# ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

## THE SETTLER AND THE SAVAGE

# Robert Michael Ballantyne
# The Settler and the Savage

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36094637*
*The Settler and the Savage:*

# Содержание

# R. M. Ballantyne
# The Settler and the Savage

## Chapter One.
## The Wild Karroo

A solitary horseman—a youth in early manhood—riding at a snail's pace over the great plains, or karroo, of South Africa. His chin on his breast; his hands in the pockets of an old shooting-coat; his legs in ragged trousers, and his feet in worn-out boots. Regardless of stirrups, the last are dangling. The reins hang on the neck of his steed, whose head may be said to dangle from its shoulders, so nearly does its nose approach the ground. A felt hat covers the youth's curly black head, and a double-barrelled gun is slung across his broad shoulders.

We present this picture to the reader as a subject of contemplation.

It was in the first quarter of the present century that the youth referred to—Charlie Considine by name—rode thus meditatively over that South African karroo. His depression was evidently not due to lack of spirit, for, when he suddenly awoke from his reverie, drew himself up and shook back his hair, his dark eyes opened with something like a flash. They lost some

of their fire, however, as he gazed round on the hot plain which undulated like the great ocean to the horizon, where a line of blue indicated mountains.

The truth is that Charlie Considine was lost—utterly lost on the karroo! That his horse was in the same lost condition became apparent from its stopping without orders and looking round languidly with a sigh.

"Come, Rob Roy," said the youth, gathering up the reins and patting the steed's neck, "this will never do. You and I must not give in to our first misfortune. No doubt the want of water for two days is hard to bear, but we are strong and young both of us. Come, let's try at least for a sheltering bush to sleep under, before the sun goes down."

Animated by the cheering voice, if not by the words, of its rider, the horse responded to the exhortation by breaking into a shuffling canter.

After a short time the youth came in sight of what appeared to be a herd of cattle in the far distance. In eager expectation he galloped towards them and found that his conjectures were correct. They were cattle in charge of one of that lowest of the human race, a Bushman. The diminutive, black-skinned, and monkey-faced creature was nearly naked. He carried a sheepskin kaross, or blanket, on his left shoulder, and a knobbed stick, or "kerrie," in his right hand.

"Can you speak English?" asked Considine as he rode up.

The Bushman looked vacant and made no reply.

"Where is your master's house?" asked the youth.

A stare was the only answer.

"Can't you speak, you dried-up essence of stupidity!" exclaimed Charlie with impatience.

At this the Bushman uttered something with so many klicks, klucks, and gurgles in it that his interrogator at once relinquished the use of the tongue, and took to signs, but with no better success, his efforts having only the effect of causing the mouth of the Bushman to expand from ear to ear. Uttering a few more klicks and gurgles, he pointed in the direction of the setting sun. As Considine could elicit no fuller information he bade him a contemptuous farewell and rode away in the direction indicated.

He had not gone far when a dark speck became visible on the horizon directly in front.

"Ho! Rob," he exclaimed, "that looks like something—a bush, is it? If so, we may find water there, who knows—eh? No, it can't be a bush, for it moves," he added in a tone of disappointment. "Why, I do believe it's an ostrich! Well, if we can't find anything to drink, I'll try to get something to eat."

Urging his jaded steed into a gallop, the youth soon drew near enough to discover that the object was neither bush nor ostrich, but a horseman.

The times of which we write were unsettled. Considine, although "lost," was sufficiently aware of his whereabouts to understand that he was near the north-eastern frontier of Cape Colony. He deemed it prudent, therefore, to unsling his gun. On

drawing nearer he became convinced from the appearance of the stranger that he could not be a Kafir. When close enough to perceive that he was a white man, mounted and armed much like himself, he re-slung his gun, waved his cap in token of friendship, and galloped forward with the confidence of youth.

The stranger proved to be a young man of about his own age—a little over twenty—but much taller and more massive in frame. He was, indeed, a young giant, and bestrode a horse suitable to his weight. He was clad in the rough woollen and leathern garments worn by the frontier farmers, or boers, of that period, and carried one of those long heavy flint-lock guns, or "roers," which the Dutch-African colonist then deemed the most effective weapon in the universe.

"Well met!" exclaimed Considine heartily, as he rode up.

"Humph! that depends on whether we meet as friends or foes," replied the stranger, with a smile on his cheerful countenance that accorded ill with the caution of his words.

"Well met, I say again, whether we be friends or foes," returned Considine still more heartily, "for if we be friends we shall fraternise; if we be foes we shall fight, and I would rather fight you for love, hate, or fun, than die of starvation in the karroo."

"What is your name, and where do you come from?" demanded the stranger.

"One question at a time, if you please," answered the youth. "My name is Charles Considine. What is yours?"

"Hans Marais."

"Well, Mr Marais, I come from England, which is my native home. In the coming I managed to get wrecked in Table Bay, landed at Capetown, joined a frontier farmer, and came up here—a long and roughish journey, as probably you know, and as my garments testify. On the way I lost my comrades, and in trying to find them lost myself. For two days nothing in the shape of meat or drink has passed my lips, and my poor horse has fared little better in the way of drink, though the karroo-bush has furnished him with food enough to keep his bones together. So now, you have my biography in brief, and if you be a man possessed of any powers of sympathy, you will know what to do."

The young Dutchman held out his huge hand, which Considine grasped and shook warmly.

"Come," he said, while a slight smile played on his bronzed countenance; "I have nothing here to give you, but if you will come with me to yon koppie you shall have both meat and drink."

The koppie to which he referred was a scarce discernible knoll on the horizon.

Hans Marais seemed to be a man of few words, for he turned and galloped away, without for some time uttering another syllable to his companion. As for Considine, the thought of once more feasting on any sort of meat and drink was so fascinating, in his then ravenous condition, that he cared for nought else, and followed his guide in silence.

Soon the herbage on the plain became more luxuriant, and in

half an hour the two horsemen found themselves riding among scattered groups of mimosa bushes, the thorns of which were from three to five inches long, while their sweet fragrance scented the whole atmosphere.

On reaching the ridge of one of the undulations of the plain, Hans Marais drew rein and gazed intently towards the distant horizon. At the same time Considine's horse pricked up its ears, pawed the ground, and exhibited unwonted signs of a desire to advance.

"Hallo, Rob!" exclaimed its master, "what's wrong with you?"

"Your horse has been gifted by his Maker with a power," said Hans, "which has been denied to man. He scents water. But before he shall taste it he must help me to procure fresh meat. Do you see the boks on that koppie?"

"Do you mean those white specks like ostrich eggs on the hillock to the right of the big bush?"

"The same. These are springboks. Ride away down by that hollow till you get somewhat in their rear, and then drive them in the direction of that clump of bushes on our left, just under the sun."

Without waiting for a reply Hans rode off at a gallop, and Considine proceeded to obey orders.

A few minutes sufficed to bring him close to the springboks, which beautiful antelopes no sooner observed him than, after one brief gaze of surprise, they bounded away in the direction of the bushes indicated by Hans,—conscious apparently of their

superior fleetness, for they seemed in no great haste, but leaped about as if half in play, one and another taking an occasional spring of six feet or more into the air. As they passed the bushes towards which Considine drove them, a white puff was seen to burst from them, and the huge roer of Hans Marais sent forth its bellowing report. It seemed as if the entire flock of boks had received an electric shock, so high did they spring into the air. Then they dashed off at full speed, leaving one of their number dead upon the plain.

When Considine came up he found that Hans had already disembowelled the springbok, and was in the act of fastening the carcase on his horse behind the saddle. Remounting immediately, the hunter galloped towards a mound, on the top of which the bushes formed a dense brake. Skirting this till he reached the other side, he pulled up, exclaiming—

"There, you'll find good water in the hollow; go drink, while I prepare supper on the koppie."

Considine went off at once. Indeed, he could not have done otherwise, for his impatient horse took the bit in its mouth and galloped towards a small pool of water, which was so yellow with mud that it resembled thin pea-soup.

Thirsty though he was, the youth could not help smiling at his new friend's idea of "good" water, but he was not in a condition to be fastidious. Jumping out of the saddle, he lay down on his breast, dipped his lips into the muddy liquid, and drank with as much enjoyment as if the beverage had been nectar—or Bass.

Rob Roy also stood, in a state of perfect bliss, in the middle of the pool, sucking the water in with unwearied vigour. It seemed as if man and horse had laid a wager as to who should drink most. At last, the point of utmost capacity in both was reached, and they retired with a sigh of contentment, Rob Roy to browse on the plain, and his master to betake himself to the encampment on the knoll, where Hans Marais quickly supplied him with glorious steaks of springbok venison.

"Isn't it an enjoyable thing to eat when one is hungry, eh?" said Considine, after half an hour's silent devotion to the duty in hand.—"Why, where got you that?"

He referred to an ostrich egg which his companion had taken from a saddle-bag, and in one end of which he was busy boring a hole.

"Found it in the sand just before I found you," said Hans. "Did you ever eat one?"

"No, never."

"Well then, you shall do so now, and I'll show you how the niggers here make an omelet."

He planted the huge egg in the hot ashes as he spoke, and kept stirring its contents with a piece of stick until sufficiently cooked.

"Not bad,—eh?"

"Glorious!" exclaimed Considine, smacking his lips.

Both youths continued to smack their lips over the egg until it was finished, after which Charlie pronounced it not only a glorious but a satisfying morsel. This was doubtless true, for an

ostrich egg is considered equal to twenty-four hen's eggs.

Returning to the springbok steaks, the half-starved youth continued his repast, while Hans Marais, having finished, extended his huge frame beside the camp-fire, leaned upon his saddle, and smoked his pipe in benignant contemplation of his companion.

"This is pleasant!" said Charlie, pausing, with a sigh, and looking up.

"Ja, it is pleasant," replied Hans.

"Ja!" repeated Charlie, quoting the Dutch "Yes" of the other; "are you a Dutchman?"

"I am; at least I am a Cape colonist descended from Dutchmen. Why are you surprised?"

"Because," replied his companion, while he prepared another steak over the embers, "you speak English so well that I could not have known it. How came you to learn the language so perfectly?"

"My father, being wiser than some of his friends and neighbours," said Hans, "sent me to Capetown to be educated. I suppose that is the reason. We dwelt in the western part of the colony then, and I was the eldest of the family. When a number of us Dutchmen left that part of the country—being disgusted with the Government,—and came up here, my brothers and sister had to be taken from school. This was a pity, for education taught me to know that education is an inestimable blessing—the want of it a heavy misfortune."

"True," remarked Considine. But being still too busy with the steaks to pursue the subject he merely added—"Does your father live near this?"

"About seven hours' ride, which, as I daresay you know, is forty-two miles. You shall go home with me to-morrow."

"How many are there of you?" asked Considine, looking at the young Dutchman over a bone. "Excuse my being so impolite," he added, "but d'you know, one feels horribly like a tiger after a two days' fast."

"Don't stand on ceremony," said the other, with a laugh. "When you are satisfied we can converse. There are fifteen of us: father, mother, sister, and eleven boys besides myself. I'll tell you about them all after supper; meanwhile I'll go fetch the horses, for there are lions about, as I daresay you know, and some of them are nearly as ravenous as yourself."

Hans rose, put his pipe in the band of his broad-brimmed hat, and sauntered heavily out of the thicket.

In a few minutes he returned, leading the horses, and then busied himself in surrounding the camp with an almost impenetrable wall of mimosa-thorn branches, the spikes of which were so tremendous that it seemed as if nothing smaller than an elephant could force its way through. This done, he sat down and quietly refilled his pipe, while Considine, having at last finished his meal, drew the embers of the fire together, disposed his limbs comfortably on the ground, lay back on his saddle, and prepared to enjoy a contemplative gaze at the cheering blaze and

an interrogative conversation with his new friend.

"Do you smoke?" asked Hans.

"No."

"Why?"

"Because it makes me sick, and I don't like it."

Hans looked surprised. This was a new idea to him, and he sat for some time pondering it; indeed, we may say with truth that he "smoked it" In a few minutes he looked earnestly at the youth, and asked why he came to the Cape.

"To make my fortune," answered Considine.

"Fortunes are not easily made at the Cape," was the grave reply. "My father has been making his fortune for the last quarter of a century, and it's not made yet.—Why did you choose the Cape?"

"I didn't choose it."

"No?" said the Dutchman, with a look of surprise.

"No," responded the Englishman; "my coming here was not a matter of choice: it was necessity. Come, I will make a confidant of you and relate my history. Don't be alarmed, I won't keep you up all night with prosy details. My life, as you may see, has not yet been a long one, and until this year it has been comparatively uneventful."

He paused a few moments as if to recall the past, while his companion, picking his pipe with a mimosa thorn, settled himself to listen.

