco for their offering of milk in tightly-woven baskets; and the Boer had come down to say "thank you," for the pistol he had duly received.

Frankfort imparted to the Dutchman his suspicions, that some one had been prowling about the bivouac in the early part of the night, but he said it was unlikely; it was probably some cunning jackal, or a herdsman's dog. Frankfort could not help thinking it was some human being, but Van Bloem said no. May was already in advance of the cavalcade, turning back now and then, with an impatient gesture at old Piet, the chief waggon-driver, and Fitje, with her baby on her lap, and gaily attired, is seated on the waggon-box of the largest vehicle, *en grande dame*, being the only lady of the party. Happy Fitje! no rivals—the men of all degrees turn to thee with deference, thankful for the aid of thy womanly skill, and cheered by thy merry laugh, albeit thy mouth be none of the smallest.

"*Trek*!"[1] —what a shout!—"*Trek*!" the slash of the long whip

[1] There can be no literal translation of this word of command, but the oxen

echoes many times, backwards, forwards, above, around, behind the mountains and through the *kloofs* (ravines). May is waiting at the turn of the winding road, half a mile off. The train of men and waggons, horses and dogs, moves slowly on, and the sportsmen ride gently ahead. But May keeps steadily in advance of all, and the dogs raise a cry of joy as they catch sight of him when he pauses at the angle of a hill, and stands there a minute or two, whistling as gleefully as though he were "monarch of all he surveyed."

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understand it well,—to them it means "advance," "on."

Chapter Three.
The Shipwreck

We must now turn from the inland valley, with its homestead, its cornfields, and flocks, to a very different scene,—a scene at sea.

On the day when our friends Frankfort and Ormsby were introduced to my reader with the tempest warring round them, as they stood shelterless with May upon the open plain, a solitary ship neared the south-eastern coast of the great continent of Africa. The hurricane blew there with frenzied violence; the fiends of the storm were howling aloft among the shrouds, the canvass cracked and rattled till it split into ribbons, and was whirled away to the winds; the rudder had been torn from its place, the masts groaned and shrieked, the waters frothed up in fountains of spray, and at intervals the heavy surges swept the decks like clouds, enveloping the vessel, and bearing it down with a force it could ill resist.

The sailors were hanging about the ship, but there were few on deck, and none in the shrouds, for there they could not keep their footing.

There were troops on board; the dull roll of the drum made itself audible at times, when there was a lull, and volleys of musketry mingled their signals of distress with the screams

of affrighted women and children,—and, alas! alas!—with the oaths of terrible men,—for it was a convict-ship.

There were but momentary glimpses of the shore as the lightning flashes rent in twain the dark masses of vapour hanging about the gloomy rock-bound coast. The captain could only guess where he was, for the vessel had been driving all the night, and the character of the cliffs was his only guide now. He saw there was no help for them if the ship continued to lie with her head to the shore, and he believed that a sand-bank at the yawning mouth of a river would engulph them, unless the hand of Providence cast them to the westward of this, where, as he supposed, the sands sloped from the cliffs, on the summit of which stood a small fortified barrack, occupied by a slender garrison of British troops, who would render such assistance as their means permitted in saving the lives of such as might be fortunate enough to be cast adrift upon the coast, or be enabled to reach it by rafts, or in the launch.

The convicts had all been freed from their shackles in the early part of the night—as soon, in fact, as the desperate situation of the ship was ascertained; but they were kept between decks till some plan of possible relief could be devised. Some sat moodily in the corners of the ship, awaiting the day, in sullen, gloomy despondency. Some blasphemed; some laughed in bitterness of heart, exulting in the idea, that man's vengeance had been set at nought by a stronger power;—whether for good or evil, they did not consider. Some jeered at the soldiers, who bore the jeers

with unswerving spirit; and some of the women, God help them! jeered the loudest! One, indeed,—who had deeply considered her position, and repented,—prayed aloud, and some drew round her to listen, but these were few; others cursed their doom. One soldier's wife, a young creature with an infant in her arms, leaned against a riven mast, crying bitterly, while her husband tried in vain to comfort her. Immovable as images were most of those iron soldiers, except as they answered to the voice of command; true, even in the jaws of death, to their country and their profession, they heard the blasphemy and the jeers and the ribaldry of the wretched beings they guarded, without evincing the slightest emotion. Between the volleys of musketry, a heavy gun occasionally boomed out its signal of distress, but it was only echoed back from the gaping rocks of the dangerous coast; again the small-arms awakened no answer.

Silence,—a voice of command from the poop, and all hands are called to lower the launch. The ship had struck several times against the sand, shivering, as though terrified at being so assailed. The gangways were guarded, and the convicts not permitted to pass. Few, indeed, attempted it, though all had been unmanacled; but discipline, in hours of difficulty and danger, is generally more than a match for strength.

The launch was lowered with a will, by those who would have no right to enter it. It was appropriated, of course, to the women and children, and those who were to have the charge of it were appointed by lot.

There was no confusion; those who drew planks turned calmly away, and went to other duties, while the guardians of the launch marshalled its passengers in funeral order, and they were cautiously lowered into it.

There were two officers in command of the convict guard; the elder was married; his wife looked quite a child, she was barely eighteen. Melancholy it was to see her clinging to her husband, and begging to be left with him on that deck, which began already to open its seams, and show the water boiling below. She threw herself on her knees at last, and implored him to let her die there with him.

"Marmaduke, my love, my husband, do not send me from you;" and, turning to the captain, who gently implored her, for the sake of her unborn infant, to endeavour to save herself, she replied, in a voice of indescribable calmness, "Sir, those whom God has joined, let no man put asunder; I will not leave my husband."

Then a boy midshipman came forward, and begged the officer to take *his* place in the launch, but Captain Dorian would not leave his men; and now everything was prepared to cut away the boat from the ship, and Mrs Dorian stood firmly by her husband.

I have alluded to the knowledge, such as it was, that the captain had of the coast they had been nearing for so considerable a time. He was not mistaken in his conjectures that they were within gun-range of a part of the shore guarded by a garrison of British soldiers.

See a signal!—the clouds have been lifted by the merciful hand of Providence; and, though the answering gun from the tower of the little fort cannot be heard, in consequence of the wind setting in-shore, and the elements outvying each other in noise at sea, the flash is distinctly visible. Captain Dorian persuades the poor young creature that there is help close at hand; appeals to her in the character of a soldier, who expects his wife to assist him in setting an example of firmness; points out to her the selfishness of her wish to remain thus unmanning him in his military duties; and, passive, stupified, at last, she suffers him to carry her to the ship's side, and she takes her place in the launch.

Dorian looked at her as she lifted her eyes in a wild way to him. She stretched out her hands, as if imploring him to call her back. A white-crested wave sweeps over her, and throws her down; she tries to rise; she sees her husband with clasped hands praying for her; she waves hers in reply, and Dorian is called away on duty.

He speaks coolly and decidedly; he gives the necessary orders to an old sergeant, but is stopped by the screams of the unhappy women on the deck, who are hoping that the launch may come back for them. A strong rope had been affixed to the ship, and it had been decided that this, being also connected with the launch, should be fastened ashore by any means that the will of Providence might offer. The rope was strong, but the rottenness of the ship's timbers was proved in a sudden and appalling manner. The poor soldiers had congregated in that part of the vessel to which the rope had been made last. I have already said

that the seams of the deck had opened, leaving here and there a large space; still the captain, officers, and crew were in hopes that she would hold together till she was driven on the sands, and by that time they anticipated further help by means of the launch, the rope, and perhaps some surf-boats, if the detachment possessed any, as was probable, from the garrison being a dépôt for stores brought thither by coasters.

An awful crash took place; the great ship parted, and the poor anxious watchers of the launch were precipitated into the foaming ocean.

The miserable convicts rushed upon what remained of the deck. They shouted, they sang, they chattered, they uttered ribald jests; they climbed the rigging, and swung aloft. It gave way under their feet. Some seemed to revel in the freedom of the unchained air; they clustered along the yards like bees. Now the ship's bows are drawn into the surge; now the shattered poop sinks beneath the waves; now the sea overwhelms the decks, sweeping living aid inanimate things in its vortex; and now, oh God! the great beams gape and yawn and part asunder, and see the wretches are jammed in between; a mast is shivered, a block falls, and strikes an old man down; his eyes burst from their sockets, his head is bruised and battered, his limbs quiver, and his fingers are convulsed. The deck opens again; the bounding: sea bursts up, and draws into its relentless jaws more than one victim!

The ship was fairly breaking up. Some rushed to the

forecastle, some looked despairingly from the poop—Between the fore and after part there was soon an impassable gulf.

At the scream, which drew the attention of Dorian and his sergeant from the arrangements they were making, the former rushed to the poop. He saw the brave fellows who had been swept off struggling in the waters, trying to regain the shattered vessel. They perished every one of them! At any other time he would have been stunned by the sight, but his eyes are strained beyond it; fixed in an aching gaze upon the launch, he can distinguish no one in her now; her passengers seem all huddled together: he turns round on hearing the mast crashing over the ship's side; he is shocked at the sight of the mutilated old man. Again he turns; his eyes seek the rocks, above which he has seen the flash of the signal-gun; he fancies he hears the echoes rolling along the cliffs; he distinguishes another momentary light; the launch is hidden between two watery mountains, but she rises; he would give worlds to use a spy-glass, but it is impossible; but he needs it not; he sees the launch again with terrible distinctness. She has turned over, she goes down! He sees no more; many of his gallant soldiers have perished in the boiling element beneath him, and he springs forward in his despair to join his flair and child-like wife.

They were found afterwards cast ashore, strange to say, not far from each other; and the captain of the detachment, as commandant of the fortress, read the funeral service over them with a faltering voice; they sleep together in a grove of oaks. The spot was chosen because the trees that flourished there reminded

passers-by of England.

Signals were now distinctly heard from the heights, and soldiers were gathered on the cliffs watching the ill-starred convict-ship. Oh, to see the arms of the maddened wretches stretched towards the shore! Some, like Captain Dorian, cast themselves in a frenzy upon the angry waters; some strive to lash themselves to spars; another boat is lowered, with provisions hastily thrown into it; three or four bold spirits tempt the surges in the fragile bark, and it is swept towards the river's mouth, is whirled round in the sparkling eddies, and disappears.

It is of one of these "bold spirits" I have to speak.

I have said that the convicts were relieved from their fetters as soon as the vessel became unmanageable.

Sternly awaiting his fate in a dark corner of the labouring and bunting ship, sat a man of some eight-and-twenty years of age; his arms were clasped round a gun, and thus he steadied himself as well as he could.

Strangely indifferent he seemed to the howling of the winds, the rattling of the cordage, the falling of spars, the crash of timbers, and the imprecations of his fellow-convicts amid the scream of frightened women. At times he sneered at the frantic gestures of a soldier's wife, who was sitting on the deck, with a baby on her lap, rocking herself to and fro and bemoaning her hard fate, and that of her family, most bitterly, at the same time directing her husband and children in certain preparations for leaving the ship, if they should be so fortunate as to succeed

in doing so. Her advice and admonitions were interlarded with various expressions of terror, sorrow, affection, and anxiety.

"Oh, Micky O'Toole! Och, wirasthrue, my darlint; sure when we played at the same door-step as childer, I didn't think we'd come to this. Och, Larry, my child, the mother that owns you is breaking her heart. Alice, say your prayers, fast—say them fast, allannan; true for ye, my darlints, this day we'll be in glory; pray up, Ally, pray up, Larry, the saints be wid us. Micky O'Toole, what did you do wid the little bundle of cloth I put up to go ashore wid? Oh, the vanity of me; sure didn't the priest tell me I'd be punished for setting myself up wid a sunshade (parasol), when you were made a corpular. Ochon a rhee, my heart is broke!

"They'll be missing us at the harvest, Micky; they'll be dancing widout us, and we drowned—drowned. Oh, Micky!" A wailing cry from the baby made its mother weep more bitterly, but still she occasionally recalled her scattered wits to console her children.

Not far from Lee, the convict, was stretched, in a listless attitude, a young man, who seemed little more than twenty years of age. He also was one of the condemned; but no one could have recognised him as a criminal by his appearance, which was exceedingly prepossessing. His thoughts were apparently wandering; for though his countenance expressed awe, there was resignation also. He was looking for a better life than the career mapped out before him as a felon. In the great crisis taking place, there was hope for him somewhere. The wretched welcome any

change. He awaited it passively.

But his heart was touched at sight of a penitent creature, who bewailed her past errors in an agony of self-reproach, as she uttered the names of father, mother, brothers, and sisters; at times exclaiming, "Oh Jamie, Jamie, ye'll be sorry when ye hear of poor Jessie's end."

"Mother, mother!" was the last appeal of the unhappy young woman, as she was washed away by the booming waves through a gap in the wreck.

But Lee saw not this; he was smiling at the scene between Mrs O'Toole and her family.

Ere long he had unlashed the boat, assisted in throwing in provisions, and, casting himself into the frail vessel with two other comrades, committed himself to what he called chance.

At length the muskets ceased their roll, the drum its sullen round. The ship had struggled bravely; the fore and after parts sometimes jamming each other, and then parting. Both were now engulphed. The death-cry rose above the roar of the foam, and the noise of falling spars and blocks; and sea-chests, ship furniture, all that had been carefully gathered together by the hand of man, were cast into the ocean.

Now a man, lifted on the crest of a wave, saw his wife, and struggled to reach her; but she was swept past him with her eyes glaring madly. Now a woman, with features all convulsed, snatched up some passing child, and cast it from her when she found it was not her own. Now the prow neared the shore, and

a young officer sprang from the bowsprit into the sea; dizzy with the leap, he closed his eyes—and opened them—oh, blessed hour!—in a tent pitched on the cliff for the reception of those cast on the strand.

The detachment of English soldiers had assembled on the cliff at the first signal of distress fired from the convict-ship. They had waited there from midnight until dawn, knowing by the nearer sound of the guns and small-arms that she must be driving towards the shore; but they could give no aid; they could only abide the issue patiently, and meanwhile make such preparations as might possibly be useful.

The barrack they occupied was situated on the western bank of a river, the entrance to which, in the present agitated state of the open ocean, formed almost a Maelstrom. As day dawned, and the convict-ship was seen driven in-shore, it was evident to the lookers-on that she must go to pieces; for fringing the shore was a narrow line of sharp and jagged rock, and at the very edge of this the ship's bows were already beating. Still it was doubtful on which side of the river she might be cast ashore, or whether, indeed, she might pass the whirlpool foaming at its mouth; for the ledge or shelf, over which the breakers burst with increased violence every hour, extended across the opening, and made a bar, which rendered it unnavigable. On either side of the stream the sands stretched for miles, and the ocean washed the shore with a hoarse and endless roar; but not with such destructive powers as it did above or below the river's mouth. On the western

side, especially, there was more chance for the poor creatures struggling for their lives, inasmuch as the sands beneath the cliffs were not of that shifting nature which rendered anchorage impossible on the eastern limits; besides which, whoever escaped drowning, by being flung upon the eastern bank, stood a chance of having his brains dashed out by detached masses of rock that had rolled from the cliffs, and were embedded in the shore. Near the mouth of the stream, indeed, many an incautious rider, on his way from Kafirland, had been well-nigh overwhelmed by the quicksands.

Fortunately for those who had outlived the storm so far, the tide drew the two divisions of the wreck, partially submerged as they were, on the safer bank of the stream; the colonial side, in feet, of a river dividing the territory of the British settlers from the "neutral ground" of the savage inhabitants of the north-east. It was found afterwards that the two portions of the ill-fated ship had been connected by means of various spars and cordage interlaced beneath the waters; but she had not been many minutes fairly among the breakers ere she literally crumbled to pieces, and scattered her timbers on the waters.

Out of three hundred souls, not more than eighty were saved. Some swam till their strength was exhausted, some gave themselves up to their fate like the young soldier, who spread out his arms, closed his eyes, and plunged from the poop to the sea; some clung to spars, boxes, tables, hencoops, anything that came in their way. All who reached the shore received the hospitable

care of the kind soldiers of the fort, and afterwards pursued their different routes and destinies as Providence directed, after preserving them for the fulfilment of its own wise and grand purposes.

The boat which had been disengaged almost unperceived by Lee, and the two other convicts, continued to buffet the waves most gallantly. It reached the entrance of the river—here the rowers used their strong arms for a time in vain, and there seemed no other prospect than that of being engulphed, when suddenly the boat rose, as if lifted in air, over the bar of rocks I have described, and, shot into the stream, was sucked into a kind of whirlpool, where it spun round like a top, filled and went down for a few minutes, but came back to the surface empty. Lee was drawn down with his fellows; his eyes and ears filled, and his senses failed him: he had an indistinct vision of the convulsed features of the other two struggling below him, and of a gurgling sound from one who tried to scream; but all afterwards was blank till he came to his recollection stretched on a bed of sand, which ran inland from a creek overhung with bush.

It was a considerable time before he could bring himself to understand the reality of his position; but at length he rallied his intellect, and sat up to look around him.

The storm still raged—not a vestige of the wreck was to be seen, and the boat, broken in pieces, was lying high and dry between the rocks, with which the bush was intersected; the body of one poor drowned wretch was floating, all swollen and

disfigured, in the creek. Jasper Lee rose by a sudden impulse, and scrambled as far from the sight as his cramped and aching limbs would allow him; the stunted bush or scrub, by which he tried to climb the cliffs, gave way in his hands, his feet slipped on the streaming and slippery weeds; but he reached a ledge at last, and taking "heart of grace," he scanned the prospect before him.

Evening was advancing, though as to when the sun was likely to withdraw his influence from that hemisphere, it was impossible to say. Sky and ocean were blended together in a hue of lead, and the glancing wings of sea-birds looked like gleams of silver light between the angry heavens and the warring sea. His eye fell only on the void expanse. He had cast himself down on an angle of the cliffs which jutted far out, and during a momentary lull, the wind brought the sound of drums from the garrison on the opposite shore. He looked down immediately below, he perceived some rotten pieces of timber floating by; he expected to see some human creature still living, for many had lashed themselves to spars and masts, and might yet be tossing about at the mercy of the waves. He stretched himself as far forward as he could, and looking to the westward, where the light of day was lingering longer than elsewhere, he distinctly saw groups of soldiers, engaged in assisting those who had been cast ashore below the fort.

He fancied he heard voices, he looked down. Immediately under his feet there were, as it seemed, phantoms floating by; some dead, some with agonised faces and beseeching hands

lifted out of the white foam, and one saw him—she was young and fair, with long tresses, all unbound, clinging round her white throat and bosom; she seemed to give a gasp of hope; he leaned over; hardened man as he was, he would have given much to have saved her; the swell brought her nearer, she saw him; still she herself tried with desperate energy to catch a ridge of rocks,—she reached it, the heavy waters swung her forward with terrific violence, the sweet face was lifted up again. Lee was about to cast himself at all hazards from his position, when a stream of blood darkened the white spray, and the head of a shark came up, its huge jaws were filled with the mangled and bleeding limbs of its victim, and the horrible sea-monster drew its prey into an inlet where it had been driven by the storm.

He buried his face in his hands, turned sick, and almost fainted; after this he looked no more towards the sea, and ere long found himself obliged, for safety's sake, to reconnoitre the locality in which he had awoke to consciousness after so narrow an escape.

His condition was forlorn enough; his clothes hung in shreds upon him, his hair was matted with brine, his body was sorely bruised, his hands and feet lacerated; but it must be confessed, that, in spite of the horrors he had witnessed, his spirits rose fresh and buoyant, as he remembered that he was at liberty; though houseless, naked, cold, hungry, and bleeding, it was not in his nature to despair.

He turned his eyes again to the westward, and on climbing

higher, he discovered the wall of the fort, with its tower in the angle and its looped parapet. Soldiers were still straggling up and down the cliff, intent, as they had been for hours, on their humane efforts in saving life, and the remnant of property which had been thrown ashore with the tide.

"Ha!" muttered the convict, "I am on the right side of the river; they've had their glasses out at the fort, no doubt; but they cannot pass this, frothing as it does at the mouth, like a wild beast, for a week to come. Well, some will fancy themselves in luck when they get within those four tall walls, and some may have their chains dangling about their heels again; but this way of escaping death is not to my taste. I have work before me, I know; but what would life be without any difficulties! What a stupid life would Adam and Eve have led without sin! A true woman, Eve; disobedience gave the flavour to the fruit! Well, I have no objection to difficulties, and although I don't abide by the trash that gives chapter and verse about first causes, I know I have not been planted on this continent again for nothing. It must be owned, though, that I have had a precious welcome;" and, wiping the blood from his temple, he sat down again, for he was somewhat exhausted in body, though untiring in spirit.

The clouds fell lower and lower, and shed no more reflected light; a pitchy darkness followed. Lee gathered himself up between the bush and the wet and slippery bank, and lay down to dream of a surging sea, of pale beseeching faces and mangled bodies of young and beautiful women. The tide was again rising,

and he dared not descend, so he determined on waiting till the dawn, and then commencing a search for the provisions which had been put into the boat, and which he hoped he might find attached to some fragment of her wreck, for they had been securely lashed to one of the seats.

Towards midnight, as the tide receded, the fury of the tempest seemed to abate, and just as day peeped with affrighted eye from the east, our convict ventured from the shelf on which he had been uneasily stretched during the hours of darkness.

A dense fog hung over the river; the wind came in gusts from the ocean, and some of the trees above the cliffs were torn up by the roots and cast midway among the stones and scrub. The solitude was perfect to a man in Lee's position, and the tide having left a spacious strand, he let himself down from his covert, and began to make a search for the necessaries of life.

The wreck of the boat was lying where he had seen it the preceding evening, and, after a patient search, the hungry man discovered the bundle of provisions. It was saturated with wet, the rain fell around in torrents, there was not a spot of ground on which real repose could be sought; but Lee sat down and satisfied his wants with a relish indescribably keen.

Let us take a view of him, resting on the dreary strand, having refreshed himself with a moderate meal of biscuit and salt pork, the latter, of course, uncooked, but to him most savoury.

In the prime of life, highly favoured in personal appearance, with the spirit of intelligence lighting his clear grey eye, and with

the stamp of the better class upon his frame and countenance, how came he there—a convict?

At this moment he was intent chiefly on one point: he was determined to avoid all chance of further captivity or restraint.

As the fog was lifted from the river by the evening breeze, he felt the necessity of keeping out of sight of any stragglers about the opposite heights. He inspected the bulky package of provisions: a bag of damaged biscuits, some lumps of salt pork, a case of dried fruit—cabin property—a canister of cocoa, and various other articles, which had been hastily thrown into a bundle, and now adhered together like glue.

These stores were exceedingly precious to one in our adventurer's condition.

But the clouds began to gather again; floods of rain poured their torrents down the channels in the cliffs, and he determined without delay, and unmindful of his fatigue, which he felt the more after his meal, to seek a hiding-place which would be secure from intruders, although there appeared little chance of any one intruding on his territory.

All along that riverside deep indentations had been made below the cliffs by the encroachments of the sea, and Lee was not long in discovering a cave which penetrated far under them. There was not much time to lose in conveying the provisions to this covert ere the path was rendered soft, and therefore dangerous, by the swell of the tide as it turned again, and Lee was beginning to doubt the safety of the shelter, when, on drawing

his bag of provisions to seek stowage for it at the furthest limits of the recess, he discovered that the chasm was deep and wide, and lighted slantwise by an aperture many feet above the level of the river. His thirst had been heretofore allayed by the channel of rain-water rippling down the face of the cliffs, and he was beginning to doubt how he should be supplied in his retreat it compelled to remain there anytime after such supplies should cease; when, to his satisfaction, he convinced himself that a little stream, which trickled into the cave through a crevice, had its source in one of those bountiful and sweet springs so often discovered near the sea-shore, and which, in spite of their brackish taste, are so exquisitely refreshing to the exhausted traveller.

This was just one of those pieces of luck which often seem to rise in aid of the vicious,—but we may not question the decrees of Providence. God has his own reasons for letting the tares thrive for a time, though the harvest of wheat be thin.

On the whole, Lee had reason to rejoice in having discovered such a retreat for the present. He had sufficient stores to support life for some days; he was free, after his own ideas of freedom; space before him, above, around, with nothing to guide him but his own free will; he thought not of check or hazard, for no man held authority over him.