"Father, mother, brothers, and sisters I have none," began

Considine as he whittled a stick—a pastime, by the way, which is erroneously supposed to be an exclusively American privilege. "Neither have I grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, nephews, nieces, or anything else of the sort. They all died either before or soon after I was born. My only living relation is an uncle, who was my guardian. He is a sea-captain, and a good man, but tough. I bear him no ill-will. I would not speak disrespectfully of him; but he is tough, and, I incline to think, no better than he should be. Infancy and boyhood with squalling and schooling I pass over. My uncle ordered me to study for the medical profession, and I obeyed. Wishing to see a little of the world before finishing my course, I sailed in a vessel bound for Australia. We touched at Table Bay in passing. Obtaining leave, I went ashore at Capetown. The ship also went ashore—without leave—in company with six other ships, during a terrific gale which sprang up in the night. Our vessel became a total wreck. The crew were saved, but my effects went with the cargo to the bottom. Fortunately, however, I had carried ashore with me the little cash I possessed."

"I found the Capetown people very kind. One of them took me by the hand and offered me employment, but I preferred to proceed into the interior with a trader and work or shoot my way, in order to save my money. No trader being about to start at that time, I was obliged to accept the offer of a frontier farmer, who, for a small sum, agreed to allow me to accompany his waggons, on condition that I should make myself generally

useful. I grudged the cash, but closed with the offer, and next day started on our journey of six hundred miles—such being the distance we had to go, according to my employer or comrade, Jan Smit."

"Who?" exclaimed Hans, with sudden energy.

"Jan Smit," repeated Considine. "Do you know him?"

"Ja—but go on," said Hans, with a nod and a smile.

"Well, I soon found that my Dutch comrade—"

"He's only half Dutch," interrupted Hans. "His mother was Dutch, but his father is English."

"Well, Dutch or English, he is the most unmitigated scoundrel I ever met."

"Ja," muttered Hans, "he is."

"And I soon found that my trip of pleasure became a trip of torment. It is true we shot plenty of game—lions among the rest—but in camp the man was so unbearable that disgust counterbalanced all the pleasure of the trip. I tried hard to get the better of him by good-humour and jollity, but he became so insolent at last that I could not stand it. Three days ago when I asked him how far we were from his farm, he growled that it wasn't far off now; whereupon I could not refrain from saying that I was glad to hear it, as we should soon have the pleasure of parting company. This put him in a rage. He kicked over the pot containing part of our breakfast, and told me I might part company then and there if I pleased. My temper does not easily go, but it went at last. I jumped up, saddled my horse, mounted,

and rode away. Of course I lost myself immediately, and for two days have been trying to find myself, without success, mourning over my fate and folly, and fasting from necessity. But for my opportune meeting with you, Mr Marais, it might have gone hard with me and my poor horse, for the want of water had well-nigh floored us both."

"You'll never make your fortune by doctoring on the frontier," said Hans, after a few minutes' silence. "Nobody gets ill in this splendid climate—besides, we couldn't afford to waste time in that way. People here usually live to a great age, and then go off without the assistance of a doctor. What else can you turn your hand to?"

"Anything," replied Considine, with the overweening confidence of youth.

"Which means nothing, I suspect," said the Dutchman, "for Jack-of-all-trades is proverbially master of none."

"It may be so," retorted the other, "nevertheless, without boasting, I may venture to assert—because I can prove it—that I am able to make tables, chairs, chests, and such-like things, besides knowing something of the blacksmith's trade. In regard to doctoring, I am not entitled to practise for fees, not yet being full-fledged—only a third-year student—but I may do a little in that way for love, you know. If you have a leg, for instance, that wants amputating, I can manage it for you with a good carving-knife and a cross-cut saw. Or, should a grinder give you annoyance, any sort of pincers, small enough to enter your

mouth, will enable me to relieve you."

At this Hans smiled and displayed a set of brilliant "grinders," which did not appear likely to give him annoyance for some time to come.

"Can you shoot?" asked Hans, laying his hand on his companion's double-barrelled gun, which lay on the ground between them, and which, with its delicate proportions and percussion-locks, formed a striking contrast to the battered, heavy, flint-lock weapon of the Dutchman.

"Ay, to some extent, as the lions' skins in Jan Smit's waggon can testify.—By the way," added Considine quickly, "you said that you knew Smit. Can you tell me where he lives? because I still owe him the half of the money promised for permission to accompany him on this trip, and should not like to remain his debtor."

"Ja, I know where he lives. He's a bad specimen of a Dutch farmer in every respect, except as to size. He lives quite close to our farm—more's the pity!—and is one of those men who do their best to keep up bad feeling between the frontier-men and the Kafirs. The evil deeds of men such as he are represented in England, by designing or foolish persons, as being characteristic of the whole class of frontier farmers, hence we are regarded as a savage set, while, in my humble opinion, we are no worse than the people of other colonies placed in similar circumstances—perhaps better than some of them. Do you know anything of our past history?"

"Not much," replied Considine, throwing away the remnant of the stick he had been whittling, and commencing on another piece. "Of course I know that the Cape was first doubled by the Portuguese commander Bartholomew Diaz in, I think, 1486, and after him by Vasco de Gama, and that the Dutch formed the first settlement on it under Van Riebeek in 1652, but beyond this my knowledge of Cape history and dates is hazy and confused. I know, however, that your forefathers mismanaged the country for about a century and a half, after which it finally came into possession of the British in 1806."

"Humph!" ejaculated Hans, while a shade of displeasure flitted for a moment across his broad visage. "'Tis a pity your reading had not extended farther, for then you would have learned that from 1806 the colony has been mismanaged by *your* countrymen, and the last fruit of their mismanagement has been a bloody war with the Kafirs, which has only just been concluded. Peace has been made only this year, and the frontier is now at rest. But who will rebuild the burned homesteads of this desolated land? who will reimburse the ruined farmers? above all, who will restore the lost lives?"

The young Dutchman's eyes kindled, and his stern face flushed as he spoke, for although his own homestead had escaped the ruthless savage, friends and kindred had suffered deeply in the irruption referred to, which took place in 1819, and one or two of his intimate comrades had found early graves in the wild karroo.

Considine, sympathising with his companion's feelings, said, "I doubt not that you have much to complain of, for there is no colony under the sun that escapes from the evil acts of occasional bad or incompetent Governors. But pray do not extend your indignation to me or to my countrymen at large, for few of us know the true merits of your case. And tell me, what was the origin of the war which has just ended?"

The young farmer's anger had passed away as quickly as it came. Letting his bulky frame sink back into the reclining position from which he had partially risen, he replied—

"Just the old story—self-will and stupidity. That domineering fellow Lord Charles Somerset, intending to check the plundering of the colony by Kafirs, chose to enter into treaties with Gaika as paramount chief of Kafirland, although Gaika himself told him plainly that he was not paramount chief. Of course the other chiefs were indignant, and refused to recognise such treaties. They did more: they made war on Gaika, and beat him, whereupon Somerset, instead of leaving the niggers to fight their own battles, must needs send a great commando of military and burghers to 'restore' Gaika to his so-called supremacy. This was done. The chief T'slambi was driven from his villages, and no fewer than 11,000 head of cattle were handed over to Gaika. While this was going on at the eastern frontier, the Kafirs invaded the colony at other points, drove in the small military posts, ravaged the whole land, and even attacked the military headquarters at Grahamstown, where, however, they

were defeated with great slaughter. After this a large force was sent to drive them out of their great stronghold, the Fish River bush. This was successfully accomplished, and then, at last, the right thing was done. The Governor met the Kafir chiefs, when it was agreed that they should evacuate the country between the Great Fish River and the Keiskamma, and that the territory so evacuated should form *neutral ground*. So matters stand at present, but I have no faith in Kafirs. It is their pride to lie, their business to make war, and their delight to plunder."

"But is it not the same with *all* savages?" asked Considine.

"Doubtless it is, therefore *no* savages ought to be trusted, as civilised men are trusted, till they cease to be savages. We trust them too much. Time will show.—By the way, I hear that a new move is about to be attempted. Rumour says that your Government is going to send out a strong party of emigrants to colonise the eastern frontier. Is this true?"

"It is," replied Considine; "I wonder that you have not heard all about it before now."

"Good reasons for that. For one thing, I have just returned from a long trip into the north-western districts, and I have not been in the way of hearing news for some time. Besides, we have no newspapers in the colony. Everything comes to us by word of mouth, and that slowly. Tell me about this matter."

"There is little to tell," returned Considine, replenishing the fire with a thick branch, which sent up a magnificent display of sparks and scared away a hyena and two jackals that had

been prowling round the camp-fence. “The fact is that there is a great deal of distress in England just now, and a redundant population of idlers, owing to the cessation of continental wars. This seems to have put it into the heads of some people in power to encourage emigration to the eastern part of this colony. In the House of Commons 50,000 pounds have been voted in aid of the plan, and it seems that when the proposal was first made public, no fewer than 90,000 would-be emigrants applied for leave to come out here. Of these I believe 4000 have been selected, and twenty-three vessels chartered to convey them out. This is all I could learn before I left England, but I suppose we shall have more light on the subject ere many months have gone by.”

“A good plan,” said the Dutchman, with a grim smile, “but I pity the emigrants!”

As Considine’s head drooped at this point, and his eyes winked with that owlish look which indicates the approach of irresistible sleep, Hans Marais rose, and, spreading a large kaross or blanket of leopard skin on the ground, invited his companion to lie down thereon. The youth willingly complied, stretched himself beside the Dutchman, and almost instantly fell sound asleep. Hans spread a lighter covering over himself and his comrade, and, with his head on his saddle, lay for a long time gazing tranquilly at the stars, which shone with an intensity of lustre peculiar to that region of the southern hemisphere, while the yelling cries of jackals and the funereal moaning of spotted hyenas, with an occasional distant roar from the king of beasts,

formed an appropriate lullaby.

# Chapter Two.
# Introduces a Cape Dutchman and his Family, and Shows the Uncertainty of Human Plans

The break of day found Charlie Considine and Hans Marais galloping lightly over the karroo towards a range of mountains which, on the previous evening, had appeared like a faint line of blue on the horizon.

The sun was just rising in a blaze of splendour, giving promise of an oppressive day, when the horsemen topped a ridge beyond which lay the primitive buildings of a frontier farm.

Considine uttered an exclamation of surprise, and looked inquiringly at his companion.

"My father's farm," said Hans, drawing rein and advancing at a foot-pace.

"A lovely spot," returned his companion, "but I cannot say much for the buildings."

"They are well suited to their purpose nevertheless," said Hans; "besides, would it be wise to build fine houses for Kafirs to burn?"

"Is being burnt by Kafirs the necessary end of all frontier farms?" asked Considine, with a smile.

"Not the necessary, but the probable end. Many a one has been burnt in times gone by, and many a one will be burnt again, if the Government and people in England do not recognise and admit the two great facts, that the interest as well as the main desire of the frontier settler is *peace*, while the chief delight as well as business of the Kafir is *war*. But I suppose that you, being an Englishman, will not believe that until conviction is forced on you by experience.—Come, I will introduce you to one of those colonists who are supposed to be such discontented fire-eaters; I think he will receive you hospitably."

The young farmer put spurs to his horse as he spoke, and dashed away over the plain, closely followed by his new friend, who was not sorry to drop the conversation, being almost entirely ignorant of the merits of the question raised.

The style of the group of buildings to which they drew near was not entirely unfamiliar to Considine, for he had passed one or two similar farms, belonging to Cape Dutchmen, on his trip from the sea-coast to the interior. There were about this farm, however, a few prominent points of difference. The cottages, being built of sun-dried bricks, were little better than mud-huts, but there were more of them than Considine had hitherto seen on such farms, and the chief dwelling, in particular, displayed some touches of taste which betokened superior refinement in the inhabitants. The group lay in a hollow on the margin of an insignificant stream, whose course through the plain was marked by a thick belt of beautiful mimosa-bushes. Close to the houses,

these mimosas, large enough to merit the title of trees, formed a green setting in which the farm appeared to nestle as if desirous of escaping the sunshine. A few cactus shrubs and aloes were scattered about in rear of the principal dwelling, in the midst of which stood several mud-huts resembling gigantic bee-hives. In these dwelt some of the Hottentot and other servants of the farm, while, a little to the right of them, on a high mound, were situated the kraals or enclosures for cattle and sheep. About fifty yards farther off, a clump of tall trees indicated the position of a garden, whose fruit-trees were laden with the blossoms or beginnings of a rich crop of peaches, lemons, oranges, apricots, figs, pears, plums, apples, pomegranates, and many other fruits and vegetables. This bright and fruitful gem, in the midst of the brown and apparently barren karroo, was chiefly due to the existence of a large enclosure or dam which the thrifty farmer had constructed about half a mile from the homestead, and the clear waters of which shimmered in the centre of the picture, even when prolonged drought had quite dried up the bed of its parent stream. The peaceful beauty of the scene was completed by its grand background of blue mountains.

A tall, powerful, middle-aged man, in a coarse cloth jacket, leathern trousers or "crackers," and a broad-brimmed home-made hat, issued from the chief dwelling-house as the horsemen galloped up and drew rein. The sons of the family and a number of barking dogs also greeted them. Hans and Considine sprang to the ground, while two or three of the eleven brothers, of various

ages—also in leathern crackers, but without coats or hats—came forward, kicked the dogs, and led the horses away.