Misty, vague, dark, dreary, was his future; but it was not so utterly lost in the darkness as it would have been to a stranger on that great continent of Africa.

Contented at first with the comparative shelter he had so opportunely discovered, he had seated himself on a stone, and surveyed the interior of his domicile; but the various plans which floated about his busy brain wanted gathering together and arranging, and he found himself ere long overshadowed by the gloom of night. Though his wits were sharp, his body was weary, and growing stiff with cold. The river murmured hoarsely past the cave; the wind came in gusts through the crevices of the rocks, and penetrated to the very marrow of his bones. The outline of the opposite bluff looked like the frowning profile of a giant, when at intervals the clouds were parted by the broad flashes of lightning; for the storm at times still wreaked its fury against the rugged coast.

Having collected the damp leaves of fallen trees together in a heap, the convict made a very tolerable bed, throwing over them a long strip of green baize, the table-cover of the cuddy, which had been appropriated as a wrapper to the provisions.

The wind still kept up its "sound of mournful wailing," and whistled through the gaps in the cave; the spray foamed within fifty yards of the entrance; the thunder came back at times with a mutter frill of wrath, and his clothes were still wet; but our convict was lulled to sleep by the roaring of the mighty elements, which held their strife around his place of refuge.

Now and then he started up, as livid faces rose before him in his sleep; and at last the excessive cold roused him, and he was thoroughly awakened. Darkness was around him, and the

stream, flowing down its channel, dripped over on to the stones, and plashed upon his almost benumbed feet. He crawled towards the aperture; there was a little light, just enough to watch the tide, till, by its retrograde movement, he was able to make a random guess at the "time o' night," or rather morning. Shivering and melancholy, he crouched, with his head upon his knees, and, as his eye got accustomed to the outer atmosphere, he began to see stars. A body of clouds floated seawards, the wind veered about, and he again perambulated the shore in search of something for fuel. Day advanced, and he stumbled over a few cask-hoops; they were soaked with wet; but with the help of a remnant of a well-pitched spar from the wrecked boat, he determined on tiring to kindle a fire. Flints were searched for, and again Providence provided for his present wants.

He re-entered the recess; but, on consideration, deemed it prudent to take some further steps for insuring his concealment.

The rocks had been so washed, while the tide was up, by the spray of the surging river, that some of those which hung over the cave were loosened. It was a matter of skill and difficulty to separate even the smaller ones from the earth in which they had been imbedded; but Lee was a man of great personal strength, and, one block giving way, it bore down with it a heap of sand and a tree, which had been uprooted, thus undermining all that immediately surrounded it. The whole mass fell in front of the cavern.

There was not much time to lose, as the daylight might betray

the refugee; so making a passage for himself through the stones and rubbish forming his barrier of defence, he re-entered his hiding-place, and set to work to light a fire.

This was not easy; at one moment a stick would catch the flame, blaze up, and disappoint him by dying so gradually away as to keep him hoping to the last; at length the pitch grew hot. He had uttered oaths enough to bring the spirits of fire to his aid. The smoke rose in little columns, and made his eyes smart with pain; but he persevered till the light danced upon the steaming and jagged walls, showing him his shadow, monstrous and undefined. The vapour found vent in the aperture opening to seaward, through which the spray had ceased to drift; and ere long some slices of ship's pork hissed on the glowing billets. A soldier's tin served as a kettle and drinking-cup, and Lee contrived to make something like a cup of cocoa. After such refreshment his blood flowed more freely in his veins, and he once more lay down to rest, intending to keep his wits about him though sleeping, and to replenish his fire, with a cautious observance of the outer atmosphere from time to time; for, although a turbid and swollen river intervened between him and the colonial side of the country, he had no mind to be tracked, by the smoke of his bivouac, by any wanderers, whether Europeans or natives.

He felt, indeed, tolerably secure; rightly judging that the Europeans on the western bank would have enough to do on their own ground, and that the few *whom he knew* to be scattered to the north-eastward would be as unlikely as the natives to hear of the

wreck while the heavy rains filled the rivers to overflowing and rendered the ground dangerous and toilsome alike to riders and pedestrians. If Kafirs did venture out on foot, he knew enough of them to satisfy himself that their journeys would be undertaken to some better purpose than loitering on the coast without sure prospects of plunder.

He again lay down, and enjoyed that species of repose which gives ease to the body without completely deadening the powers of the mind; and it must be owned that his conscience was by no means so harassed by trouble or remorse, as from his outward position one would think it must be. In his own estimation Lee was an ill-used, unfortunate man; and, as to the latter, truth to tell, his reasons for thinking so were not altogether fallacious.

He is a felon; but the circumstances which have brought him to his present condition have met with extenuation from some: of this, by-and-by.

Hush! the earth is loosened without; Lee hears it faffing about the entrance. Some small stones come clattering down, and then there is silence.

The strong man's heart beats, and he clutches the clasp-knife hanging round his neck, and tries to open it, but his hand trembles; a strong current of air rushes in, the fire flickers up, and the shadow of a man's face is for an instant traced on the rocky side of the cave.

It is suddenly withdrawn.

Lee revolved the circumstances of his case in a few seconds.

He felt sure it was a white man's shadow, even at that momentary glance; the outline of the loose cap and prominent nose was unmistakeable. It might be a mend—a fellow-convict—a sailor; if the latter, Jack would die rather than betray the fugitive. But if it were any who might, after all, turn informer, he would doubtless report that the cave was tenanted, and bring down a file of soldiers upon him, unless the clasp-knife settled the question, which it was not likely to do in its rusty condition. Lee's powers of body were a little impaired by the perils he had undergone, and the exertions he had been obliged to make in screening his hiding-place, as he hoped, from all observers.

But he was discovered, that was certain.

"Who comes there?" he cried, in a voice that shook more than he wished to confess to himself. "Enter, I am armed."

"Lee," hoarsely whispered a voice, issuing from lips within which the teeth chattered audibly,—"It is I, Martin Gray."

"And where the devil did *you* cast up from?" asked Lee, in no very gracious voice, and sitting up with ears and eyes now wide open.

"I am starved, and miserable, and hungry," was Gray's reply, as he scrambled through all impediments in his path, and crawling into the cave, began unceremoniously to draw together the embers of the fire.

"Are there any more of you?" inquired Lee, hastily.

"Not one. I have been skewered up in a hole ever since I was flung ashore. I got hitched on to the rudder of the boat when it

broke away, and except a few bumps, I was all right when I got driven in between the rocks, and there I have been wedged for hours, for I dared not stir, except in the dark, when I could find nothing. I had no mind to be caught by the soldiers up there on the hill, so I have been creeping along under the rocks looking for luck in some shape or another, and what should I see, but a glimpse of light from this quarter? Friend or foe, it was all the same to me; I resolved to take my chance, and here I am."

Martin Gray was the young man I have alluded to as lying passively on the deck of the staggering ship—he had, like others, sprung into the sea, to take his chance, and clinging to a spar, had been providentially washed ashore.

Lee had had much opportunity of judging of Gray's character, which, though not without good, wanted strength and resolution; he was less wicked than unfortunate. There was this difference between the two: Lee would most probably, under any circumstances, have been ambitious, selfish, and unsound in principle, while Gray, with better fortunes, would have made a respectable member of society: warm of temperament, he was docile of disposition; he was, in fact, the very person to be influenced by a strong and determined mind, under circumstances like those in which he was now cast.

In Lee's forlorn condition, he felt there was comfort in fellowship, with so "safe a fellow as poor Gray," and he therefore set about proffering hospitality to his guest with a good grace, especially considering the limited extent of his larder. The meat

again hissed upon the coals, the batch of damp biscuits was re-toasted, and Gray brewed another cup of cocoa—what a treat it was!

If you have been shipwrecked, reader, as I have been, you will understand this.

Gray having dried his torn clothes, and satisfied the inward cravings of nature, not without warnings from Lee on the dangers of indigestion from too hurried a meal after a long fast, which warnings were entirely self-interested, recommended that the fire should be extinguished, lest its smoke should betray their hiding-place at sunrise; "though, to tell the truth," the young man added, "I am much more inclined to surrender myself than to take my chance; for what is to become of us?"

"Surrender!" cried Lee; "what, with such a country before us as I know this to be? No, no, my lad, you'll not surrender; trust to me, there is nothing to lose by taking our freedom, and what prospects are there before us, if we give ourselves up? You, for one, would be packed off to New South Wales by the first opportunity. As for me—I have said it before—I had rather fall into the hands of God than those of man: here is space enough for even my free spirit, and with a little caution, and patience, and perseverance, I will take you into safe quarters for life!"

Gray was too weary to enter upon further discussion, and the two convicts stretching themselves side by side, the former was soon dead asleep, while Lee lay meditating an infinite variety of plans.

"This youth is safe," soliloquised the host of the the cave; "he must be taught to keep my counsel and his own, for although hereafter he may be rather an incumbrance to me than of use, it will not do to let him go,—he would betray me, to a certainty. He has roughed it and seen service; though he is not clever, he has lots of pluck; on the whole, perhaps, I may make him useful, and it would be deuced lonely work to find my way across the country without any help. We must look about for arms; I saw large pieces of the wreck drifting this way after the crazy old craft went to pieces.

"I wish I had not seen that girl, though. I cannot forget her; how the blood bubbled up with the foam!

"The wind has changed, I suspect, but the river will be impassable to those red-jackets for days to come; we must collect our traps together without loss of time, and make ready for a start; I must do the amiable to this lad; he is a soft-hearted youth, I know.

"That fellow Tanner, I wonder if he is still trafficking up there in the kloof; he is an infernal rogue; I hope he won't turn informer —I think not, though, for I could betray him, and he knows it."

He rapidly chalked out in his mind's eye a map of his plans, and as he heard the wind again veering about to all points of the compass, and at last return to its deadly quarter, from which it had breathed its fury on the hapless ship, he rubbed his hands cheerfully together. "Blow, gentle gales," said he, and as Gray answered the apostrophe with a loud snore, Lee laughed and lay

down, taking care to appropriate to himself a goodly portion of the green baize coverlet. Ere long he, too, was in a dreamless sleep.

Chapter Four.
The Deserter

It is time to give our reader some further insight into the circumstances which had brought these two sleepers to their present condition, for they will occupy a prominent and peculiar part in the narrative.

Although Gray is the last adventurer on the scene, I will give him the precedence, since all that is necessary to relate concerning his previous history may be comprised in the following sketch.

He was the foremost boy of the village school of M—, industrious, high-spirited, and well-looking; he made slow but steady progress in his education, and his pastor entertained fair hopes touching his future prospects; but these hopes were suddenly overclouded by Gray's enlisting into a company of artillery quartered at a neighbouring town.

Thus it fell out. Let us go back to his earliest days, when he had been accustomed to stop at his uncle's garden-gate to call for his cousin Katy on his way to school. She would come with her school-bag hanging on her arm and singing down the walk as merry as a bird, and hand in hand they would wend their way along the lane to the school-house, where they parted at the porch with a tender but most innocent farewell, she for the girls' class,

he for the boys'. On Sundays they stood side by side round the pulpit to recite their catechism—often, however, threatened with a separation, because Martin Gray *would* prompt Katy.

On Sunday evenings in the summer prime they sat beneath the apple-trees in the garden belonging to Martin's bereaved father, and on winter nights it was cheering to see the light glowing on the walls and shining through the cottage casements; for there were the three assembled round the fire, Martin reading to earnest auditors.

A sorrowful evening hour it was for Katy, when her cousin parted with her at her own door. Love, and joy, and peace, all departed with him, and she exchanged happiness for the misery of finding her father and mother quarrelling after their return from the alehouse. Morning would chase away the sad thoughts the darkness had brought. Morning brought healing on its wings, for then Katy and Martin were again hand in hand, singing through the lanes, and gathering primroses or crocuses on their way to the school-house.

Then Katy "got a place;" her mother thought it a very fine thing indeed, to have her daughter admitted as under-housemaid at the Hall. Katy and her cousin met at church on alternate Sundays, Katy growing smarter and prettier in Martin's eyes every time he saw her; but he began to find out that the dashing valets, who accompanied their showy masters to the Hall, were freely permitted to join him and Katy in their summer evening strolls. He remonstrated. Katy was clever and self-opinionated.

She replied that she was not a school-girl; he quizzed the valets; she observed they were *gentlemen* to him, adding that Mrs White, the housekeeper, thought she demeaned herself by keeping company with such as he; he grew angry, Katy laughed at him, and one of her admirers, passing by, hearing the laugh, paused, stepped up to her, learned the cause of the merry peal, and walked off with her in triumph.

She looked in vain for Martin at church on the following Sunday; she dawdled through the churchyard, and her friend, "My Lord Wellor's valet," overtook her: he thought she was lingering for him. She did not drive him away, as she had discarded poor Martin Gray, with a laugh, but she was evidently thinking of some one else. With all his vanity, he guessed as much, and quitted her to join some gay ladies'-maids, who were flaunting along the meadow path. Katy never noticed them, though they watched her all across the meadow, out at the gate, up the lane to the turnstile, where she stood for a while, but turned back, and so met the giddy party again.

It was now her turn to feel the bitterness of laughter, when directed against herself; for the prettiest of the party, a rival of hers in the affections of Lewis the valet, cried out, "Well, Mistress Kate, were you looking for your sweetheart, Martin Gray? It is all of no use, my dear; he is gone for a soldier."

"Gone for a soldier!" Katy passed the giddy waiting-women and their obsequious attendant, and hastened to the nursery garden of Martin's father. He was sitting alone beneath the apple

boughs. The pathway was unswept, the clove pinks streeling over the neat box borders. He looked very sad, indeed. “Uncle,” said Katy, with white lips, “where is Martin?”

“Gone for a soldier, Katy,” replied the old gardener, striking his gnarled oaken stick angrily on the gravel path.

“Oh, uncle!” Katy burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

“It is no use crying now, Katy,” said Gray, “it is too late;” and rising, but not without difficulty, for he was an infirm man, “well stricken in years,” he walked towards the cottage, Katy following him like a culprit.

The elder Gray did not close his door upon his pretty niece; in truth, he could only suspect her as being the cause of his boy’s departure, for Martin had formed some military acquaintances latterly; but one of; his son’s last acts had been to collect some gifts, which this father knew to be “keepsakes from Katy,” and these were lying on the window-sill, packed up and addressed to “Miss Katharine, at the Hall.”

Martin had left; the cottage two days before with a sergeant of artillery, who had long had designs of enlisting so fine a young man, and from the adjoining town had addressed, a few lines to his father. He spoke of his wish for other countries, of the Artillery service being one of a superior character, as he considered, to the Line, and anticipated great satisfaction at speedily embarking for Gibraltar; not a word was said or Katy, not a single regret was expressed at the idea of leaving his native village, and from the style of the letter, it was very evident that

it was written as a matter of duty to the old man—all sorrow at quitting him was superseded by the anticipation of visiting far lands. The father laid the letter on the table, and observing, for the first time, the parcel on the window-sill, he wiped the mist from his spectacles, read the direction, and formed his opinion of Martin's reasons for leaving home.

"Don't open it here, if you please," said old Gray, as he put the parcel into his niece's hands.

He sat down in his accustomed corner; Katy placed herself in the tall, old-fashioned arm-chair in front of the window, and Martin's dog, a long-haired shaggy terrier, lay with its nose to the ground in an attitude of expectation, which had doubtless been increased by the entrance of Katy; as she had come, he thought his master must soon follow.

There were various trifles belonging to the lad scattered about the room and its walls. The whip he used when he drove his father's cart into town—Katy had often heard it *whish* close to her ear as the tip of the lash touched the smart blue ribbons of her bonnet, causing her to turn round sooner than she had intended, though she had recognised the steady "trot, trot," of the rough-coated aged pony long before. A starling hopped up and down its perch in a cage manufactured by young Gray, and made its alternate appeals to "Katy" and "Martin." Festoons of birds' eggs hung over the neatly-carved wooden mantel-shelf, also the handiwork of Martin Gray; and a few of his pencil sketches, of much promise, were wafered against the clean white-washed

walls. His books were all in their usual places on the shelves he had made for them; and the cat—ungrateful creature—purred with unaltered complacency, as she sat on the door-mat woven by the ready fingers of her young master, to whom Katy had given her three years before.

Heartless Tibby!—she nodded and dozed, and blinked her green eyes at the sunset, and washed her face with her white fore paws, just as she had done two Sundays before, when Martin was calling to her in vain from his seat beside his father under the apple-trees; but poor Grip was ill at ease, whining from time to time as he looked at Katy, then at the old man, at the open door, at puss—the selfish, the luxurious, the apathetic, the antipodes of Grip himself.

Katy found, after sitting there some minutes, that her uncle could not speak. The very clock was silent, for it had not been wound up on Saturday night; it had always been Martin's task to see to that. She went up to the old man, kissed him, and wished him good-bye. He suffered all this, and at last faltered out a few words intended to be kind. She looked back as she went out, but he said no more.

She never saw him again.

Next day the cottage door was closed. Evening came, the old man was not under the apple boughs as usual; the door was still closed. Some neighbours opened it, and entered the chamber; old Gray lay on his bed, as if in a calm sleep—he was dead.

Deep in the night a step came up the gravel-walk of the

garden; Grip gave a low whine, the latch of the door was lifted, and Martin Gray entered. The unusual sight of a light at that still hour of village repose had prepared him for sickness, and he trembled exceedingly as he crossed the threshold. Friends were sitting there; he gazed at them with a bewildered stare, walked up to the bed, whither he was followed by the watchers. One of them, a kind old woman, laid her hand upon the sheet that covered the body, but Martin whispered, in an unnatural tone, "Lift it."

She uncovered the face of the dead, and Martin Gray fell fainting on his father's breast. They drew him into the garden, the soft summer air revived him, and he sat down upon the door-step of his home overwhelmed with grief. In vain poor Grip licked the tears that fell through his trembling fingers; in vain the faithful beast whined, and thrust his nose into his young master's bosom; his sympathy was unheeded.

The youth got up, walked again into the house, looked once more at his father, felt his brow, on which a few bright silver hairs were smoothly and decently parted, kissed it, and, saying to the old woman, Margaret Wilson, "You will take care of all," he gave a glance round the room, his eye resting for a moment on his father's vacant seat and Katy's high-backed chair, and then, shaking hands with two other kind-hearted watchers, he passed out again; Grip watching him, and waiting vainly for the whistle with which it had always been his master's wont to summon him.

The door closed, the latch fell, the step upon the gravel-walk

receded quickly, and Martin Gray was never seen again in M— save by one person.

He paid it one more visit though, after his return from Gibraltar. His journey to his native place was made sometimes on foot, sometimes by a lift from a waggoner, or good-natured stage-coachman, who felt for the weary traveller, with his knapsack on his back, and sometimes in those barges which slip so lazily and pleasantly along the deep-winding streams of England.

It was in one of the last conveyances that he found himself sailing slowly up the river in which he had so often fished when a boy; it looked narrower to him than it had done in his youth, but the over-arching trees were taller and thicker than of old. He recognised a pool where he and Katy had drawn their pumpkin boats together; the alder bushes shaded it now, and it looked cold and gloomy, for the sunlight could not penetrate it. As the barge neared the bank, he offered payment to the bargemen, but they refused it—he sprung ashore, and plunged into the thick coppice that formed part of the grounds of the Hall where Katy used to be. He came to an open space, near which stood the ruins of an old keep, part of the ancient castle residence of the first owners of the soil. In early days, it appeared to him as something grand and stupendous; now he was surprised to find the windows and doorways so near him as he stood beneath the mound.

Having no mind to be recognised at once, he withdrew from the open ground to the shrubberies, and choosing a sequestered spot where the rooks were congregating in the old beeches, he sat

down upon the leaves which the winds of autumn had gathered together in a bank.

It was a lonely place, but from the hawthorn hedge which bounded it there was a view of the meadows and farm-buildings belonging to the landlord of the Hall; and he lay contemplating, with something of pleasurable feelings, the variegated landscape of cornfields and green uplands—the sweet scent of beans reminded him of those autumn meetings, when the corn was carrying. There was a cart, loaded with golden sheaves, standing under the elms of the great meadow, and another coming down an opposite hill, with laughing children on the top—their voices rang distinctly across the fields; the sun was glittering on the bright weather-cock of the church spire, and Martin Gray took up his knapsack, which he had unstrapped from his tired shoulders, and resolved on yielding to the impulse which tempted him, to join the reapers… Voices in the lane close by! There was a laugh, prolonged, and rather loud, but musical and merry, if not cheerful, and two people advanced arm-in-arm. The forage-cap with its gold band, the blue surtout and glittering scales upon the shoulders, bespoke the officer of artillery, as Martin lightly concluded from the company quartered in the town; but the other, the lady—

The *lady*!—a bonnet with bright-coloured ribbons—ah, Gray thought of Katy's garish taste!—placed far back on the head, revealed a face encircled with hair of that rich wavy brown only seen in England. The curls fell heavily upon the swelling bosom

—the large dark and shining eyes, the red lips, the brilliant cheek, were all of a character too full and decided for Katy; and yet —Martin stole along the hedge, keeping pace with these two people; the gentleman, young and showy, with his cap set jauntily on his shapely head, and she, the woman—for girlhood was passed, face and form were in their prime—was arrayed in attire that ill agreed with Katy's condition.

But it was she—her large shawl slipped from her shoulders, and she turned to gather up its gaudy folds; she spoke, laughed again, the white teeth parted the scarlet lips, and Martin knew her.

He stopped, breathed shorter, and she passed on, after the shawl had been adjusted, and the lover, or husband, had put aside the sunny hair and kissed the smooth forehead of that laughing, beaming face.

Whether wife or mistress, Gray felt she was lost to him, and he sat down again upon the bank of leaves, till the shadows of the old elms stretched themselves out like giants on the meadow-grass, and the song of the reapers mingled with the hum of voices in the village; then he rose, buckled on his knapsack, and made his way through many well-remembered paths, past the old school-house, to the garden-gate opening upon his father's little property.

Again he trod the well-remembered path, again he lifted up the latch, and, as he had hoped and expected, found old Margaret by the fire; age made her feel the cold, though the glow of autumn was in the sky.

She recognised him at once, in spite of growing infirmities; perhaps it was because, as she said, she had been expecting him, for she had saved what rent she could afford to pay out of earnings from the garden, and had it ready for him; but he set aside all questions of finance and property, and sat down beside the old woman's spinning-wheel.

Something whined and moaned at the back-door. Margaret rose, opened it, and Grip crawled in. He had waited, as it were, till his master came before he *could* die. He dragged himself as well as he could along the sanded floor, lay down at Martin's feet, licked his shoes, tried to reach his hands, fell back, uttered a long, low whine of joy, and *died upon the cottage hearth*. Dame Margaret gave the history of Katy in a few words. She had been encouraged in her insatiable love of dress by the housekeeper at the Hall, who had her own ends to gain by the setting off of Katy's beauty; father and mother, brought to the lowest ebb of vice by drink, quarrelled between themselves about unholy profits, and their daughter finally exchanged her place at the Hall for a dwelling in the town, close to the barracks. She had no shame now, Dame Margaret said, and Martin listened in bitter silence to the tale, and that night departed.

He turned and looked at his old home from the garden-gate. The light shone through the casement and streamed in a glittering line along the gravel path; the gentle breeze of autumn lifted the boughs of the trees and murmured through the neighbouring woods; the hum of voices in the village had died away, the

"watch-dog's honest bark" breaking the silence now and then, and there was but small stir in the long irregular street as Martin passed through it.

No one observed him, though some were lingering about the old coach-inn, expecting the one-pair-horse vehicle that travelled through it "up to London." He went on his way, avoiding all the pleasant lanes and paths, through which he had walked in youth and sunshine, and reached a spot where four cross-roads met. He remembered the time when he and Katy would tremble if benighted here, for the place was said to be haunted: there was some old tradition of a suicide being buried beneath the tall white hand-post, with a stake through his body, and not a villager would pass this way alone after sunset.

But now Martin Gray sat down at the foot of the hand-post, in the twilight, and hailed the coachman when he came up, much to the old driver's surprise, as he drove along the road, whistling in solitude, for not a creature was on the top of the vehicle.