"Let me introduce a stranger, father, whom I have found—lost in the karroo," said Hans.

"Welcome to Eden! Come in, come in," said Mynheer Conrad Marais heartily, as he shook his visitor by the hand.

Considine suitably acknowledged the hospitable greeting and followed his host into the principal room of his residence.

There was no hall or passage to the house. The visitor walked straight off the veldt, or plain, into the drawing-room—if we may so style it. The house door was also the drawing-room door, and it was divided transversely into two halves, whereby an open window could at any moment be formed by shutting the lower half of the door. There was no ceiling to the room. You could see the ridge-pole and rafters by looking up between the beams, on one of which latter a swallow—taking advantage of the ever open door and the general hospitality of the family—had built its nest. The six-foot sons almost touched the said nest with their heads; as to the smaller youths it was beyond the reach of most of them, but had it been otherwise no one would have disturbed the lively little intruder.

The floor of the apartment was made of hard earth, without carpet. The whitewashed walls were graced with various garments, as well as implements and trophies of the chase.

From the beams hung joints of meat, masses of dried flesh, and various kinds of game, large whips—termed sjamboks

(pronounced *shamboks*)—made of rhinoceros or hippopotamus hide, leopard and lion skins, ostrich eggs and feathers, dried fruit, strings of onions, and other miscellaneous objects; on the floor stood a large deal table, and chairs of the same description—all home-made,—two waggon chests, a giant churn, a large iron pot, several wooden pitchers hooped with brass, and a side-table on which were a large brass-clasped Dutch Bible, a set of Dutch tea-cups, an urn, and a brass tea-kettle heated like a chafing-dish. On the walls and in corners were several flint-lock guns, and one or two of the short light javelins used by the Kafirs for throwing in battle, named assagais.

Three small doors led into three inner rooms, in which the entire family slept. There were no other apartments, the kitchen being an outhouse. On the centre table was spread a substantial breakfast, from which the various members of the family had risen on the arrival of the horsemen.

Considine was introduced to Mynheer Marais' vrouw, a good-looking, fat, and motherly woman verging on forty,—and his daughter Bertha, a pretty little girl of eight or nine.

"What is Mynheer's name?" was the matron's first question.

Mynheer replied that it was Charles Considine.

"Was Mynheer English?"

"Yes," Mynheer was proud to acknowledge the fact.

Mrs Marais followed up these questions with a host of others—such as, the age and profession of Mynheer, the number of his relatives, and the object of his visit to South Africa. Mynheer

Marais himself, after getting a brief outline of his son's meeting with the Englishman, backed the attack of his pleasant-faced vrouw by putting a number of questions as to the political state of Europe then existing, and the chances of the British Government seriously taking into consideration the unsatisfactory condition of the Cape frontier and its relations with the Kafirs.

To all of these and a multitude of other questions Charlie Considine replied with great readiness and good-humour, as far as his knowledge enabled him, for he began quickly to appreciate the fact that these isolated farmers, who almost never saw a newspaper were thirsting for information as to the world in general as well as with regard to himself in particular.

During this bombardment of queries the host and hostess were not forgetful to supply their young guest with the viands under which the substantial table groaned, while several of the younger members of the family, including the pretty Bertha, stood behind the rest and waited on them. With the exception of the host and hostess, none of the household spoke during the meal, all being fully occupied in listening eagerly and eating heartily.

When the Dutch fire began to slacken for want of ammunition, Considine retaliated by opening a British battery, and soon learned that Marais and his wife both claimed, and were not a little proud of, a few drops of French blood. Their progenitors on the mother's side, they said, were descended from one of the French Huguenot families which settled in the colony after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

"You see," said Mynheer Marais, with a quiet smile of satisfaction, as he applied a boiled cob of mealies or Indian corn to his powerful teeth, "our family may be said to be about two-thirds Dutch and one-third French. In fact, we have also a little English blood in our veins, for my great-grandfather's mother was English on the father's side and Dutch on the mother's. Perhaps this accounts to some extent for my tendency to adopt some English and American ideas in the improvement of my farm, which is not a characteristic of my Cape-Dutch brethren."

"So I have been told, and to some extent have seen," said Considine, with a sly glance; "in fact they appear to be rather lazy than otherwise."

"Not lazy, young sir," returned Marais with some emphasis. "They are easy-going and easily satisfied, and not solicitous to add to their material comforts beyond a certain point—in short, contented with little, like Frenchmen, which is a praiseworthy condition of mind, commended in Holy Writ, and not disposed to make haste to be rich, like you English."

"Ah, I see," rejoined Considine, who observed a twinkle in the eyes of some of Mynheer's stalwart sons.

"Yes," pursued the farmer, buttering another mealie-cob, and commencing to eat it with infinite gusto, "you see, the Cape Dutchmen, although as fine a set of men as ever lived, are just a *little* too contented and slow; on the other hand, young sir, you English are much too reckless and fast—"

"Just so," interrupted Considine, bowing his thanks to the

hostess for a third venison-steak which she had put on his plate; "the Dutch too slow, the English too fast, so that three parts Dutch, two parts French, and one part English—like a dash of seasoning—is, it seems, the perfect Marais mixture."

This remark produced a sudden and unintentional burst of laughter from the young Maraises, not so much on account of the excess of humour contained in it, as from the fact that never before had they heard a jest of any kind fabricated at the expense of their father, of whom they stood much in awe, and for whom they had a profound respect.

Conrad Marais, however, could take a joke, although not much given to making one. He smiled blandly over the edge of his mealie-cob.

"You're right, sir,—right; the mixture is not a bad one. The Dutch element gives steadiness, the English vigour, and the French spirit.—By the way, Arend," he continued, turning to one of his stout olive-branches, "talking of spirit reminds me that you will have to go to work at that leak in the dam with more spirit than usual, for we can't afford to lose water in this dry weather. It is not finished, I think?"

"No, father, but we hope to get it done this afternoon."

"That's well. How many of you are at it?"

"David and I, with six Totties. Old Sam is ill, and none of the others can be spared to-day."

"Can't some of your brothers help?" asked the farmer. "Losing water is as bad almost as losing gold."

"Joseph meant to come, but he started at six this morning to look after the cattle. We hear that the Kafirs carried off some of Jan Smit's sheep yesterday."

"The black scoundrels!" exclaimed Conrad Marais, with a growl and a frown, "they are never at rest, either in times of peace or of war."

The frown passed as quickly as it came, and the genial smile habitual to the farmer resumed its place on his countenance as he ran his fingers through the thick masses of his iron-grey hair, and rose from the table.

"Come, Mr Considine," he said, putting on his hat, "are you disposed for a ride? I take a look round the farm every morning to see that things are going straight. Will you join me?"

Of course Considine gladly assented, and Hans said he would accompany them, while the other sons—except of course the younger ones, and the baby who was Bertha's special charge—went out to their various avocations.

A few minutes later the three horsemen were cantering over the plain.

During the ride, Considine was again questioned closely as to his future intentions and prospects, but without anything very satisfactory being evolved. At last Conrad Marais pulled up, after a long pause in the conversation, and while they advanced at a walk, said— "Well, I've been *thinking*, and here is the outcome. You want work, Mr Considine, and I want a workman. You've had a good education, which I count a priceless advantage. Some

of my sons have had a little, but since I came here the young ones have had none at all worth mentioning. What say you to become a schoolmaster? You stop with me and give the youngsters as much as you think fit of whatever you know, and I'll give you house-room and food, with a small salary and a hearty welcome. You need not bind yourself. If you don't like it, you can leave it. If you do like it, you are welcome to stay as long as you please, and you'll thus have an opportunity of looking about and deciding on your future plans. What say you?"

Considine received the opening sentences of this proposal with a smile, but as the farmer went on he became grave, and at length seriously entertained the idea. After having slept a night over it he finally resolved to accept the offer, and next day was fairly installed as dominie and a member of the farmer's family. School-books were ferreted out from the bottom of family chests; a Hottentot's (or Tottie's) mud-hut was converted into a schoolroom; six of the farmer's sons—beginning almost at the foot of the scale—formed a class. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were unfolded to youthful and not unwilling minds, even Latin was broached by the eldest of the six, and, during a separate hour in the evening, French was taught to Bertha. Everything, in short, was put in train, and, as Considine expressed it, "the Marais Academy was going full swing," when an event occurred which instantly sent French and Latin to the right-about and scattered the three R's to the four winds.

This was nothing less than an order from the Colonial

Government to the Field Cornets on the frontier to engage waggons and oxen from the farmers, to be sent to Algoa Bay for the purpose of conveying the British immigrants—expected in a few weeks—from the coast to the various locations destined for their reception.

Among others, Conrad Marais was to send two waggons and spans of oxen, each span consisting of eighteen animals. Hans Marais was to go in charge, and Hans resolved to have Considine as a companion, for the journey down to the coast was long—about 160 miles,—and the two youths had formed so strong an attachment during their short acquaintance that Considine was as anxious to go as his friend could desire.

Conrad Marais, having no objection to this arrangement, the oxen were "inspanned," and the day following that on which the order was received they set off towards the shores of the Indian Ocean.

Having to pass the residence of Jan Smit on the way, Considine seized the opportunity to visit his former cross-grained companion and pay his debt.

Jan Smit was in a more savage humour than usual when the young man walked up to his dwelling. The farmer's back was towards him as he approached. He stood nervously switching a sjambok in his right hand, while he stormed in Dutch at three of his unfortunate people, or rather slaves. One was a sturdy Hottentot named Ruyter, one a Malay named Abdul Jemalee, both of whom had travelled with Considine on the up journey.

The third was the Bushman whom he had encountered when lost on the karroo, and who, owing to his inveterate stupidity, had been named Booby.

They had all been implicated in the recent loss of cattle suffered by their savage master, who had already flogged the Bushman with the sjambok and was furiously interrogating the Hottentot. At last he gave him a tremendous cut across the shoulders, which immediately raised a dark red bar thereon.

Ruyter's black eyes flashed. He did not wince, but drew himself quickly up like a man about to retaliate. Jan Smit observing and resenting the action, at once knocked him down.

Ruyter slowly rose and staggered away just as Considine came up. The youth could not resist the inclination to exclaim "Shame!"

"Who dares—" cried Jan Smit, turning fiercely round. He paused in mute surprise at sight of his former companion.

"*I* dare!" said Considine sternly; "many a time the word has been on my lips before, and now that it has passed them it may go. I came not here, however, to bully, or be bullied, but to pay my debt to you."

He drew out a leathern purse as he spoke, and the Dutchman, whose spirit was quelled both by the manner and the matter of his visitor's remark, led the way to his domicile.

The house resembled that of Conrad Marais in form, but in nothing else. Everything in and around it was dirty and more or less dilapidated. There was no dam, no garden,—nothing, in

short, but the miserable dwelling and a few surrounding huts, with the cattle kraal.

Having paid his debt, Considine did not vouchsafe another word, but returned at once to the waggons. On the way he overtook Ruyter.

"My poor fellow," he said, "have you no means of redress? Can you not complain to some one—some magistrate?"

"Complain!" exclaimed the Hottentot fiercely, "what de use of complain? No one care. Nobody listen—boh! no use complain."

The man had learnt a smattering of English. He was a short but very powerful fellow, and with a more intellectual head and countenance than is common to his race.

"Where are you going just now, Ruyter?" asked Considine, feeling that it was best to change the subject just then.

"Go for inspan de waggin. Ordered down to Algoa Bay for bring up de white men."

"Then we shall probably meet on the road," said Considine, "for I am going to the same place." As he spoke, they came to a point where the road forked. The Hottentot, with a sulky "Good-day," took that path which led towards Jan Smit's cattle kraal, while Considine followed the other and rejoined his waggons. The two friends mounted their horses, the drivers set the ox-teams in motion, and the huge waggons lumbered slowly over the karroo towards the rising sun.

# Chapter Three.
# Describes the somewhat Curious Beginning of Settler-Life in South Africa

Leaping over time and space with that hilarious mental bound which is so easy and enjoyable to writers and readers, let us fold our wings at early morn in the month of May, and drop down on the heights in the vicinity of Algoa Bay.

The general aspect of the bay is sandy and sterile. On its blue waters many large vessels lie at anchor. Some of them are trim, with furled sails and squared yards, as if they had been there for a considerable time. Others have sails and spars loose and awry, as if they had just arrived. From these latter many an emigrant eye is turned wistfully on the shore. The rising ground on which we stand is crowned by a little fortress, or fortified barrack, styled Fort Frederick, around which are the marquees of the officers of the 72nd regiment. Below, on the range of sandhills which fringe the beach, are pitched a multitude of canvas tents, and among these upwards of a thousand men, women, and children are in busy motion. There are only one or two small wooden houses visible, and three thatched cottages. Down at the water's edge, and deep in the surf, crowds of soldiers, civilians, and half-

naked natives are busy hauling on the ropes attached to the large surfboats, which are covered to overflowing with human beings. Those in the boats, as well as those in the surf and on the beach, are in a state of high excitement, and more or less demonstrative, while the seamen from a neighbouring sloop of war, who manage the boats, shout to the people at the ropes. The replies of these are drowned, ever and anon, by the roar of falling "rollers." These rollers, or great waves, calm though the morning be, come in with giant force from the mighty sea. They are the mere termination of the ocean-swell.

Reader, the scene before you marks an epoch of vast importance in South African history. It is the "landing of the British Settlers" in the year 1820. The spot is that on which now stands the flourishing commercial town of Port Elizabeth, styled, not inappropriately, by its inhabitants, the "Liverpool of South Africa."

Standing near the stern of one of the surf-boats, his strong right hand grasping the gunwale, and his grave eyes fixed on the shore, one of the exiles from Scotland lifted his voice that day and said—

"Hech, sirs! it's but a puir, ill-faur'd, outlandish sort o' country. I wad fain hope the hieland hills of our location inland are mair pleasant-lookin' than this."

"Keep up your spirits, Sandy Black," observed a sturdy Highlander who stood at his side; "those who know the country best say that our location is a splendid one—equal to Scotland

itself, if not superior."

"It may be so, Mr McTavish," replied Sandy, in a doubtful tone of voice, "it *may* be so."

"Hallo!" suddenly and loudly exclaimed a dapper little man, whose voice betokened him English.

"What is't, Jerry?" demanded Sandy Black, turning his eyes seaward, in which direction Jerry was gazing.

The question needed no reply, for Sandy, and indeed all the various people in the barge who stood high enough on its sides or lading to be able to look over the gunwale, observed a mighty wave coming up behind them like a green wall.

"Haul hard!" roared the seamen in charge.

"Ay, ay," shouted the soldiers on shore.

As they spoke the billow lifted the boat as if it had been a cork, fell under it with a deafening roar and bore it shoreward in a tumult of seething foam. Next moment the wave let it down with a crash and retired, leaving it still, however, in two or three feet of water.

"Eh, man, but that *was* a dunt!" exclaimed Sandy, tightening his hold on the gunwale, while several of his less cautious or less powerful neighbours were sent sprawling into the bottom of the boat among terrified women and children.

All was now bustle and tenfold excitement, for the soldiers on the beach hurried waist-deep into the sea for the purpose of carrying the future settlers on shore.

Thomas Pringle, the leader of the Scotch party, and who

afterwards became known as the "South African poet" had previously landed in a gig. He gave an opportune hint, in broad Scotch, to a tall corporal of the 72nd Highlanders to be careful of his countrymen.

"Scotch folk, are they?" exclaimed the corporal, with a look of surprise at Pringle. "Never fear, sir, but we sal be carefu' o' *them*."

The corporal was as good as his word, for he and his comrades carried nearly the whole party ashore in safety. But there were others there who owned no allegiance to the corporal. One of these—a big sallow Hottentot—chanced to get Jerry, surnamed Goldboy, on his shoulders, and, either by mischance or design, stumbled and fell, pitching Jerry over his head, just as another billow from the Indian Ocean was rushing to the termination of its grand career. It caught Jerry up in a loving embrace as he rose, and pitched him with a noisy welcome on the shore.

"Weel done, Jerry!" cried Sandy Black, who had just been overturned by the same wave from the shoulders of a burly Englishman—a previously landed settler—"you an' me's made an impressive landin'. Come, let's git oot o' the bustle."

So saying the stout Lowlander seized his little English friend by the arm and dragged him towards the town of canvas which had within a few weeks sprung up like mushrooms among the sandhills.

Although wet from head to foot, each forgot his condition in the interest awakened by the strange sights and sounds around

him. Their immediate neighbourhood on the beach was crowded with emigrants, as party after party was carried ashore shoulder-high by the soldiers, who seemed to regard the whole affair as a huge practical joke.

The noise was indescribable, because compound. There was the boisterous hilarity of people who felt their feet once more on solid ground, after a long and weary voyage; the shouting of sailors and bargemen in the boats, and of soldiers and natives on the beach; the talking and laughing of men and women who had struck up sudden friendships on landing, as well as of those who had crossed the sea together; the gambolling and the shrieking delight of children freed from the restraints of shipboard; the shouts of indignant Government officials who could not get their orders attended to; the querulous demands of people whose luggage had gone astray in process of debarkation; the bawling of colonial Dutch by gigantic Dutch-African farmers, in broad-brimmed hats and leathern crackers, with big tobacco-pipes in their mouths; the bellowing of oxen in reply to the pistol-shot cuts applied to their flanks by half-naked Hottentots and Bushmen, whose whips were bamboos of twenty feet or so in length, with lashes twice as long; the creaking of Cape-waggons, the barking of dogs, and, as a measured accompaniment to all, the solemn regular booming of the restless sea.

Disengaging themselves from the crowded beach, Sandy Black and Jerry Goldboy proceeded towards the town of tents among the sandhills. On their way they passed several large

tarpaulin-covered depots of agricultural implements, carpenter's and blacksmith's tools, and ironware of all descriptions, which had been provided by Government to be sold to the settlers at prime cost—for this grand effort at colonisation was originated and fostered by the British Government.

"Weel, weel, did ever 'ee see the like o' that, noo?" observed Sandy Black, as he passed some sandhills covered with aloes and cactuses and rare exotics, such as one might expect to find in English greenhouses.

"Well, yes," replied Jerry Goldboy, "them *are* hodd lookin' wegitables. I can't say that I've much knowledge of such-like myself, 'avin' bin born an' bred in London, as I've often told you, but they do seem pecooliar, even to me.—I say, look 'ere; I thought all the people 'ere was settlers."

Sandy, who was a grave man of few words, though not without a touch of sly humour, replied, "Weel, so they are—an' what than?"

"Why, w'at are them there?" demanded Jerry, pointing to several marquees pitched apart among some evergreen bushes.

"H'm! 'ee may ask that," replied the Scot; but as he did not add more, his companion was content to regard his words as a confession of ignorance, and passed on with the remark, "haristocrats."

Jerry was so far right. The marquees referred to belonged to the higher class of settlers, who had resolved to forsake their native land and introduce refinement into the South African

wilds. The position chosen by them on which to pitch their tents, and the neatness of everything around, evinced their taste, while one or two handsome carriages standing close by betokened wealth. Some of the occupants, elegantly dressed, were seated in camp-chairs, with books in their hands, while others were rambling among the shrubbery on the little eminences and looking down on the bustling beach and bay. The tents of these, however, formed an insignificant proportion of the canvas town in which Sandy Black and his friend soon found themselves involved.

"Settlers' Camp," as it was called, consisted of several hundred tents, pitched in parallel rows or streets, and was occupied by the middle and lower class of settlers—a motley crew, truly. There were jolly farmers and pale-visaged tradesmen from various parts of England, watermen from the Thames, fishermen from the seaports, artisans from town and country, agricultural labourers from everywhere, and ne'er-do-weels from nowhere in particular. England, Scotland, Ireland, were represented—in some cases misrepresented,—and, as character was varied, the expression of it produced infinite variety. Although the British Government had professedly favoured a *select* four thousand out of the luckless ninety thousand who had offered themselves for emigration, it is to be feared that either the selection had not been carefully made, or drunkenness and riotous conduct had been surprisingly developed on the voyage out. Charity, however, requires us to hope that much of the excitement displayed was

due to the prospect of being speedily planted in rural felicity in the wilds of Africa. Conversation, at all events, ran largely on this theme, as our wanderers could easily distinguish—for people talked loudly, and all tent-doors were wide open.

After wandering for some time, Sandy Black paused, and looking down at his little friend with what may be called a grave smile, gave it as his opinion that they had got lost "in Settlers'-toon."

"I do believe we 'ave," assented Jerry. "What's to be done?"

"Gang to the best hotel," suggested Sandy.

"But where *is* the best 'otel?"

"H'm! 'ee may ask that."

A burst of noisy laughter just behind them caused the lost ones to turn abruptly, when they observed four tall young men of gentlemanly aspect sitting in a small military tent, and much amused apparently at their moist condition.

"Why, where did you two fellows come from?" asked one of the youths, issuing from the tent.

"From England and Scotland," replied Jerry Goldboy promptly.

"From the sea, I should say," returned the youth, "to judge from your wet garments."

"Ay, we've been drookit," said Sandy Black.

"Bring 'em in, Jack," shouted one of the other youths in the tent.

"Come inside," said he who was styled Jack, "and have a glass

of whisky. There's nothing like whisky to dry a wet skin, is there, Scotty?"

To this familiar appeal Sandy replied, "m–h'm," which word, we may add for the information of foreigners, is the Scotch for "Yes."

"Sit down there on the blankets," said the hospitable Jack, "we haven't got our arm-chairs or tables made yet. Allow me to introduce my two brothers, James and Robert Skyd; my own name is the less common one of John. This young man of six feet two, with no money and less brain, is not a brother—only a chum—named Frank Dobson. Come, fill up and drink, else you'll catch a cold, or a South African fever, if there is such a thing. Whom shall I pledge?"

"My name is Jerry Goldboy," said the Englishman; "your health, gentlemen."

"'Am Sandy Black," said the Scot; "here's t'ee."

"Well, Mr Black and Mr Coldboy"—Goldboy, interposed Jerry—"I speak for my brothers and friend when I wish you all success in the new land."

"Do talk less, Jack," said Robert Skyd, the youngest brother, "and give our friends a chance of speaking—Have you come ashore lately!"

"Just arrived," answered Jerry.

"I thought so. You belong to the Scotch party that goes to Baviaans River, I suppose?" asked Frank Dobson.

This question led at length to a full and free account of the

circumstances and destination of each party, with which however we will not trouble the reader in detail.

"D'ee ken onything aboot Baviaans River?" inquired Sandy Black, after a variety of subjects had been discussed.

"Nothing whatever," answered John Skyd, "save that it is between one and two hundred miles—more or less—inland among the mountains, and that its name, which is Dutch, means the River of Baboons, its fastnesses being filled with these gentry."

"Ay, I've heard as much mysel'," returned Sandy, "an' they say the craters are gey fierce. Are there ony o' the big puggies in the Albany district?"

"No, none. Albany is too level for them. It lies along the sea-coast, and is said to be a splendid country, though uncomfortably near the Kafirs."

"The Kawfirs. Ay. H'm!" said Sandy, leaving his hearers to form their own judgment as to the meaning of his words.

"An' what may *your* tred be, sir?" he added, looking at John Skyd.

The three brothers laughed, and John replied—

"Trade? we have no trade. Our *profession* is that of clerks —knights of the quill; at least such was our profession in the old country. In this new land, my brother Bob's profession is fun, Jim's is jollity, and mine is a compound of both, called joviality. As to our chum Dobson, his profession may be styled remonstrance, for he is perpetually checking our levity, as he

calls it; always keeping us in order and snubbing us, nevertheless we couldn't do without him. In fact, we may be likened to a social clock, of which Jim is the mainspring, Bob the weight, I the striking part of the works, and Dobson the pendulum. But we are not particular, we are ready for anything."

"Ay, an' fit for nothin'," observed Sandy, with a peculiar smile and shrug, meant to indicate that his jest was more than half earnest.

The three brothers laughed again at this, and their friend Dobson smiled. Dobson's smile was peculiar. The corners of his mouth turned down instead of up, thereby giving his grave countenance an unusually arch expression.

"Why, what do you mean, you cynical Scot!" demanded John Skyd. "Our shoulders are broad enough, are they not? nearly as broad as your own."

"Oo' ay, yer shoothers are weel aneugh, but I wadna gie much for yer heeds or haunds."

Reply to this was interrupted by the appearance, in the opening of the tent, of a man whose solemn but kindly face checked the flow of flippant conversation.

"You look serious, Orpin; has anything gone wrong?" asked Frank Dobson.

"Our friend is dying," replied the man, sadly. "He will soon meet his opponent in the land where all is light and where all disputes shall be ended in agreement."

Orpin referred to two of the settlers whose careers in South

Africa were destined to be cut short on the threshold. The two men had been earnestly religious, but, like all the rest of Adam's fallen race, were troubled with the effects of original sin. They had disputed hotly, and had ultimately quarrelled, on religious subjects on the voyage out. One of them died before he landed; the other was the man of whom Orpin now spoke. The sudden change in the demeanour of the brothers Skyd surprised as well as gratified Sandy Black. That sedate, and literally as well as figuratively, long-headed Scot, had felt a growing distaste to the flippant young Englishers, as he styled them, but when he saw them throw off their light character, as one might throw off a garment, and rise eagerly and sadly to question Orpin about the dying man, he felt, as mankind is often forced to feel, that a first, and especially a hasty, judgment is often incorrect.

Stephen Orpin was a mechanic and a Wesleyan, in virtue of which latter connection, and a Christian spirit, he had been made a local preacher. He was on his way to offer his services as a watcher by the bedside of the dying man.

This man and his opponent were not the only emigrants who finished their course thus abruptly. Dr Cotton, the "Head" of the "Nottingham party," Dr Caldecott and some others, merely came, as it were like Moses, in sight of the promised land, and then ended their earthly career. Yet some of these left a valuable contribution, in their children, to the future colony.