Gray climbed up beside the coachman, and, looking back upon the village from the summit of a hill, distinguished only a few twinkling lights; but beyond it the windows of the great house shone resplendent: doubtless it was filled with company, and poor Martin turned from such a view with a heavy sigh.

The coachman tried, without success, to engage him in conversation, and then lit his cigar, leaving his passenger to his own melancholy thoughts.

I must give one or two more scenes in the life of Martin Gray

ere I again bring him forward in companionship with his fellow-convict.

One fair summer's day, a body of troops was embarking for foreign service. Among the rest was the company of Royal Artillery to which Gray belonged, and the officer who had just assumed the command was no other than the same Captain Trafford, whom he had seen walking with his old love, Katy. Three years had elapsed since that memorable evening when Martin quitted his native village; but had he not then learned the name of this officer, he would have recognised him at once.

The steamer which was to convey the detachments to the transport lay alongside the quay of a great mercantile town in England. There were crowds standing alongside to wish their friends farewell. A gay regimental band had accompanied the troops, and they passed through the throng, cheering as they marched. There was not much delay in getting the steamer underweigh; all the poor property the men possessed was strapped upon their backs, and they were not long on board ere they turned their faces to the shore to give a parting hurra! There was a struggle between the policemen and some of the crowd at the gangway, but it was soon over, the people giving way. The cheers rose from the deck, there was an answering hearty shout, and the steamer dropped slowly down along the quay side.

A woman had pressed onwards to take a last look; her cloak was dropping from her shoulders, her bonnet hung at the back of her head; the rich hair was cast back from her wan, thin

face; her dress was torn, disorderly, and soiled, but Martin Gray recognised her instantly. It was his lost love—his once bright-faced cousin Katy.

But she did not see him; and as he gazed with aching eyes and beating heart upon her, he heard a comrade say, "That is the girl that followed Captain Trafford all the way from London. I heard him last night, when I took the orderly-book to the inn, swearing at her, and telling her not to follow him. I was sorry for the poor thing, for she was so tired she could hardly stand, and leaned against the wall, staring at him and crying terribly; but he sent for a waiter and had her turned out. She gave me such a wild look as she passed me by, I shall never forget it; but I could not help her, you know."

The crowd dispersed, but Gray saw a single figure standing alone at the end of the quay, watching the steamer to the last. She stretched out her arms, leaned forward, and plunged into the water.

His involuntary scream brought others to his side, and the news soon spread along the deck that a woman had drowned herself. Some women had approached nearer the after-part of the packet than was consistent with the regulations, and openly coupled her name with Captain Trafford's. He came forward, and, in a furious tone, sent them forward, and placed a sentry on the spot they had invaded.

Some humane ladies of the party requested the captain of the steamer to let them know the fate of the unfortunate young

woman, and late at night, as the ship's bows began to ruffle the waters, and her sails to fill, a fisher wherry hailed her, and a note was sent on board.

It was speedily whispered about that Captain Trafford had been the cause of the poor young creature's death, but there were no outward signs of regret on his part; he was as brusque as ever among the women and children when on duty between decks, and as intolerant and overbearing as usual towards the men of his company.

They hated him cordially—they had always done so; but after the sad incident I have recorded, their dislike increased.

Martin Gray buried his sorrow in his own breast. None ever knew that the unhappy girl who had cast herself despairingly into the waters was his cousin.

Some trifling dereliction from duly on Gray's part brought a violent reprimand from Captain Trafford. The young soldier responded in a strain equally excited, and the result was the imprisonment of Gray in a solitary cell.

Some days after, Captain Trafford, being the offices on duty, visited the prisoner. The sentry at the adjoining guard awaited the officer's return, and the sergeant, at length growing uneasy at the delay, proceeded to the cell.

Trafford lay on the ground at Gray's feet. He had evidently been stunned by a blow, for he was insensible.

Gray made no defence, merely remarking, that he "had paid an old debt."

Had Captain Trafford died, the young soldier must have been hung; but the former lived to give his evidence at the court-martial, the sergeant's corroborated the captain's, and the prisoner pleaded guilty.

But ere the sentence of the court was ascertained, Gray, through some sailor friends, managed to escape from prison, got on board a merchant ship where hands were wanting, and worked his passage home. He was easily traced, was seized as a deserter, and the result of another trial was transportation for life.

The convicts who had been rescued from the wreck by the soldiers of the fort were of course handed over to the proper authorities in South Africa.

Some met with a merciful destiny, some continued their evil practices—these were sent on their way.

The wreck of the *Trafalgar* became matter of history in an age when philanthropy, or the affectation of it, takes the lead in public.

"Ha!" said Lee to his companion, when they heard, some months after, of the fate of felons like themselves, "what a fool you would have made of yourself if you had given yourself up as you wished."

Poor Martin Gray would at the moment this was said have gladly changed places with the hardest-worked convict in Norfolk Island.

But I must not anticipate my tale.

I have said that Lee had "rapidly chalked out in his mind's

eye a map of his plans." These were rather facilitated in prospect by the unexpected advent of a companion; and on rising the following morning, he drew out such a sketch of his intended operations as induced Gray, of necessity, to assent to them.

In the first place, he, Gray, knew Lee to be a desperate man, albeit certain indulgences, the result of a morbid spirit of philanthropy—an endemic peculiar to England—had been granted to the latter on board the convict-ship; and he had thus, comparatively with the other voyagers, been placed beyond complaint. Secondly, there was only the alternative of giving himself up as a deserter. On the one hand, was infinite space in a fine country, with strange promises from his comrade, a daring and clever man; on the other, at best, a renewal of servitude under a yoke he had been taught by a miserable fatality to dislike.

Their resolution once taken, they determined, with wise precaution, on leaving no traces of concealment in a locality so dangerous by its proximity to the military post; for, although the river to the westward still remained impassable, and there was no likelihood of an invasion from the eastward, it was not to be doubted that ere long the scene of the wreck would prove of sufficient interest to bring some to the spot in search of such plunder as the tide might cast up. This territory, held, in Kafir parlance, by "the sons of Congo," contained, besides the kraals and pasture-lands of its chiefs and their people, a few traders' huts, and three or four mission stations, all widely separated from each other.

Chapter Five.
The Flight into Kafirland

Perseverance and the instinct of self-preservation will effect much that, under ordinary circumstances, would be abandoned as impossible. By working at night within the cave, and at dawn at the outer entrance, they contrived to loosen heavy stones, and piled them together so cleverly, that they felt sure that in a day or two all traces of their hiding-place would be obliterated, especially if the surf increased.

Starting in the depth of a stormy night along the coast, at the imminent risk of their lives, they resorted by day to the rocks, where they ate such a portion of the provision they carried as served to keep up their strength. There was no scarcity of water, the heavens still poured forth their floods; at times they were almost blinded by the rain, and had not the heavy fogs occasionally rolled themselves up, they might have perished. For his own wise purposes, God chose to lead these two men in safety through the storm, and on the third day of their journey they entered a dense bush, crept along the bank of a stream, the Inzonzana, forded it in safety, and, having waited till nightfall to cross the open plains northwards, they about midnight entered a narrow gorge or kloof, and lay down to sleep; nor did they wake till the sun, for the first time since their *entrée* upon this stage of

their existence, came from his chambers unveiled, and rejoicing as a giant to run his glorious course.

"We are all right now," said Lee, "and we may light a fire in this dip under the cliff; we may wait again till night-time to pay a visit to my friend up there," pointing to a mud hut on the slope of a mountain, which Gray would not of himself have discovered. "And so now to dinner; there is a scrap of pork left; our smoke will not attract attention here, so we may make ourselves comfortable; you will see fires in all directions by-and-by."

And so it proved. The swollen rivers had detained many a Kafir from a thieving or hunting expedition; but Lee knew he was some distance from any kraal of importance. However, in case of any unexpected visit from rovers, he selected the densest part of a thicket for their bivouac till evening.

The sun went down, and the cool breeze, which stirred the surface of the stream, fanned the travel-stained faces of the wanderers. The sprews and smaller finches, the canaries, the titmouses, and the blue birds and the Cape chlories—a whole airy colony, in fact, of bright-winged creatures—began to flit about the bush preparatory to taking their pleasant pest among the myrtle boughs and dwarf lilacs, and soon woke the adventurers, who had sought repose in that small Eden.

Gray sat up, and the scene had its influence on his mind, which was not yet as a garden utterly laid waste and tare-sown. Gentle thoughts stole over him, and he longed for the wings of the doves

crooning near him to fly away and be at rest; but such thoughts became as a bottle in the smoke when his companion awoke himself, and, rousing Gray by a rough shake, bid him get up from the bed of dry leaves on which they had reposed themselves with a comfort rare to their wearied frames.

Lee's mind was wide awake. Now that he had readied a place of comparative security, for he knew well where he was, which was more than Gray did, he, Lee, almost wished that the latter had been drowned with the other victims of the storm; but the wish was idle—there he was—his fellow-convict, his comrade. It would not do to lose sight of him; he was at his mercy, for the deserter might earn his pardon by betraying his companion.

As Lee considered these points, he did not by any means contemplate getting rid of Gray by violent means. How many men, from whose misdeeds originate death and misfortune, shudder at the abstract idea of slaughter in cold blood.

> "The breeze that stirs the stream,
> It knows not the depth below."

And the little bubbling spring, that rises with diamond brightness amid the flowery turf, wots not of the desolation it may spread in its course if unrestrained.

But Lee's career had been little checked in its evil nature; and I question if Gray had been thoroughly disabled by rheumatism or fatigue, whether his companion would have had any compunction

in leaving him to the mercy of stray Kafirs or wild beasts.

But, as matters stood, it was clear he must not be lost sight of; so Lee, on hearing his companion complain of cramped limbs, made a virtue of necessity, and bid him take courage, and follow him to the trader's hut.

With some little difficulty they scrambled across the stones lying in the bed of the gorge, through which a swift rivulet was rushing. Had there been water enough to drown Gray, and had he fallen into it *by accident*, I know not how he might have fared.

But they reached the opposite slope dotted with granite heaps and mimosa clumps, climbed the mountain steep, and traversed another path. The moon, like a blazing shield, rising above the distant mountains, lit the plains, but the nearer hills were yet in deep shadow; and it was not till the wanderers were in full advance upon the ill-tended garden fronting the hut indicated by Lee, that they discovered, some paces from them, what appeared a herd of cattle. They drew back stealthily, for Lee's experience of the country made him cautious, and sunk down in a hollow beneath the thickest bush at hand. Each held the other by the arm; they scarcely breathed, and paused with fixed eyes and rigid limbs for many minutes.

At length a rustling sound arose among that mysterious crowd, the shivering noise of assegais announced its warlike calling, and a Fingo chief marshalled his phalanx with their shields of bullock hides, beneath which they had been resting till the rising of the moon. Keen watchers of their great mother, Nature, they had

calculated to a nicety the darkest nook for a shelter to rest beneath their shields preparatory to their march at night.

It was clear they were on a mission of vengeance, for the few Kafirs, whose fires had appeared during the day, were either too terrified to leave their lairs, and give warning of an enemy's approach; or, what was more probable, the band of warriors had moved unnoticed to the spot.

In perfect silence, and within the shadow of the hill, the chief put his force in order; ere long they were on their march.

Not a sound was now heard upon the hill-side, but a measured tread of distant feet was distinctly audible to the convicts, as, impatient of delay, and, it must be owned, rather disheartened, they lay with their ears to the ground listening to the receding footsteps of the Fingoes along the edge of the ravine.

"What a life we are to lead in this savage country!" murmured Gray, who, ill, weary, and unhappy, would have given worlds to have been at his duty as a soldier again.

"Silence, fool! and follow me," was Lee's reply.

There was nothing for it but to obey. They crept cautiously into the garden fronting the trader's hut; it was a desolate piece of ground; such plants as had once flourished were trodden to the earth; the door was torn from its hinges, and there was light enough from the moon to see that the interior had been rifled of some, if not all, of its contents.

The two men sat down upon the earthen floor of the despoiled abode; the one cursing, the other moaning in the anguish of pain

and weariness of heart.

A man's form suddenly came between them and the moonlight that shone upon the opposite mountain. A pistol clicked in their ears.

"Who have we here?" said a stern voice in English. The convicts rose to their feet, and in a moment all three men stood together in the clear and radiant atmosphere.