While Black and his friend Jerry were observing Orpin, as he conversed with the brothers Skyd, the tall burly Englishman

from whose shoulders the former had been hurled into the sea, chanced to pass, and quietly grasped the Scot by the arm.

"Here you are at last! Why, man, I've been lookin' for you ever since that unlucky accident, to offer you a change of clothes and a feed in my tent—or I should say *our* tent, for I belong to a 'party,' like every one else here. Come along."

"Thank 'ee kindly," answered Sandy, "but what between haverin' wi' thae Englishers an' drinkin' their whusky, my freen' Jerry an' me's dry aneugh already."

The Englishman, however, would not listen to any excuse. He was one of those hearty men, with superabundant animal spirits—to say nothing of physique—who are not easily persuaded to let others follow their own inclinations, and who are so good-natured that it is difficult to feel offended with their kindly roughness. He introduced himself by the name of George Dally, and insisted on Black accompanying him to his tent. Sandy being a sociable, although a quiet man, offered little resistance, and Jerry, being a worshipper of Sandy, followed with gay nonchalance.

# Chapter Four.
# Further Particulars of "Settlers' Town," and a Start made for the Promised Land

Threading his way among the streets of "Settlers' Town," and pushing vigorously through the crowds of excited beings who peopled it, George Dally led his new acquaintances to a tent in the outskirts of the camp—a suburban tent, as it were.

Entering it, and ushering in his companions, he introduced them as the gentlemen who had been capsized into the sea on landing, at which operation he had had the honour to assist.

There were four individuals in the tent. A huge German labourer named Scholtz, and his wife. Mrs Scholtz was a substantial woman of forty. She was also a nurse, and, in soul, body, and spirit, was totally absorbed in a baby boy, whose wild career had begun four months before in a furious gale in the Bay of Biscay. As that infant "lay, on that day, in the Bay of Biscay O!" the elemental strife outside appeared to have found a lodgment in his soul, for he burst upon the astonished passengers with a squall which lasted longer than the gale, and was ultimately pronounced the worst that had visited the ship since she left England. Born in a storm, the infant was baptised in a stiff breeze

by a Wesleyan minister, on and after which occasion he was understood to be Jabez Brook; but one of the sailors happening to call him Junkie on the second day of his existence, his nurse, Mrs Scholtz, leaped at the endearing name like a hungry trout at a gay fly, and "Junkie" he remained during the whole term of childhood.

Junkie's main characteristic was strength of lungs, and his chief delight to make that fact known. Six passengers changed their berths for the worse in order to avoid him. One who could not change became nearly deranged towards the end of the voyage, and one, who was sea-sick all the way out, seriously thought of suicide, but incapacity for any physical effort whatever happily saved him. In short, Junkie was the innocent cause of many dreadful thoughts and much improper language on the unstable scene of his nativity.

Besides these three, there was in the tent a pretty, dark-eyed, refined-looking girl of about twelve. She was Gertrude Brook, sister and idolater of Junkie. Her father, Edwin Brook, and her mother, dwelt in a tent close by. Brook was a gentleman of small means, but Mrs Brook was a very rich lady—rich in the possession of a happy temper, a loving disposition, a pretty face and figure, and a religious soul. Thus Edwin Brook, though poor, may be described as a man of inexhaustible wealth.

Gertrude had come into Dally's tent to fetch Junkie to her father when Sandy Black and his friends entered, but Junkie had just touched the hot teapot, with the contents of which Mrs

Scholtz was regaling herself and husband, and was not in an amiable humour. His outcries were deafening.

"Now *do* hold its dear little tongue, and go to its popsy," said Mrs Scholtz tenderly. (Mrs Scholtz was an Englishwoman.)

We need not say that Junkie declined obedience, neither would he listen to the silvery blandishments of Gertie.

"Zee chile vas born shrieking, ant he vill die shrieking," growled Scholtz, who disliked Junkie.

The entrance of the strangers, however, unexpectedly stopped the shrieking, and before Junkie could recover his previous train of thought Gertie bore him off in triumph, leaving the hospitable Dally and Mrs Scholtz to entertain their visitors to small talk and tea.

While seated thus they became aware of a sudden increase of the din, whip-cracking, and ox-bellowing with which the camp of the settlers resounded.

"They seem fond o' noise here," observed Sandy Black, handing his cup to Mrs Scholtz to be refilled.

"I never 'eard such an 'owling before," said Jerry Goldboy; "what is it all about?"

"New arrivals from zee interior," answered Scholtz; "dere be always vaggins comin' ant goin'."

"The camp is a changin' one," said Dally, sipping his tea with the air of a connoisseur. "When you've been here as long as we have you'll understand how it never increases much, for although ship after ship arrives with new swarms of emigrants from the old

country, waggon after waggon comes from I don't know where—somewheres inland anyhow—and every now an' then long trains of these are seen leaving camp, loaded with goods and women and children, enough to sink a small schooner, and followed by crowds of men tramping away to their new homes in the wilderness—though what these same new homes or wilderness are like is more than I can tell."

"Zee noise is great," growled Scholtz, as another burst of whip-musketry, human roars, and bovine bellows broke on their ears, "ant zee confusion is indesgraibable."

"The gentlemen whose business it is to keep order must have a hard time of it," said Mrs Scholtz; "I can't ever understand how they does it, what between landing parties and locating 'em, and feeding, supplying, advising, and despatching of 'em, to say nothing of scolding and snubbing, in the midst of all this Babel of bubbledom, quite surpasses my understanding. Do *you* understand it, Mr Black?"

"Ay," replied Sandy, clearing his throat and speaking somewhat oracularly. "'Ee must know, Mrs Scholtz, that it's the result of organisation and gineralship. A serjeant or corporal can kick or drive a few men in ony direction that's wanted, but it takes a gineral to move an army. If 'ee was to set a corporal to lead twunty thoosand men, he'd gie them orders that wad thraw them into a deed lock, an' than naethin' short o' a miracle could git them oot o't. Mony a battle's been lost by brave men through bad gineralship, an' mony a battle's been won by puir enough

bodies o' men because of their leader's administrative abeelity, Mrs Scholtz."

"Very true, Mr Black," replied Mrs Scholtz, with the assurance of one who thoroughly understands what she hears.

"Noo," continued Sandy, with increased gravity, "if thae Kawfir bodies we hear aboot only had chiefs wi' powers of organisation, an' was a' united thegither, they wad drive the haul o' this colony into the sea like chaff before the wind. But they'll niver do it; for, 'ee see, they want mind—an' body withoot mind is but a puir thing after a', Mrs Scholtz."

"I'm not so shure of zat," put in Scholtz, stretching his huge frame and regarding it complacently; "it vould please me better to have body vidout mint, zan mint vidout body."

"H'm! 'ee've reason to be pleased then," muttered Black, drily.

This compliment was either not appreciated by Scholtz, or he was prevented from acknowledging it by an interruption from without; for just at the moment a voice was heard asking a passer-by if he could tell where the tents of the Scotch party were pitched. Those in the tent rose at once, and Sandy Black, issuing out found that the questioner was a handsome young Englishman, who would have appeared, what he really was, both stout and tall, if he had not been dwarfed by his companion, a Cape-Dutchman of unusually gigantic proportions.

"We are in search of the Scottish party," said the youth, turning to Sandy with a polite bow; "can you direct us to its whereabouts?"

"I'm no' sure that I can, sir, though I'm wan o' the Scotch pairty mysel', for me an' my freen hae lost oorsels, but doobtless Mister Dally here can help us. May I ask what 'ee want wi' us?"

"Certainly," replied the Englishman, with a smile. "Mr Marais and I have been commissioned to transport you to Baviaans river in bullock-waggons, and we wish to see Mr Pringle, the head of your party, to make arrangements.—Can you guide us, Mr Dally?"

"Have you been to the deputy-quartermaster-general's office?" asked Dally.

"Yes, and they directed us to a spot said to be surrounded by evergreen bushes near this quarter of the camp."

"*I* know it—just outside the ridge between the camp and the Government offices.—Come along, sir," said Dally; "I'll show you the way."

In a few minutes Dally led the party to a group of seven or eight tents which were surrounded by Scotch ploughs, cart-wheels, harrows, cooking utensils fire-arms, and various implements of husbandry and ironware.

"Here come the lost ones!" exclaimed Kenneth McTavish, who, with his active wife and sprightly daughter Jessie, was busy arranging the interior of his tent, "and bringing strangers with them too!"

While Sandy Black and his friend Jerry were explaining the cause of their absence to some of the Scotch party, the young Englishman introduced his friend and himself as Charles

Considine and Hans Marais, to the leader, Mr Pringle, a gentleman who, besides being a good poet, afterwards took a prominent part in the first acts of that great drama—the colonisation of the eastern frontier of South Africa.

It is unnecessary to trouble the reader with all that was said and done. Suffice it to say that arrangements were soon made. The acting Governor, Sir Rufane Donkin, arrived on the 6th of June from a visit to Albany, the district near the sea on which a large number of the settlers were afterwards located, and from him Mr Pringle learned that the whole of the Scotch emigrants were to be located in the mountainous country watered by some of the eastern branches of the Great Fish River, close to the Kafir frontier. The upper part of the Baviaans, or Baboons, River had been fixed for the reception of his particular section. It was also intended by Government that a piece of unoccupied territory still farther to the eastward should be settled by a party of five hundred Highlanders, who, it was conjectured, would prove the most effective buffer available to meet the first shock of invasion, should the savages ever attempt another inroad.

Mr Pringle laid this proposed arrangement before a council of the heads of families under his charge; it was heartily agreed to, and preparations for an early start were actively begun.

On the day of his arrival Sir Rufane Donkin laid the foundation of the first house of the now wealthy and flourishing, though not very imposing, town of Port Elizabeth, so named after his deceased wife, to whose memory an obelisk was subsequently

erected on the adjacent heights.

A week later, a train of seven waggons stood with the oxen "inspanned," or yoked, ready to leave the camp, from which many similar trains had previously set out. The length of such a train may be conceived when it is told that each waggon was drawn by twelve or sixteen oxen. These were fastened in pairs to a single trace or "trektow" of twisted thongs of bullock or buffalo hide, strong enough for a ship's cable. Each waggon had a canvas cover or "till" to protect its goods and occupants from the sun and rain, and each was driven by a tall Dutchman, who carried a bamboo whip like a salmon fishing-rod with a lash of thirty feet or more. A slave, Hottentot or Bushman, led the two front oxen of each span.

Like pistol-shots the formidable whips went off; the oxen pulled, tossed their unwieldy horns, and bellowed; the Dutchmen growled and shouted; the half-naked "Totties" and Bushmen flung their arms and legs about, glared and gasped like demons; the monstrous waggons moved; "Settlers' Town" was slowly left behind, and our adventurers, heading for the thorny jungles of the Zwartkops River, began their toilsome journey into the land of hope and promise.

"It's a queer beginning!" remarked Sandy Black, as he trudged between Hans Marais and Charlie Considine.

"I hope it will have a good ending," said Considine.

Whether that hope was fulfilled the reader shall find out in the sequel.

Meanwhile some of the English parties took their departure by the same route, and journeyed in company till points of divergence were reached, where many temporary friendships were brought to a close, though some there were which, although very recently formed, withstood firmly the damaging effects of time, trial, sorrow, and separation.

# Chapter Five.
# Adventures and Incidents of the First Night in the "Bush"

A Night-Bivouac under the mimosa-bushes of the Zwartkops River. The Cape-waggons are drawn up in various comfortable nooks; the oxen are turned loose to graze; camp-fires are kindled. Round these men and women group themselves very much as they do in ordinary society. Classes keep by themselves, not because one class wishes to exclude the other, but because habits, sympathies, interests, and circumstances draw like to like. The ruddy glare of the camp-fires contrasts pleasantly with the cold light of the moon, which casts into deepest shadow the wild recesses of bush and brake, inducing many a furtive glance from the more timid of the settlers, who see an elephant, a buffalo, or a Cape "tiger" in every bank and stump and stone. Their suspicions are not so wild as one might suppose, for the neighbouring jungle, called the Addo Bush, swarms with these and other wild animals.

The distance travelled on this first day was not great; the travellers were not much fatigued, but were greatly excited by novelty, which rendered them wakeful. If one had gone round to the numerous fires and played eavesdropper, what eager discussion on the new land he would have heard; what anxious speculations; what sanguine hopes; what noble plans;

what ridiculous ideas; what mad anticipations—for all were hopeful and enthusiastic.

Round one of these fires was assembled the family and retainers of our Highland farmer, Kenneth McTavish, among whom were Sandy Black and Jerry Goldboy. They had been joined by Charlie Considine, who felt drawn somewhat to Sandy. Quite close to these, round another fire, were grouped the three bachelor brothers Skyd, with their friend Dobson. At another, within earshot of these, were Edwin Brook and his wife, his daughter Gertrude, Scholtz and his wife, Junkie, George Dally, and Stephen Orpin, with bluff Hans Marais, who had somehow got acquainted with the Brook family, and seemed to prefer their society to that of any other.

Down in a hollow under a thick spreading mimosa bush was the noisiest fire of all, for there were assembled some of the natives belonging to the waggons of Hans and Jan Smit. These carried on an uproarious discussion of some sort, appealing frequently to our friend Ruyter the Hottentot, who appeared to be regarded by them as an umpire or an oracle. The Hottentot race is a very inferior one, both mentally and physically, but there are among them individuals who rise much above the ordinary level. Ruyter was one of these. He had indeed the sallow visage, high cheek-bones, and dots of curly wool scattered thinly over his head, peculiar to his race, but his countenance was unusually intelligent, his frame well made and very powerful, and his expression good. He entered heartily into the fun of attempting to

teach the Hottentot klick to some of the younger men among the emigrants, who were attracted to his fire by the shouts of laughter in which the swarthy slaves and others indulged. Abdul Jemalee, the Malay slave, was there; also Booby the Bushman—the former grave and silent, almost sad; the latter conducting himself like a monkey—to which animal he seemed closely related—and evoking shouts of laughter from a few youths, for whose special benefit he kept in the background and mimicked every one else.

"What a noisy set they are over there!" observed Edwin Brook, who had for some time been quietly contemplating the energetic George Dally, as he performed the duties of cook and waiter to his party.

"They are, sir," replied Dally, "like niggers in general, fond of showing their white teeth."

"Come, Gertie, your mother can spare you now; let's go over and listen to them."

Gertie complied with alacrity, and took her father's arm.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a little scream, as a thorn full five inches long gave her a wicked probe on the left shoulder.

Hans Marais sprang up and gallantly raised the branch which had touched her.

"It is only Kafirs who can run against mimosa thorns with impunity," said the handsome young Dutchman.

Gertie laughed, remarked that mimosa thorns, like South African gentlemen, were unusually long and sharp, and passed on.

Hans sat down on the ground, filled his large pipe, and gazed dreamily into the fire, with something of the sensation of a hunter when he makes a bad shot.

"Now then, Goliath," said the ever busy George Dally; "move your long legs out o' that. Don't you see the pot's about to bile over?"

Hans quietly obeyed.

"If I chanced to be alongside o' that Tottie over there just now," continued George, "I'd be inclined to stop his noise with a rap on his spotted pate."

"You'd have to make it a heavy rap, then, to produce any effect," said Hans, taking a long draw at his pipe, "for he belongs to a hard-headed race."

The truth of the young farmer's words was verified just then in a way that was alarming as well as unexpected.

One of the heavy waggons, which had been delayed behind the others by some trifling accident, came lumbering up just as Hans spoke. There was a softish sandy spot in advance of it, into which one of the front wheels plunged. The tilt caught on part of the waggon to which Ruyter belonged. To prevent damage the active Hottentot sprang forward. In doing so he tripped and fell. At the same instant a tremendous crack of the whip and a shout produced a wrench at the waggon, the hind wheel of which went over Ruyter's head and crushed it into the ground!

A roar of consternation followed, and several eager hands carefully dug out the poor man's head. To the surprise of all, the

five-ton waggon had *not* flattened it! The sand was so soft that it had not been squeezed at all—at least to any damaging extent,—a round stone having opportunely taken much of the pressure on itself, so that the Hottentot soon revived, and, beyond a headache, was little the worse of the accident. He returned to his place at the fire, but did not resume his part in the discussions, which were continued as noisily as before.

In strong contrast with the other groups were those of the Dutch-African boers who had brought the waggons to the Bay. Most of them were men of colossal stature. They sat apart, smoking their huge pipes in silent complacency and comfort, amused a little at the scenes going on around them, but apparently disinclined to trouble themselves about anything in particular.

Supper produced a lull in the general hum of conversation, but when pipes were lit the storm revived and continued far into the night. At last symptoms of weariness appeared, and people began to make arrangements for going to rest.

These arrangements were as varied as the characters of the emigrants.

Charlie Considine and Hans Marais, now become inseparable comrades, cleared and levelled the ground under a mimosa-bush, and, spreading their kaross thereon, lay down to sleep. George Dally, being an adaptable man, looked at the old campaigners for a few minutes, and then imitated their example. Little Jerry Goldboy, being naturally a nervous creature, and having his imagination filled with snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, etcetera,

would fain have slept in one of the waggons above the baggage —as did many of the women and children—if he had not been laughed out of his desire by Dally, and induced to spread his couch manfully on the bare ground.

It must not be supposed, however, that Jerry, although timid, was cowardly. On the contrary, he was bold as a lion. He could not control his sensitively-strung nervous system, but instead of running away, like the coward, he was prone to rush furiously at whatever startled him, and grapple with it.

Some families pitched their tents, others, deeming curtains a needless luxury in such magnificent weather, contented themselves with the shelter of the bushes.

Meanwhile the Hottentot attendants replenished the fires, while the boers unslung their huge guns and placed them so as to be handy; for, although elephants and lions were not nearly so numerous as they once had been in that particular locality, there was still sufficient possibility of their presence, as well as of other nocturnal wanderers in the African wilds, to render such precaution necessary. The whole scene was most romantic, especially in the eyes of those who thus bivouacked for the first time in the wilderness. To them the great waggons; the gigantic Cape-oxen—which appeared to have been created expressly to match the waggons as well as to carry their own ponderous horns; the wild-looking Hottentots and Bushmen; the big phlegmatic Dutchmen; the bristling thorns of the mimosas, cropping out of comparative darkness; the varied groups of emigrants; the

weird forms of the clumps of cactus, aloes, euphorbias, and other strange plants, lit up by the fitful glare of the camp-fires, and canopied by the star-spangled depths of a southern sky—all seemed to them the unbelievable creations of a wild vision.

Poor Jerry Goldboy, however, had sufficient faith in the reality of the vision to increase his nervous condition considerably, and he resolved to lie down with his "arms handy." These arms consisted of a flint-lock blunderbuss, an heirloom in his father's family, and a bowie-knife, which had been presented to him by an American cousin on his leaving England. Twice during that day's march had the blunderbuss exploded owing to its owner's inexperience in fire-arms. Fortunately no harm had been done, the muzzle on each occasion having been pointed to the sky, but the ire of the Dutch driver in front of Jerry had been aroused, and he was forbidden to reload the piece. Now, however, observing the preparations above referred to, he felt it to be his duty to prepare for the worst, and quietly loaded his bell-mouthed weapon with a heavy charge of buckshot.

"What's that you're after, boy?" asked George Dally, who was making some final arrangements at the fire, before lying down for the night.

"Oh, nothing," replied Jerry, with a start, for he had thought himself unobserved, "only seein' to my gun before turnin' in."

"That's right," said George. "Double-load it. Nothin' like bein' ready for whatever may turn up in a wild country like this. Why, I once knew a man named Snip who said he had been attacked

one night in South America by a sarpint full forty feet long, and who saved his life by means of a blunderbuss, though he didn't fire at the reptile at all."

"Indeed, how was that?" asked Jerry.

"Why, just because his weapon was bell-mouthed an' loaded a'most to the muzzle. You see, the poor fellow was awoke out of a deep sleep and couldn't well see, so that instead o' firin' at the brute, he fired his blunderbuss about ten yards to one side of it, but the shot scattered so powerfully that one o' the outside bullets hit a stone, glanced off, and caught the sarpint in the eye, and though it failed to kill the brute on the spot, the wound gave it such pain that it stood up on its tail and wriggled in agony for full five minutes, sending broken twigs and dry leaves flying about like a whirlwind, so Snip he jumped up, dropped his weapon, an' bolted. He never returned to the encampment, and never saw the big snake or his blunderbuss again."

"What a pity! then he lost it?" said Jerry, looking with some anxiety at a decayed branch, to which the flickering flame gave apparent motion.

"Yes, he lost the blunderbuss, but he saved his life," replied Dally, as he lay down near his little friend and drew his blanket over him. "You'd better put the gun between us, my boy, to be handy to both—an' if *anything* comes, the one of us that wakes first can lay hold of it and fire."

There was, we need scarcely observe, a strong spice of wickedness in George. If he had suggested a lion, or even an

elephant, there would have been something definite for poor Jerry's anxious mind to lay hold of and try to reason down and defy, but that dreadful "*anything*" that might come, gave him nothing to hold by. It threw the whole zoological ferocities of South Africa open to his unanchored imagination, and for a long time banished sleep from his eyes.

He allowed the blunderbuss to remain as his friend had placed it, and hugged the naked bowie-knife to his breast. In addition to these weapons he had provided himself with a heavy piece of wood, something like the exaggerated truncheon of a policeman, for the purpose of killing snakes, should any such venture near his couch.

The wild shrieks of laughter at the neighbouring Hottentot fire helped to increase Jerry's wakefulness, and when this at last lulled, the irritation was kept up by the squalling of Master Junkie, whose tent was about three feet distant from Jerry's pillow, and who kept up a vicious piping just in proportion to the earnestness of Mrs Scholtz's attempts to calm him.

At last, however, the child's lamentations ceased, and there broke upon the night air a sweet sound which stilled the merriment of the natives. It was the mellow voice of Stephen Orpin singing a hymn of praise, with a number of like-minded emigrants, before retiring to rest. Doubtless some of those who had already retired, and lay, perchance, watching the stars and thinking dreamily of home, were led naturally by the sweet hymn to think of the home in the "better land," which might possibly be

nearer to some of them than the old home they had left for ever —ay, even than the new "locations" to which they were bound.

But, whatever the thoughts suggested, the whole camp soon afterwards sank into repose. Tent-doors were drawn and curtains of waggon-tilts let down. The boers, sticking their big pipes in their hatbands, wrapped themselves in greatcoats, and, regardless of snake or scorpion, stretched their limbs on the bare ground, while Hottentots, negroes, and Bushmen, rolling themselves in sheepskin karosses, lay coiled up like balls with their feet to the fire. Only once was the camp a little disturbed, during the early part of the night, by the mournful howl of a distant hyena. It was the first that the newcomers had heard, and most of those who were awake raised themselves on their elbows eagerly to listen.

Jerry was just dropping into slumber at the time. He sat bolt upright on hearing the cry, and when it was repeated he made a wild grasp at the blunderbuss, but Dally was beforehand. He caught up the weapon, and this probably saved an explosion.

"Come, lie down, you imp!" he said, somewhat sternly.

Jerry obeyed, and his nose soon told that he had reached the land of dreams.

Dally then quietly drew the charge of shot, but left the powder and laid the piece in its former position. Turning over with the sigh of one whose active duties for the day have been completed, he then went to sleep.

Gradually the fires burned low, and gave out such flickering uncertain light, when an occasional flame leaped up ever and

anon, that to unaccustomed eyes it might have seemed as though snakes were crawling everywhere, and Jerry Goldboy, had he been awake, would have beheld a complete menagerie in imagination. But Jerry was now in blessed oblivion.

When things were in this condition, that incomprehensible subtlety, the brain of Junkie Brook—or something else—so acted as to cause the urchin to give vent to a stentorian yell. Strong though it was, it did not penetrate far through the canvas tent, but being, as we have said, within a few feet of Jerry's ear, it sounded to that unhappy man like the united, and as yet unknown, shriek of all the elephants and buffaloes in Kafirland.

Starting up with a sharp cry he stretched out his hand towards the blunderbuss, but drew it back with a thrill of horror. A huge black snake lay in its place!

To seize his truncheon was the act of a moment. The next, down it came with stunning violence on the snake. The reptile instantly exploded with a bellowing roar of smoke and flame, which roused the whole camp.

"Blockhead! what d'you mean by *that*?" growled George Dally, turning round sleepily, but without rising, for he was well aware of the cause of the confusion.

Jerry shrank within himself like a guilty thing caught in the act, and glanced uneasily round to ascertain how much of death and destruction had been dealt out. Relieved somewhat to see no one writhing in blood, he arose, and, in much confusion, replied to the numerous eager queries as to what he had fired at. When

the true state of affairs became manifest, most of the Dutchmen, who had been active enough when aroused by supposed danger, sauntered back to their couches with a good-natured chuckle; the settlers who had "turned out" growled or chaffed, according to temperament, as they followed suit, and the natives spent half an hour in uproarious merriment over Booby's dramatic representation of the whole incident, which he performed with graphic power and much embellishment.

Thereafter the camp sank once more into repose, and rested in peace till morning.

# Chapter Six.
# Spreading over the Land

With the dawn next morning the emigrants were up and away. The interest of the journey increased with every novel experience and each new discovery, while preconceived notions and depressions were dissipated by the improved appearance of the country.

About the same time that the Scotch "party" left the Bay, several of the other parties set out, some large and some small, each under its appointed leader, to colonise the undulating plains of the Zuurveld.

Soon the pilgrims became accustomed to the nightly serenade of hyena and jackal—also to breakneck steeps, and crashing jolts, and ugly tumbles. But they were all hopeful, and most of them were young, and all, or nearly all, were disposed to make light of difficulties.