But, to Lee's disappointment, the man, who had just issued from some place of concealment near them, was not the person he had expected to see, and on whose co-operation in his plans he relied, inasmuch as he, Lee, had some claims on the trader's good-will; and, compelled by circumstances to be prompt and truthful, he plainly admitted his surprise and regret. Then, without satisfying his interrogator as to his identity or his comrade's, he inquired abruptly, "Where is Tanner?"

To this he received, instead of a reply, the unsatisfactory answer of "What's that to you? and who the devil are you?"

The pistol was again elevated, but Lee coolly put it aside; and, sensible that his desperate position could only be defended by hardy measures—seeing, too, that the peremptory tone of his opponent was that of a man whose privacy was not to be further invaded against his will, answered in a steady tone:

"I am not a spy, you may trust us both; lead us into your cabin, or we must climb higher up the hill to the hut where Tanner kept his powder in old days. If it is not standing now, there is a cave near it, and we can light a fire there in safety. My

companion must have an hour's rest and food, and we shall be secure enough there. To tell you the truth, we are both hungry, and have travelled far."

It was clear that the speaker knew the ground on which he stood and the calling of the trader, who, to outward observers travelling the country, carried on a harmless traffic in ostrich-feathers, skins, horns, tobacco, snuff, and such comforts as civilisation in her slow march through Kafirland had taught the use of to the natives. Puzzled, and rather disconcerted, he led the way to the hut.

It had a counter, shelves, weights and scales—all the accompaniments of legitimate trade; but on striking a light, and holding it up, both visitors and host were soon made aware of the devastated state at the stores. The shelves had been cleared of their blankets, the walls were bare of all but the nails to which beads and bugles had been suspended in tempting array; the tobacco had been swept from the counter, the remnant of tobacco-pipes lay broken on the trampled floor, and scarce a vestige remained of any portable wares. A bunch of common candles hanging in a corner had escaped the notice of the thieves. One of these the host took down, and, going into an inner room, returned with the welcome intelligence that there was something yet left in the locker.

Either overlooking the entrance to this inner apartment, or having found sufficient plunder to satisfy themselves, the thieves had here left all intact. The marauders had been Kafirs, who, not

aware of the Fingoes' proximity, had swept off all the property they could readily dislodge.

The Fingoes bore the odium of the theft, but they were only intent on repossessing themselves of their own property.

A bed covered with skins stood at one end, a chest, a bench, and a common table of yellow-wood at the other; a few household utensils completed the furniture; the window was darkened by a rude shutter, and the ashes of a wood fire were on the hearth.

Drawing a few sticks together from the scattered embers, the host, a man of determined aspect, re-lit the fire, replenishing it with a billet of wood, and in a short time the three men were seated together on the ground with closed doors. A repast of dried buck and some mouldy bread, which did not look particularly inviting even to wayworn travellers, was spread before them; and the large chest being removed, some clay, which had been spread to give the surface the same appearance as the floor, was cleared away, a heavy stone was lifted, and the master of the hut, descending an aperture, brought up a tiny keg of Cape brandy, filled the flask he carried in his huge pocket, and, replacing the keg, the stone, the trap-floor, and the chest, handed a tin cupful of the burning liquid first to Lee and then to Gray.

All this, of course, had not been done in silence. The host, who called himself Brennard, recounted how he had been absent on a trading excursion for some days to Fort Beaufort, a garrison in the northern part of the colony; how, on his return, his horses and

oxen had fallen lame, and he had left them at a brother-trader's station; how he had talked homewards with a pack-ox carrying some of his stores—the ox was now fastened to a stout oak far down the adjoining kloof; how he had advanced to reconnoitre, having heard the Fingoes were on march against Umgee's people, who had stolen Fingo cattle; and how, after watching the phalanx advance upon their silent path to his own property, which they despoiled sad left, he had been astonished to meet two white men on his ground, one of whom was evidently no stranger there.

Gray remained contented as an auditor to a conversation begun by Brennard in Dutch, and carried on by Lee, who admitted in English that he had been in the country before, and that he had known Tanner, the first trader on the station; but the dialogue was soon wholly carried on in Dutch, which was incomprehensible to the deserter. He learned, however, that Tanner had been shot on the other side of the Kei in a conflict with the tribes there. Brennard, who had been his agent beyond the Bashee, knowing that the head-quarters of the business needed looking after, left a deputy on the coast, near the Umtata river, and removed himself to the hut in the hills.

In a word, Brennard was a dealer in gunpowder, which he sold secretly to the tribes on the English frontier; and the men on the coast were the established consignees of arms from British artificers.

Lee, of course, soon enlightened Brennard on the subject of his former acquaintance with Tanner; but how it first came

about was a mystery to the trader. He was beginning to consider how he might sift this out, and both convicts were on the point of reminding him that they should be glad of some change of raiment, when a long low whistle, from the side of the hut nearest the hill, interrupted their plan of operations, and the trader, rising, prepared to leave the hut.

His pistol lay on the bench, Gray seized it.

"Put it down, Gray," said Lee; "I know my man now; besides, you fool, do you suppose he would have left a loaded weapon behind him if he was bringing an enemy upon us? Put it down, I say," and he took it out of the hand of the deserter, who, as his prospects opened before him, began to deplore his state, and longed, with thoughts half-bewildered, to free himself from the net he felt gradually closing round him.

Lee read mistrust, and what he called fear, in the face of his unfortunate companion. The mistrust was unmistakable, but the fear was that which a heart, born as honest as human nature can be, feels when involved in wrong-doing, from which there is no escape.

"Stay, Brennard," said Lee, indicating an assumption of confidence in Gray. "I suspect I know what that whistle means. I have no secret from my friend here," laying his hand on the shoulder of the deserter as he spoke. "I have told you as much as need be of my tale, and now let us make a bargain—there is nothing like plain speaking in great emergencies; and as I have a pretty strong notion that through your information we might be

handed over to the authorities, I do not mind reminding you that we might do the same by you; and that while our fate would only be re-transportation—for we have escaped from the wreck of the *Trafalgar—perhaps* yours would be a dance in the air. Whether the hut in the kloof is still in its old place, I cannot tell; but a commando out here would soon rout out your stores, and either take you prisoner, or set a price on your head. At any rate, the game would be up with you as a respectable British trader,"—Lee laughed heartily—"and you would be at the mercy of the Kafirs or the Dutch, into whatever territory you might wander."

He whom the convict so addressed was a man of powerful frame—deep-chested, and rather short-armed, every limb proved strength; backed by a couple of Kafirs, he might have despatched his visitors; but, although a dealer in contraband stores, and accustomed to danger, and at times to scenes of warfare, in which he was supposed to take a part against the very population he helped to arm,—although, in fact, he, like Lee, was a traitor, he would have hesitated at a deed of cold-blooded murder on his own hearth.

In a word, no two men could have better understood each other than Lee, the convict, and John Brennard, the trader of the Witches' Krantz (Cliff). As for Gray, he might truly be considered, what a late ruffian was described to be, "the victim of circumstances,"—with wearied body and aching heart, he sat by, a passive listener; passive, because he *could* not help himself.

The low whistle was repeated, and Brennard, opening the

window-shutter, responded in the tone of a wandering, hungry wolf: then the signal came clear but slow, and with evident caution, and moving in am upward direction, died away in some hollow of the hill. Then Brennard, closing the aperture carefully, proposed entering on a solemn compact with his new acquaintances, to which they agreed.

Strange indeed is that species of oath, which binds bad men together, and which may truly be considered as founded on a superstition, of which the devil is the founder. There are many to whom the nature of such an oath is sacred, who will rob, murder, desolate the home of the industrious and virtuous, and commit every crime which by that oath they are bound to enter upon, in partnership with others as "blind of heart" as themselves. In these compacts, they swear by the Bible, thus blasphemously making the word of God a witness and a guarantee for sin. Aye, and such compacts have been kept inviolate, even at the gibbet's foot, and beneath the bloody guillotine.

And, after all, what is an oath, in the opinion of a truly honest man? A seal set upon the word of a villain, who only tells the truth because the fear of punishment on earth compels him to do it. He who lies to God daily, would hardly hesitate to lie to man, but that he lets "I dare, not wait upon I would," and trembles, like the Chinese and the Kafir, not at commission of crime, but at the disgrace and punishment which must follow its discovery.

They stood up, did those three desperate men, in the low and narrow room; the owner of the wild domicile held the book in

his hand, for there was a Bible in the chest. They opened the unholy compact with the words "I swear." As they spoke, their eyes were fixed distrustingly on each other, not on Heaven, the witness they invoked, and Brennard was proceeding to dictate a certain form, with its set phrases of "betrayal of brotherhood," "rights of partnership," etc, when the whistle came back from the krantz above, descended gradually down the hill-side, paused, chirruped like a bird, a gay, innocent bird, and a low tap at the door was followed by a voice of most musical sweetness.

"Vuka u zishukumise"—"Awake and be stirring," said the voice. It was a woman's.

"Urga lungenalake?"—"Are you ready?" asked Brennard.

"Ewa—urga kuza ni nina?"—"Yes—when are you coming?"

"Dirge za"—"I am coming now," replied the trader.

On which another voice added, "Lexesha kaloku"—"Now is the time."

A quick but gentle sound of unshod feet patted past the window, there was silence again in the outer air, and the three Englishmen resumed their attitude; Brennard in the centre with the Bible—it had the names of brothers and sisters beneath his own in the fly-leaf—he had kept it by him in the wilderness—and the two others with their palms spread open on the cover. They went through the formula again, the oath was sealed by a kiss upon the sacred record, sad it was restored to its resting-place, whence it never emerged but on extreme occasions like the present. The fire was extinguished, and once more refreshing

themselves with a sip from the flask, the light was extinguished, and all three passed out from the hut, the door was drawn to, as well as its dilapidated condition would allow, and passing through the garden and advancing a few yards to the right, they turned the profile of a hill, descended a steep pathway leading to a dense bush, and in a few minutes distinguished the hurried tread of naked feet upon the crisp leaves and underwood; a group of women pattered through a narrow glade, and, passing our adventurers in silence, led the way into the kloof.

Lee recognised the locality as he advanced, step by step, down a declivity intersected with blocks of granite and tufts of scrub, or low bush; the murmur of a rivulet making its way over the stones was audible, and the distant cry of the jackal hailed the coming of the night. Here Lee remembered well to have rested on shooting excursions in former days; here he had listened to many a tale of Tanner's, and he could guess the exact spot for which they were bound—the three men in advance, the Kafir girls in Indian file following. So they proceeded, till the darkness of the glen deepened, and putting aside a large alder, they bent their heads, and found themselves beneath a magnificent oak-tree, to a branch of which was fastened a large ox, black as Erebus.

Motionless and patient he stood with his heavy load upon his broad back, for Brennard had intended returning to the spot sooner than circumstances eventually permitted him, and he bent his head in loving recognition of Amayeka, whose sweet voice welcomed her favourite. The unusual roughness of the weather

had detained Brennard longer on his expedition than usual, and Amayeka and her companions had kept their watch day by day in the hills.

I know not a more perfect model of obedience and endurance than a Kafir woman. With the white man, she is never thoroughly tamed. You may take her under your care in childhood—you may accustom her to English habits, dress, and religion; but once let her taste of freedom, and she is like a bird on the wing again. True, however, to the instincts of her nature, she bows to the thraldom of her race, wields the pickaxe and the hoe, submits cheerfully to her occupation of "hewer of wood and drawer of water," yields obedience to her task-masters, abjures her European costume, albeit she delights in a broidery of many-coloured beads, and sits meekly silent when bartered for by a lover, who, as a husband, makes her one of many slaves.

Such was Amayeka, who had been reared from the age of six years at a missionary station, near the Caledon river; but from this she had been withdrawn by her father Doda when she was fourteen, and during the year—for she was now but fifteen, the prime of a Kafir maiden's life—she had thrown off her European habits in every sense, retaining only the language, which she spoke with the grace so peculiar to her nation when educated.

I specify her age from general calculation; her father could only count her years by connecting her birth with a period of great drought.