The country they were about to colonise had been recently overrun by Kafir hordes. These had been cleared out, and driven across the Great Fish River by British and Colonial troops, leaving the land a wilderness, with none to dispute possession save the wild beasts. It extended fifty miles along the coast from the Bushman's River to the Great Fish River, and was backed by an irregular line of mountains at an average distance of sixty

miles from the sea.

Leaving the Zwartkops River, not only the Scottish party, but all the other parties, filed successively away in long trains across the Sundays River, over the Addo Hill and the Quagga Flats and the Bushman's River heights, until the various points of divergence were reached, when the column broke into divisions, which turned off to their several locations and overspread the land.

There was "Baillie's party," which crossed Lower Albany to the mouth of the Great Fish River, and on the way were charmed with the aspect of the country, which was at that time enriched and rendered verdant by recent rains, and enlivened by the presence of hartebeests, quaggas, springboks, and an occasional ostrich. There was, however, a "wash" of shadow laid on part of the pleasant picture, to counteract the idea that the Elysian plains had been reached, in the shape of two or three blackened and ruined farms of the old Dutch colonists—sad remains of the recent Kafir war—solemn reminders of the uncertainties and possibilities of the future.

Then there was the "Nottingham party." They took possession of a lovely vale, which they named Clumber, in honour of the Duke of Newcastle, their patron. "Sefton's party" settled on the Assegai Bush River and founded the village of Salem, afterwards noted as the headquarters of the Reverend William Shaw, a Wesleyan, and one of the most able and useful of South Africa's missionary pioneers. Wilson's party settled between the Waay-

plaats and the Kowie Bush, across the path of the elephants, which creatures some of the party, it is said, attempted to shoot with fowling-pieces. Of the smaller parties, those of Cock, Thornhill, Smith (what series of adventurous parties ever went forth without a "Smith's party"?), Osler, and Richardson, located themselves behind the thicket-clad sand hills of the Kowie and Green Fountain. But space forbids us referring, even in brief detail, to the parties of James and Hyman and Dyson, and Holder, Mouncey, Hayhurst, Bradshaw, Southey; and of Scott, with the Irish party, and that of Mahony, which at the "Clay Pits," had afterwards to meet the first shock of every Kafir invasion of Lower Albany. Among these and other parties there were men of power, who left a lasting mark on the colony, and many of them left numerous descendants to perpetuate their names—such as Dobson, Bowker, Campbell, Ayliffe, Phillips, Piggott, Greathead, Roberts, Stanley, and others too numerous to mention.

But with all these we have nothing to do just now. Our present duty is to follow those sections of the great immigrant band with the fortunes of which our tale has more particularly to do.

At the points of separation, where the long column broke up, a halt was made, while many farewells and good wishes were said.

"So you're gaun to settle thereawa'?" said Sandy Black to John Skyd and his brothers as they stood on an eminence commanding a magnificent view of the rich plains and woodlands of the Zuurveld.

"Even so, friend Black," replied John, "and sorry am I that our lot is not to be cast together. However, let's hope that we may meet again ere long somewhere or other in our new land."

"It is quite romantic," observed James Skyd, "to look over this vast region and call it our own,—at least, with the right to pick and choose where we feel inclined. Isn't it, Bob?"

To this Bob replied that it was, and that he felt quite like the children of Israel when they first came in sight of the promised land.

"I hope we won't have to fight as hard for it as they did," remarked Frank Dobson.

"It's my opeenion," said Sandy Black, "that if we haena to fight *for it*, we'll hae to fight a bit to *keep* it."

"Perhaps we may," returned John Skyd, "and if so, fighting will be more to my taste than farming—not that I'm constitutionally pugnacious, but I fear that my brothers and I shall turn out to be rather ignorant cultivators of the soil."

Honest Sandy Black admitted that he held the same opinion.

"Well, we shall try our best," said the elder Skyd, with a laugh; "I've a great belief in that word '*try*'.—Goodbye, Sandy." He held out his hand.

The Scot shook it warmly, and the free-and-easy brothers, after bidding adieu to the rest of the Scotch party, who overtook them there, diverged to the right with their friend Frank Dobson, and walked smartly after their waggons, which had gone on in advance.

"Stoot chields they are, an' pleesant," muttered Sandy, leaning both hands on a thick cudgel which he had cut for himself out of the bush, "but wofu' ignorant o' farmin'."

"They'll make their mark on the colony for all that," said a quiet voice at Sandy's elbow.

Turning and looking up, as well as round, he encountered the hazel eyes and open countenance of Hans Marais.

"Nae doot, nae doot, they'll mak' their mark, but it'll no' be wi' the pleugh, or I'm sair mista'en. Wull mair o' the settlers be pairtin' frae us here?"

Hans, although ignorant of the dialect in which he was addressed, understood enough to make out its drift.

"Yes," he replied, "several parties leave us at this point, and here comes one of them."

As he spoke, the cracking of whips announced the approach of a team. A moment later, and a small Hottentot came, round a bend in the road, followed by the leading pair of oxen. It was the train of Edwin Brook, who soon appeared, riding a small horse. George Dally walked beside him. Scholtz, the German, followed, conversing with the owner of the waggon. In the waggon itself Mrs Brook, Mrs Scholtz, and Junkie found a somewhat uneasy resting-place, for, being new to the style of travel, they had not learned to accommodate themselves to jolts and crashes. Gertie preferred to walk, the pace not being more than three miles an hour.

"Oh, father!" said Gertie, running up to the side of her sire,

with girlish vivacity, "there is the tall Dutchman who was so polite to me when I was pricked by the thorn bush."

"True, Gertie, and there also is the Scot who was so free and easy in giving his opinion as to the farming powers of the brothers Skyd."

"Your road diverges here, sir," said Hans, as Brook rode up; "I fell behind my party to bid you God-speed, and to express a hope that we may meet again."

"Thanks, friend, thanks," said Brook, extending his hand. "I am obliged for the aid you have rendered me, and the advice given, which latter I shall no doubt find valuable.—You are bound for the highlands, of course," he added, turning to Sandy Black. "We of the Albany lowlands must have a friendly rivalry with you of the highlands, and see who shall subdue the wilderness most quickly."

This remark sent the Scot into a rather learned disquisition as to the merits and probable prospects of a hill as compared with a low-lying region, during which Hans Marais turned to Gertie. Being so very tall, he had to stoop as well as to look down at her pretty face, though Gertie was by no means short for her age. Indeed, she was as tall as average women, but, being only twelve, was slender and girlish.

"How *very* tall you are, Mr Marais!" she exclaimed, with a laugh, as she looked up.

"True, Gertie," said Hans, using the only name which he had yet heard applied to the girl; "true, we Cape-Dutchmen are big

fellows as a race, and I happen to be somewhat longer than my fellows. I hope you don't object to me on that account?"

"Object? oh no! But it *is* so funny to have to look up so high. It's like speaking to father when he's on horseback."

"Well, Gertie, extra height has its advantages and its inconveniences. Doubtless it was given to me for some good end, just as a pretty little face and figure were given to you."

"You are very impudent, Mr Hans."

"Am I? Then I must ask your pardon. But tell me, Gertie, what do you think of the new life that is before you?"

"How stupid you are, Hans! If the new life were behind me I might be able to answer, but how can I tell how I shall like what I don't know anything about?"

"Nay, but you know something of the beginning of it," returned the young Dutchman, with an amused smile, "and you have heard much of what is yet to come. What do you think of the *prospect* before you?"

"Think of the prospect?" repeated Gertie, knitting her brows and looking down with a pretended air of profound thought; "let me see: the prospect as I've heard father say to mother,—which was just a repetition of what I had heard him previously say to these queer brothers Skyd—is a life in the bush—by which I suppose he means the bushes—in which we shall have to cut down the trees, plough up the new soil, build our cottages, rear our sheep and cattle, milk our cows, make our butter, grow our food, and sometimes hunt it, fashion our clothing, and protect

our homes. Is that right?"

"Well, that's just about it," was the answer; "how do you like that prospect?"

"I delight in it," cried the girl, with a flash in her brilliant black eyes, while she half laughed at her own sudden burst of enthusiasm. "Only fancy! mother milking the cows, and me making butter, and Scholtz ploughing, and Dally planting, and nurse tending Junkie and making all sorts of garments, while father goes out with his gun to shoot food and protect us from the Kafirs."

"'Tis a pleasant picture," returned Hans, with a bland smile, "and I hope may be soon realised—I must bid you goodbye now, Gertie, we separate here."

"Do you go far away?" asked the girl, with a touch of sadness, as she put her little hand into that of the young giant.

"A goodish bit. Some six or eight days' journey from here,—according to the weather."

"You'll come and see us some day, won't you, Hans?"

"Ja—I will," replied Hans, with emphasis.

The whips cracked again, the oxen strained, the lumbering waggons groaned as they moved away, and while the Scotch band passed over the Zuurbergen range and headed in the direction of the Winterberg mountains, their English friends spread themselves over the fertile plains of Albany.

A few days of slow but pleasant journeying and romantic night-bivouacking brought the latter to their locations on the

Kowie and Great Fish River.

On the way, the party to which Edwin Brook belonged passed the ground already occupied by the large band of settlers known as "Chapman's party," which had left Algoa Bay a few weeks before them in an imposing procession of ninety-six waggons. They had been accompanied to their future home by a small detachment of the Cape Corps, the officer in command of which gave them the suggestive advice, on bidding them goodbye, never to leave their guns behind them when they went out to plough! Although so short a time located, this party had produced a marvellous change in the appearance of the wilderness, and gave the settlers who passed farther eastward, an idea of what lay before themselves. Fields had already been marked out; the virgin soil broken up; timber cut, and bush cleared; while fragile cottages and huts were springing up here and there to supplant the tents which had given the first encampments a somewhat military aspect. Grotesque dwellings these, many of them, with mats and rugs for doors, and white calico or empty space for windows. It was interesting, in these first locations, to mark the development of character among the settlers. Those who were practical examined the "lie" of the land and the nature of the soil, with a view to their future residence. Timid souls chose their sites with reference to defence. Men of sentiment had regard to the picturesque, and careless fellows "squatted" in the first convenient spot that presented itself. Of course errors of judgment had to be corrected afterwards on all hands, but the

power to choose and change was happily great at first, as well as easy.

As Brook's party advanced, portions of it dropped off or turned aside, until at last Edwin found himself reduced to one family besides his own. Even this he parted from on a ridge of land which overlooked his own "location," and about noon of the same day his waggons came to a halt on a grassy mound, which was just sufficiently elevated to command a magnificent view of the surrounding country.

"Your location," said his Dutch waggon-driver, with a curious smile, as though he should say, "I wonder what you'll do with yourselves."

But the Dutchman made no further remark. He was one of the taciturn specimens of his class, and began at once to unload the waggon. With the able assistance of Brook and his men, and the feeble aid of the "Tottie," or Hottentot leader of the "span" of oxen, the boxes, ploughs, barrels, bags, cases, etcetera, which constituted the worldly wealth of the settlers, were soon placed on the green sward. Then the Dutchman said "goeden-dag," or farewell, shook hands all round, cracked his long whip, and went off into the unknown wilderness, leaving the Brook family to its reflections.

# Chapter Seven.
# The "Location."

In the midst of the confused heap of their property, Edwin Brook sat down on a large chest beside his wife and daughter, and gazed for some time in silence on his new estate and home.

To say truth, it was in many respects a pleasant prospect. A bright blue sky overhead, a verdant earth around. Grassy hills and undulations of rich pasture-land swept away from their feet like a green sea, until stopped in the far distance by the great blue sea itself. These were dotted everywhere with copses of the yellow-flowered mimosa-bush, through openings in which the glitter of a stream could be seen, while to the left and behind lay the dark masses of a dense jungle filled with arboreous and succulent plants, acacias and evergreens, wild-looking aloes, tall euphorbias, quaint cactuses, and a great variety of flowering shrubs—filled also, as was very soon discovered, with antelopes, snakes, jackals, hyenas, leopards, and other wild creatures. The only familiar objects which broke the wild beauty of the scene were the distant white specks which they knew to be the tents just put up by those settlers who chanced to be their "next neighbours."

"May God protect and bless us in our new home!" said Edwin Brook, breaking the silence, and reverently taking off his cap.

A heartfelt "Amen" was murmured by Mrs Brook and Gertie, but a strange, though not unpleasant, feeling of loneliness had crept over their spirits, inducing them to relapse into silence, for they could not avoid realising strongly that at last they were fairly left alone to fight the great battle of life. Edwin Brook in particular, on seeing the long team of the Dutch driver disappear over a distant ridge, was for the first time deeply impressed with, as it were, the forsaken condition of himself and his family. It was plain that he must take root there and grow—or die. There was no neighbouring town or village from which help could be obtained in any case of emergency; no cart or other means of conveyance to remove their goods from the spot on which they had been left; no doctor in case of sickness; no minister in cases either of joy or sorrow—except indeed (and it was a blessed exception) Him who came to our world "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Strong in the comfort that this assurance gave, Edwin Brook shook off the lethargy that had been stealing over him, and set about the duties of the present hour. The tent had to be pitched, the trunks and boxes conveyed into it, a fire kindled, the kettle boiled, the goods and chattels piled and secured from the weather, firewood cut to prepare for the night-bivouac, etcetera.