She and her companions, all older than herself, had been sent

by Umlala, a petty chief, to convoy the treasonable stores brought from the colony in Brennard's wagon, and transferred to Zwartz's back, at a secret station on the banks of Somerset River. This done, a sagacious old Kafir had led Zwartz through an intricate defile to Witches' Krantz, and fastening him to the "trysting tree," returned as herdsman to the trading wagon, with its span of draught-oxen, on the banks of Somerset River. For days these poor girls of Kafirland had sat watching the changes of the atmosphere from the mountain slopes. Their food was parched corn and strips of *biltongue* (meat dried in the sun), supplied by a cleft in the rock, where they had long ago established a simple larder. Apples, from the banks of the Kei and the Gonube rivers, varied their repast occasionally, and a large light basket of sour milk, brought to them from a distant kraal, was a delicious addition. They were very merry; they laughed, they sang, sometimes hymns, taught them by Amayeka; they danced, ate their frugal meals, and slept soundly, pillowed on flowery turf, with heaven's own canopy of blue and gold above them. If the clouds rose, they withdrew to the caves in the mountain-side, and these recesses were their shelter, when a scout come to tell them that Jocqueenis' Fingoes were on a march into Dushani's country, to "eat up" the son of Ixexa. For, however quiet and unpeopled the hills of Kafirland may appear, there are always scouts on the look-out. These tribes carry out the prophecy against the sons of Ishmael, "their hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against them," hence they are ever

on the watch. But all this time our adventurous group are waiting together in the glen. Here Brennard unslung his haversack from Zwartz's yoke, taking out of it such articles of raiment as he chose to retain for his own use, bestowed it, with some acceptable gear, on the convicts. The flask of Cape brandy was added to the stores, and to each was given a small double-barrelled pistol. Thus partially provided for, the three bade each other farewell, for it was necessary to make as much way as they could before morning, and the defile being threaded, some hours of repose might be obtained in a place of security, to which their female guides would direct them.

Brennard, having watched the party as far as the rays of the moon flickering through the tracery of the trees permitted, returned to his domicile, there to accomplish such repairs as he could single-handed; and this done, to return to Somerset River for his wagon, and forward information to the authorities of the delinquency of the Fingo marauders; but long before the trader had noted the outrage on paper, the warriors had stalked through the enemy's kraal, and possessed themselves of the cattle they called theirs, and crossing a stream about nine miles to the north, soon chanted their song of triumph and defiance from their own territory.

As the reader will readily infer, the compact to which I have alluded involved a treaty of partnership between Brennard, Lee, and Gray, in the secret traffic of arms and ammunition with the tribes to the north-east of the Cape colony. The deputies left by

Brennard near the coast held a situation of little danger, since there was no legal restriction on the sale of arms; nevertheless, a certain caution was necessarily observed in the transmission of such stores from Cape Town, lest the eyes of the authorities should be opened to a fact, at present only suspected by the non-commercial settlers. The powder traffic, demanding greater care and secrecy, was not so easily carried on, and it had long been obvious to Brennard that it would be highly advantageous to establish an intermediate agent between the Gonube and the Witches' Krantz, for the disposal of the gunpowder, and the surer interchange of Kafir goods in return.

This offer Lee readily accepted, with a reservation that, if it suited his purpose hereafter, he should proceed to the locations lately established to the eastward by the disaffected Dutch. As to Gray, a spell seemed to bind him to such measures as Lee chose to propose.

I have shown that Lee had given Brennard only such details of his early acquaintance with Tanner as he thought necessary, and the trader, as he climbed the hill again, wondered, within himself, at the mysterious influence which had thus suddenly been imposed upon him. Who Lee was, or what his position had been in Southern Africa in former days, he could not tell. All he knew was, that he was a runaway convict, that he had been acquainted with Tanner, and that he had a thorough knowledge of that part of the country, and of all the secret nooks for keeping contraband stores.

Brennard also felt quite certain that Lee would not have admitted his real condition as a runaway convict of the wreck of the *Trafalgar*, had it not been an event of publicity which would elicit close inquiries; and as there would, probably, be some survivors who had witnessed Lee's escape in the boat, it would at least be conjectured that he had reached *terra firma* and made his way into the interior, where he might become a dangerous assistant to the Dutch, who were known to welcome such desperadoes to their gloomy councils. In a word, Lee knew himself to be a marked man, and, in such an exigency, there was nothing like binding a useful coadjutor, like Brennard, by ties which, if broken by one, must be the ruin of both.

When in the cave, after his preservation from shipwreck, Lee had shaped out a somewhat crude plan for the future; he certainly entertained a vision of self-aggrandisement, of leadership among the malcontent Boers, of founding a settlement, and opening a career of rule; but a new incentive to be "up and doing" presented itself unexpectedly before him, and a fresh impetus was at once given to his desires of organising a party among a people ripe for rebellion, by the perusal of a paragraph in an English newspaper, of a comparatively late date, which Brennard had brought with him from the interior, and given to Lee to beguile him on the stealthy march, in company with the unwilling and melancholy Gray, and the dusky maiden guides of Kafirland.

It was on the evening of the first day's march that the instincts of ambition within the convict's breast assumed a new direction.

Through what deep and tangled footpaths did those patient maidens lead the party! A curious sight it was to Gray, a stranger in that far country, as, lingering behind the rest, he watched the group wending its slow way, now under the shadow of the great krantzes, now waiting for him, beside some tiny stream, that shone like steel under the "Green willows with the hanging boughs."

He could not run, and had he been able to do so, he knew not his way. He could only guess by certain constellations, known in both hemispheres, that he was journeying eastward, and he wandered on like a man dreaming that a fiend has fixed an evil eye upon him, and beckons him to a doom he cannot resist. Gray felt that Lee never lost sight of him.

It was at night that their longest marches were made; but when the sun came fairly up, the girls were generally able to point out the established resting-places, where a commissariat of biltongue and Kafir corn lay hid in some rocky storehouse.

In these halting-places all slept through the golden hours of noon, the women at a prescribed distance. There had been five at first starting, and the party had been increased by three more joining them in a kloof, almost impassable from the density of the bush. Zwartz lay like a guardian in the centre of his female friends; they petted and talked to him at times, calling him all manner of endearing names, but Amayeka was his best friend; and Gray, sorrowful and restless, reclined always within arm's length of the wary Lee.

The latter was the first stirring. It was a sultry afternoon on the first day's march, and Lee took from the haversack the paper Brennard had slipped into it at the Witches' Krantz. The paragraph I have alluded to was as follows:

"We regret to learn that the indisposition of our governor, Sir Marmaduke Faulkner, still detains him in England, and that General Sir John Manvers has been requested to take command of the frontier forces at this critical period, when it is pretty well understood, by such as choose to open their eyes to the fact, that the Kafirs are rife for war, and that the Boers to the eastward are only waiting a favourable opportunity to proclaim their disaffection. Sir John may be daily expected from Cape Town."

"So," said Lee, his chest heaving, his eye dilating, "*he* is here! Well, there will come a day when we shall stand face to face, openly, as foes; I may fail of success, I may be beaten for want of a regular force, but I *may* be revenged—revenged;" and the tone in which he uttered this aroused the sleeping deserter.

Lee held a parley with Gray, but did not enlighten him fully on the subject of his enmity to the man who would soon be first in authority over the wide territory through which they were roaming. He gave him to understand, however, that his final object was not to join a tribe of savages in a fight against his countrymen; once well on the north-eastward, there would be no difficulty in proceeding by degrees to those settlements where many Dutch farmers lay bivouacked, with all their poor

household and farm property about them.

The character Lee had assumed for himself and friend was one which quite suited his disposition, and would greatly facilitate his movements; the Kafirs would welcome him as a trader, and pass him safely on as such; while the Dutch would receive him as a confederate, and hail with satisfaction so able an assistant as Gray, a deserter from the Royal Artillery.

Night fell. The Kafir girls re-adjusted Zwartz's burden; they frequently lightened it by carrying skins of gunpowder on their heads, which they did with perfect ease and grace, and Amayeka, uttering the simple warning, "It is time," passed on, lingered on the hill-side to point out the smoothest cattle-tracks to Gray, who, as his limbs recovered their elasticity, tried to reconcile himself to his fate by admitting the pleasant influence which the glittering eyes and brilliant smile of Amayeka shed on his moody moments.

Having passed through many intricate defiles and glens of indescribable beauty, they emerged, in about a fortnight from the first night march, upon a more open country. These plains were dotted with kraals, from each of which some "Great man" came forth; Amayeka acted as interpreter. A day was fixed for meeting in a secret spot, where a due exchange of goods was to be made. The wagons sent by the agent from the Gonube were already, with hides and horns, waiting there, and these were to be despatched by trusty convoy to the Witches' Krantz; Doda, the great councillor or the principal chief, firmly believing that unless the tribes kept to their agreement with Brennard, the latter

would withhold the supplies and betray the storehouses, or rather storehuts, which held the arms and ammunition of Kafirland.

A stronger would not have distinguished these huts from others of the hamlet, but day and night three dusky guards kept watch and ward around than, for fear of treachery or fire. These guards wove baskets, or shaped out bullet-moulds, or bound the assegai blades to the slender shafts; they did anything apparently but keep sentry over the domicile they so cautiously protected.

On the twelfth day of the journey, having headed the Imkwali river and traversed a plain, our travellers suddenly dipped between two hills, and on ascending the last, found themselves in front of an amphitheatre, over which Umlala's kraal and pasture-lands were spread. It was the chief residence of Umlala and his *hemraaden*, or councillors.

Behind this green space rose a range of purple heights; nearer to it, and sheltering the village from the north, was a chain of low hills, and the sides of these were dotted with thousands of beautiful cattle. The whole population of this territory was astir. Over one slope a hunting-party wound its way, below were children riding races on the backs of oxen, far too sleek for such an exertion; girls were laughing and talking together under the noble groups of trees, but the great mass of Kafirs had gathered in a crowd in an angle of the kraal. Amayeka, on perceiving this, bid the convoy await till her father should be sent for.

Doda came, he having, as I have shown, already held communication with Lee on the road, and he now invited him to

the front of his hut until Umlala should be ready to receive him. Ere long, a summons arrived, and Lee proceeded to a conference with Umlala.

The chief was seated on the ground, surrounded by several of his hemraaden. The subject of conversation had for many days touched upon the preparations for war, which, for months had been secretly progressing in Kafirland; and the intelligence which Amayeka brought, and which Lee confirmed, was soon conveyed by Doda: he told Umlala that the white men were making ready for battle. Even now, it was said, the white chiefs were beginning to count their red men by tens, for they were many.

No immediate or noisy demonstration followed this announcement. Umlala sat, to all appearance, in deep thought, Doda waiting at his right hand till it should please his chief to address him.

At last, having matured his thought, Umlala said, in a low and distinct voice,

"Amakosa noburoti bona"—"The Amakosa are brave."

The crowd testified their satisfaction by a murmur of assent that rolled through the assembly like the swell of an ocean wave.

"Our chief is wise," said Doda; "without him we are as the land in drought—as a bundle of sticks scattered for want of a cord—as people journeying on vast plains without a purpose, without landmarks. It is he who leads us from dark places, and sets our feet on open ground—we are his children—hear him."

"Umlala," answered Amani, "is my mouth, let him speak."

"Our ears are open," said Doda, and sat down with an uneasy glance at Amani.

For Doda was peacefully inclined—that is to say, though war was in his heart, he had tasted of the blessings of civilisation. He had seen his daughter, "sitting in the sun and eating honey," living under virtuous influences, in peace and plenty, at the mission station, and it was with inward reluctance that he had obeyed his chief in withdrawing her from thence. It would have been useless, as well as impolitic, to oppose his sentiments openly to Umlala's inclinations, especially as of late the malcontent Dutch had been tampering with the chiefs, and some mercenary and unprincipled traders had profited by the aspect of affairs to increase their traffic.

Amani rose. He was the rain-maker, or witch doctor, of the tribe—one of those wicked magicians of the country, who, taking advantage of the Kafir belief in evil agency, manage, with extraordinary tact, to turn the very changes of the elements to bad account. By his cunning and audacity, he had made such predictions and revelations as had obtained for him paramount ascendancy over his chief, and consequently the whole tribe. Doda both despised and dreaded him. He had missed him lately for several days. Amani was supposed to be in the retirement of the hills, preparing charms and incantations for the ceremony they had assembled to witness, the induction of the young warriors into their calling. But Doda, who had his scouts ever on the watch, felt sure that the wizard had made a hurried march

to some secret place of meeting with Brennard, who would have given him the last colonial news; and, armed with this, he could easily forestall Amayeka and her white confederates, since Amani could travel faster and by nearer paths than they could traverse in a body, and with Zwartz, encumbered with their contraband stores.

It was soon clear that such was the case.

Amani began his address by saying, that Umlala's eyes were open. Amani himself had predicted mischief. He had told his chief that the great white captains were coming to speak to them with guns; but as for the red men they had now on the borders of the colony, *they* could be counted in a day, they were *not* many. He called on the sons of Congo to sound the war-cry from the highest mountain-top.

"Swear," said he, "by the bones of Congo's forefathers, to drive the Amglezi to the sea which spits them up. Behold, we will turn the hail-storm of their fire to water—it shall be as water poured through a broken calabash. What right has the white man to put his foot before us on our war-paths, when we choose to quarrel with the Gaikas about grass? The bad people of Gaika steal from us—he shares the plunder—then we take up arms against him—the white man comes, and tramples down our corn; he begins the war, and will not let us rest in our huts, though our fight with Gaika is no business of his. Gaika calls himself the white man's friend; he is a liar—he hates the white man—but likes to sit where he will in the colony with his eyes open.

He stretches out his hand, and the Amglezi fill it. The Amglezi are fools, and believe him. He does not steal their cattle himself, but sits still upon the hills, and sees it go by to the kloofs in the Amatolas; and quarrels with us when he finds us there waiting to share the plunder that belongs to all the land—our land—a land that will soon be dead to us, for shall we reap the corn we have planted? Gaika is a woman—he will not fight us himself, but lifts up his voice, and cries aloud to the white men, who come among us like locusts, and eat us up, and then pay Gaika in beads and buttons for his treachery to his brothers. Let the Amglezi come—let them kill the last man of us—but let not Umlala's children put their necks under the foot of Gaika. Better to be dead lions in our own kraals, than live dogs in the Amglezi's territory. The white man calls himself the protector of the Kafir tribes dwelling on the borders of the country he has made his own; but we are oppressed by his protection, and we will not have it; and we know, too, that some of the Amglezi are with us in heart; for they tell us we are wronged, and bring us arms and powder wherewith to regain our rights."

Doda thought within himself, "we pay for such stores;" but the thought rested in his breast, for he dared not express it.

Amani proceeded, waving aloft an assegai, which quivered in the grasp of his muscular palm:

"Awake, sons of Congo! shout from the mountain-tops! the valleys are waiting to reply—we have sat still long enough. Behold the children of the foam will multiply, and come and

drive us like monkeys into the rocks. Shall we consent to sit there in darkness? Shall our young warriors be mown down like early grass, or be driven into the sea like ashes before the wind? Shall our cattle be taken from us, to languish in new pastures? Shout, young warriors of Kafirland! shout, for the elders of the tribe are women—their hearts grow white. Our old women would laugh at the old men, whose eyes are unclosed, but that their hearts tremble as they think of the strong hand of the Umburghi. Hark! the young women of Kafirland, the daughters of Congo, call to us in our sleep. Answer them, and let the war-cry be echoed back from the Kei to the Amatolas. Let Gaika know that we are men. Then shall he be ashamed—then shall he uncover his face, and turn it towards us, and we shall have light."

The Kafir girls, armed with assegais, and ranged in a double semicircle behind the councillors, responded to this appeal with a shrill chorus, their weapons rattling like the leaves of a forest in a gale of wind. Amani ceased speaking, but they took up the strain.

"Busa Abantu u ba hlanganise"—"Sound the alarm! gather the people together,"—they chanted over and over again in a tone of triumph and defiance. "Uya biswa go yithlo"—"You are called by your father."

"You are called, you are called," was repeated many times, till the young hunters paused on the hill paths, and, looking down, waved their muskets, for most of them were thus armed. Some threw their assegais and knob-kierries into the air, and

cried, “Izapa, izapa”—“Come on!” Six or seven women, the mothers of the kraal, stood round a skin stretched on sticks to the tightness of a drum; this they began to beat, now loud, now low, now in slow time, and now in quick, accompanying the measure with their feet, and repeating the cry, “Sound the alarm”—“Silathtekile”—“we are lost!”—the strange chorus rising, swelling, dying away into a cry of wailing and despair, and again filling the amphitheatre as it was taken up by the whole population of the valley.

Suddenly some of the newly-elected young warriors, twenty in number, stalked from a hut set a little apart from the others of the kraal, and Lee was thoroughly startled by their appearance. Whitened from head to foot with a preparation of ashes and chalk, their ghastly hue contrasted in a most extraordinary manner with the dusky colour of the rest of the tribe, some of whom drew as near as custom permitted, and united in a shout of welcome.

The faces of the youths were almost concealed by a thatched head-dress of reeds, surmounted by two tall and slender leaves of the palmeet plant; round their waists, and depending to their knees, were kilts of the same texture as the head-gear; brass bangles shone upon their arms and ankles, marking the exquisite contour of their limbs; and, shaking a reed in his hand, for as yet they were not permitted to wield the assegai, a youth advanced in pantomimic fashion. At one moment he would spring forward with a bound like a tiger’s, the next he would glide onward as

a bird skims the surface of the earth; then rising suddenly, he would execute a pirouette in a style that would establish the fame of an opera dancer. Anon he would balance himself on tiptoe like a Mercury, then wheeling round, and again springing into the air, would come down with an *aplomb* that stirred the spectators to loud applause, the men crying "It is good," the old women drumming loud and sharp in the back-ground, the younger ones advancing, retreating, and chanting shrilly to their accompaniment of rattling assegais; the spectators in the distance adding their meed of admiration, their cries of applause and encouragement echoing along the hills, and dying on the air, till taken up and repeated by the herdsmen in the valleys.

Umlala had been too much excited to hold a parley even on the important question of gunpowder traffic.

The chief and his councillors ceased to speak. Doda led the white men away, Amayeka following at a distance. A hut was set apart for their accommodation, and a huge steak, cut from an ox slaughtered in honour of the young warriors' installation, was sent to them by Umlala, together with some baskets of sour milk, and a good store of Indian corn. The bearer closed his message with the usual demand of *baseila*, which Lee answered with an English oath, and Gray responded to by sending the chief some tobacco.

As the night fell, the dark but shapely arm of Amayeka pushed aside the wicker door of the hut, and set within it a small English saucepan containing some fresh eggs, a little pipkin of clear

water, a few grains of salt—a great prize—and a cake made of coarsely-ground flour. Gray would have followed her to offer her thanks, but Lee restrained him at the doorway.

Ere closing it for the night, they looked out. The hills were silent, but, between the summits and the sky, a scout at times appeared, moving here and there in communication with others. The watch-fires began to glimmer, the cattle were settling in the kraals for the night, but the hamlet was still astir, and the dull beating of the great primitive drum went on. The stars came out, the Southern Cross shed its light upon the wild scene, and the young warriors still kept up their ghost-like dance upon the dewy turf, one party relieving the other, as did the singing-girls and elder women.

Long after the fire in the centre of the convicts' hut had been extinguished, did both the inmates, stretched on karosses, try to collect their somewhat scattered senses together. Still the weary drum beat on—still the shrill chorus rose and fell upon the clear night wind, and at times the shout of some excited dancer pierced the air. Lee, in wish, sent them to the infernal regions—whence, indeed, a stranger might infer they came—and tried to frame plans connected with the insurgent operations of the Dutch. Gray strove to pray, but knew not how—poor wretch!

"Ah," thought he, with a heavy sigh, "would I were once more a soldier, and an honest man!"

And with this vain wish he fell asleep, and dreamed he was a little child again, kneeling on the hearth beside his mother,

and repeating to her the simple prayer she used to teach him at eventide.

Chapter Six.
The Kafir Spy

We left Frankfort and Ormsby with their cavalcade of wagons, horses, and attendants, pursuing their way to the north-east.

I have no intention of giving you a detailed account of this part of their expedition, since they are not presented to the reader in the character of mere sportsmen—indeed such narratives belong to more experienced hands than mine, albeit, ere their able works appeared, I had collected a few anecdotes, which would now present no novelty.

May, the bushman guide, still headed the cavalcade, a unique advance-guard, closely followed by two or three of the queerest-looking mongrels possible, of which his favourite was a species of water-spaniel.

A fine bloodhound kept close to Ormsby's horse's heels, never condescending to join May and his scratch-pack, and scorning all offers from the bushman's cuisine; the only symptom of toleration of inferior caste shown by the aristocratic dog was a passive endurance of the infant Ellen's caresses, when she crawled through the grass to Major Frankfort's tent, into which the yellow face of the little imp no sooner peered, than she was snatched up by her father, and carried back to Fitje with a gentle rebuke. "The sir was kind," May said, "and he would not have

him imposed upon."

In many ways this stunted creature of the wilderness displayed a refinement of feeling not always met with among worldly beings, jealous of infringing on the conventionalism of society —people who meet you with "Unmeaning speech—exaggerated smile," and measure their civilities by the length of your purse, or your position in fashionable life.

At last, even he, of the active limbs and bronzed skin, begins to pant—his shadow shows like a frog beneath his feet; tired as he is, he laughs at it, spreads out his hands, whistles an opera air he has picked up from some military band, and capers in the glowing light.—Page 100.

And are these less treacherous than the savage? Verily, I

believe that, in spirit, they are just as deceitful.

But let us leave them, and return to our party.

There they go up the hill—May in advance with Spry and Punch, and Floss. The sun is blazing out, and our bushman winds his bright-coloured *douk* round his head, and tramps round the angle of a jutting rock, staff in hand. Before he does so, he looks back to see how the cavalcade gets on, lights his pipe, and alternately smoking, and singing, and whistling to his dogs, he proceeds leisurely along. At last, even he, of the active limbs and bronzed skin, begins to pant—his shadow shows like a frog beneath his feet; tired as he is, he laughs at it, spreads out his hands, whistles an opera air he has picked up from some military band, and capers in the glowing light, till wearied, he sits down on a block of granite, beneath a stunted bush, unslings his three-string fiddle from his neck, and plays with great skill, considering the means at hand, the rattling, saucy air of "Rory O'More."

And he was at it right merrily, when the first wagon, with its oxen smoking and breathing heavily, reached the spot he had chosen as the outspan, where a more solid breakfast was to be prepared than the one that had been hastily snatched at dawn.

The country, although only about nine miles distant from the picturesque locality on which our party had rested during the night, was now of a totally different character; great plains, only relieved here and there by low bush, or huge masses of stone, stretched out for miles before the traveller's eye, and the noble natural parks through which they had journeyed the preceding

day were hidden from their view by the undulations they had traversed. In the distance, between the arid earth and the glowing sky, at the edge of the horizon, stalked a company of ostriches, apparently the only tenants of this great solitude.

There was something very grand, and even affecting, in the contemplation of such a scene; at least, so thought Frankfort, whose heart expanded under the impression produced by Nature in her state of lonely majesty. Here she was not lovely, but sublime; the infinity of space, the shadowless land, the unclouded sky—too dazzling for mortal eye to dwell upon—the awful silence, all seemed more fully to betoken the eternal presence of God, than in green places where shelter was at hand, and where, therefore, the solitude was not so apparent, so vast. The very cries of wild beasts give life to the jungle—but here the human voice broke abruptly on the stillness of the plains, as if it had no business there, and Frankfort was thoroughly disenchanted of his sublime mood in contemplating the almost awful expanse, as May scraped his fiddle ere he laid it down to attend to Ormsby's inquiry as to "where his cigars had been packed."

It must be owned, that Ormsby had no taste for the sublime or the romantic; indeed, there are not many men in the world who would have found food for contemplation in the desert scene before them; and as for our young sub, I am forced to admit, that by the time he had smoked three cigars, he began to wonder what he should do with himself when breakfast was over.

Frankfort had stocked the wagon with many more luxuries on

Ormsby's account, than he would have thought of providing for himself; and the meal, spread out on the shady side of the wagon, was by no means despicable. Excellent tea, devilled biscuits, cold tongue and honey, an offering from Vanbloem, and added to these were savoury slices of porcupines, a viand from which, in its raw state, Ormsby had turned away in disgust, but to which, when cooked, he addressed himself with a keen relish.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.