Much of this work was already in progress, for George Dally, —with that ready resource and quiet capacity of adaptation to circumstances which he had displayed on the voyage out and on the journey to the location,—had already kindled a fire, sent Scholtz to cut firewood, and was busy erecting the tent when

Brook joined him.

"That's right, George," he said, seizing a tent-peg and mallet; "we have plenty to do here, and no time to waste."

"Very true, sir," replied George, touching his cap, for George was an innately respectful man—respectful to *all*, though with a strong tendency to humorous impudence; "very true, sir; that's just what I thought when I see you a-meditatin', so I went to work at once without wastin' any time."

"Is zat enough?" asked Scholtz, staggering up at the moment with a heavy load of firewood, which he threw on the ground.

The question was put to George, for whom the big German had a special regard, and whose orders he consequently obeyed with unquestioning alacrity, although George had no special right to command.

"Enough!" exclaimed George, with a look of surprise, "why, *zat* is not enough to scare a weasel with, much less a elephant or a—a platzicumroggijoo."

George was ignorant of South African zoology, and possessed inventive powers.

"Bring ten times as much," he added; "we shall have to keep a blazin' bonfire agoin' all night."

Scholtz re-shouldered his axe, and went off to the jungle with a broad grin on his broader countenance.

He was a man who did not spare himself, yet of a temperament that kicked at useless labour, and of a size that forbade the idea of compulsion, but George Dally could have led him with a

packthread to do anything.

Before he had reached the jungle, and while the smile was yet on his visage, his blood was curdled and his face elongated by a most appalling yell! It was not exactly a war-whoop, nor was it a cry of pain, though it partook of both, and filled the entire family with horror as they rushed to the tent on the mound from which the cry had issued.

The yell had been given by Junkie, who had been bitten or stung by something, and who, under the combined influence of surprise, agony, and wrath, had out-Junkied himself in the fervour and ferocity of his indignant protest.

The poor child was not only horrified, but inconsolable. He wriggled like an eel, and delivered a prolonged howl with intermittent bursts for full half an hour, while his distracted nurse and mother almost tore the garments off his back in their haste to discover the bite or the brute that had done it.

"It *must* have bin a serpent!" cried the nurse, agonising over a knotted string.

"Perhaps a tarantula," suggested Gertie, who only clasped her hands and looked horrified.

"Quick!" exclaimed Mrs Brook, breaking the unmanageable tape.

"Ze chile is growing black and vill bust!" murmured Scholtz in real alarm.

It did seem as if there were some likelihood of such a catastrophe, for Junkie's passion and struggles had rendered him

blue in the face; but it wes found that the bite or sting, whichever it was, had done little apparent damage, and as the child cried himself out and sobbed himself to sleep in half an hour without either blackening or bursting, the various members of the family were relieved, and resumed their suspended labours.

The shades of evening had fallen, and, among other orbs of night, the stars of that much too highly complimented constellation, the "Southern Cross," had for some time illumined the sky before these labours were completed, and the wearied Brook family and household retired to rest, with weapons ready at hand and fires blazing. Wild beasts—to whose cries they were by that time accustomed—soon began their nightly serenade and carried it on till morning, but they were not wild enough to disturb the newcomers with anything more formidable than sound.

Next morning early, George Dally was the first to bestir himself. On taking a general view of surrounding nature he observed a thin column of smoke rising above the tree-tops in the direction of the stream or river to which reference has already been made.

"Perhaps it's Kafirs," thought George.

Following up that thought he returned to what we may style his lair—the place where he had spent the night—under a mimosa-bush, and there girded himself with a belt containing a long knife. He further armed himself with a fowling-piece. Thus accoutred he sallied forth with the nonchalant air of a sportsman taking

his pleasure. Going down to the stream, and following its course upwards, he quickly came in sight of the camp-fire whose smoke had attracted his attention. A tall man in dishabille was bending over it, coaxing the flame to kindle some rather green wood over which a large iron pot hung from a tripod. The fire was in front of a large, but not deep, cavern, in the recesses of which three slumbering figures were visible.

Drawing cautiously nearer, George discovered that the man at the fire was John Skyd, and of course jumped to the conclusion that the three slumbering figures were his brothers and friend. These enterprising knights of the quill, having found what they deemed a suitable spot, had selected a cave for their residence, as being at once ready and economical.

Now, George Dally, being gifted with a reckless as well as humorous disposition, suddenly conceived the idea of perpetrating a practical joke. Perhaps Junkie's performances on the previous evening suggested it. Flinging his cap on the ground, he ran his fingers through his thick hair until it stood up in wild confusion, and then, deliberately uttering a hideous and quite original war-whoop, he rushed furiously towards the cave.

The brothers Skyd and company proved themselves equal to the occasion, for they received him at the cavern mouth with the muzzles of four double-barrelled guns, and a stern order to halt!

Next moment the muzzles were thrown up as they exclaimed in surprise—

"Why, Dally, is it you?"

"Didn't you hear it?" gasped George, supporting himself on the side of the cavern.

"Hear what?"

"The war-whoop!"

"Of course we did—at least we heard a most unearthly yell. What was it?"

"We'd best go out and see," cried George, cocking his gun; "if it was Kafirs the sooner we follow them up the better."

"Not so, friend George," said Frank Dobson, in a slightly sarcastic tone. "If it was Kafirs they are far beyond our reach by this time, and if they mean us harm we are safer in our fortress here. My opinion is that we should have our breakfast without delay, and then we shall be in a fit state to face our foes—whether they be men or beasts."

Acting on this suggestion, with a laugh, the brothers leaned their guns against the wall of the cavern and set about the preparation of breakfast in good earnest.

Meanwhile George gravely assented to the wisdom of their decision, and sat down to his morning pipe, while he questioned the brothers as to their intentions.

They pointed out to him the spot where they thought of commencing agricultural operations and the site of their future dwelling—close, they said, to the cave, because that would be conveniently near the river, which would be handy for both washing, drinking, and boiling purposes.

"That's true—wery true," said George, "but it seems to me

you run a risk of bein' washed away, house and all, if you fix the site so low down, for I've heard say there are floods in these parts now and again."

"Oh, no fear of that!" said Robert Skyd, who was the quietest of the three brothers; "don't you see the foundation of our future house is at least ten feet above the highest point to which the river seems to have risen in times past?"

"Ah, just so," responded George, with the air of a man not convinced.

"Besides," added John Skyd, lifting the iron pot off the fire and setting it down, "I suppose that floods are not frequent, so we don't need to trouble ourselves about 'em.—Come, Dally, you'll join us?"

"No, thank 'ee. Much obleeged all the same, but I've got to prepare breakfast for our own party.—Goin' to begin plantin' soon?"

"As soon as ever we can get the soil broken up," replied Dobson.

"Studied farmin'?" inquired George.

"Not much, but we flatter ourselves that what we do know will be of some service to us," said John.

Dally made no reply, but he greatly doubted in his own mind the capacity of the brothers for the line of life they had chosen.

His judgment in this respect was proved correct a week later, when he and Edwin Brook had occasion to visit the brothers, whom they found hard at work ploughing and sowing.

"Come, this looks business-like!" exclaimed Brook heartily, as he shook hands with the brothers; "you've evidently not been idle. I have just come to ask a favour of you, gentlemen."

"We shall grant it with pleasure, if within our powers," said Robert Skyd, who leaned on a spade with which he had been filling in a trench of about two feet deep.

"It is, that you will do me and Mrs Brook the pleasure of coming over to our location this afternoon to dinner. It is our Gertie's birthday. She is thirteen to-day. In a rash moment we promised her a treat or surprise of some sort, but really the only surprise I can think of in such an out-of-the-way place is to have a dinner-party in her honour. Will you come?"

The brothers at once agreed to do so, remarking, however, that they must complete the sowing of their carrot-seed before dinner if possible.

"What did you say you were sowing?" asked Brook, with a peculiar smile.

"Carrot-seed," answered Robert Skyd.

"If your carrot-seed is sown *there*," said George Dally, pointing with a broad grin to the trench, "it's very likely to come up in England about the time it does here,—by sendin' its roots right through the world!"

"How? what do you mean?"

"The truth is, my dear sir," said Brook good-humouredly, "that you've made a slight mistake in this matter. Carrot-seed is usually sown in trenches less than an inch deep. You'd better

leave off work just now and come over to my place at once. I'll give you some useful hints as we walk along."

The knights of the quill laughed at their mistake, and at once threw down their implements of husbandry. But on going over their farm, Brook found it necessary to correct a few more mistakes, for he discovered that the active brothers had already planted a large quantity of Indian corn, or "mealies," entire, without knocking it off the cobs, and, in another spot of ground, a lot of young onions were planted with the roots upwards!

"You see, Miss Gertie," said John Skyd, when commenting modestly on these mistakes at dinnertime, "my brothers and I have all our lives had more to do with the planting of 'houses' and the growth of commercial enterprise than with agricultural products, but we are sanguine that, with experience and perseverance, we shall overcome all our difficulties. Have *you* found many difficulties to overcome!"

Gertie was not sure; she thought she had found a few, but none worth mentioning. Being somewhat put out by the question, she picked up a pebble—for the dinner was a species of picnic, served on the turf in front of Mr Brook's tent—and examined it with almost geological care.

"My daughter does not like to admit the existence of difficulties," said Mrs Brook, coming to the rescue, "and to say truth is seldom overcome by anything."

"Oh, ma, how can you?" said Gertie, blushing deeply.

"That's not true," cried Mr Brook; "excuse me, my dear, for so

flat a contradiction, but I have seen Gertie frequently overcome by things,—by Junkie's obstinacy for instance, which I verily believe to be an insurmountable difficulty, and I've seen her thoroughly overcome, night after night, by sleep.—Isn't that true, lass?"

"I suppose it is, father, since you say so, but of course I cannot tell."

"Sleep!" continued Brook, with a laugh, "why, would you believe it, Mr Skyd, I went into what we call the nursery-tent one morning last week, to try to stop the howling of my little boy, and I found him lying with his open mouth close to Gertie's cheek, pouring the flood of his wrath straight into her ear, and she sound asleep all the time! My nurse, Mrs Scholtz, told me she had been as sound as that all night, despite several heavy squalls, and notwithstanding a chorus of hyenas and jackals outside that might almost have awakened the dead.—By the way, that reminds me: just as I was talking with nurse that morning we heard a most unearthly shriek at some distance off. It was not the least like the cry of any wild animal I have yet heard, and for the first time since our arrival the idea of Kafirs flashed into my mind. Did any of you gentlemen happen to hear it?"

The brothers looked at each other, and at their friend Dobson, and then unitedly turned their eyes on George Dally, who—performing the combined duties of cook and waiter, at a fire on the ground, not fifteen feet to leeward of the dinner-party—could hear every word of the conversation.

"Why, yes," said John Skyd, "we did hear it, and so did your man Dally. We had thought—"

"The truth is, sir," said George, advancing with a miniature pitchfork or "tormentor" in his hand; "pardon my interrupting you, sir,—I did hear the screech, but as I couldn't say exactly for certain, you know, that it was a Kafir, not havin' seen one, I thought it best not to alarm you, sir, an' so said nothing about it."

"You looked as if you had seen one," observed Frank Dobson, drawing down the corners of his mouth with his peculiar smile.

"Did I, sir!" said George, with a simple look; "very likely I did, for I'm timersome by nature an' easily frightened."

"You did not act with your wonted wisdom, George, in concealing this," said Edwin Brook gravely.

"I'm afraid I didn't sir," returned George meekly.

"In future, be sure to let me know every symptom of danger you may discover, no matter how trifling," said Brook.

"Yes, sir."

"It was a very tremendous yell, wasn't it, Dally?" asked John Skyd slily, as the waiter-cook was turning to resume his duties at the fire.

"Wery, sir."

"And alarmed us all dreadfully, didn't it?"

"Oh! dreadfully, sir—'specially me; though I must in dooty say that you four gentleman was as bold as brass. It quite relieved me when I saw your tall figurs standin' at the mouth o' your cavern, an' the muzzles o' your four double-guns—that's eight shots—

with your glaring eyes an' pale cheeks behind them!"

"Ha!" exclaimed John Skyd, with a grim smile—"but after all it might only have been the shriek of a baboon."

"I think not, sir," replied George, with a smile of intelligence.

"Perhaps then it was the cry of a zebra or quagga," returned John Skyd, "or a South African ass of some sort."

"Wery likely, sir," retorted George. "I shouldn't wonder if it was—which is wery consolin' to my feelin's, for I'd sooner be terrified out o' my wits by asses of any kind than fall in with these long-legged savages that dwell in caves."

With an appearance of great humility George returned to his work at the fire.

It was either owing to a sort of righteous retribution, or a touch of that fortune which favours the brave, that George Dally was in reality the first, of this particular party of settlers, to encounter the black and naked inhabitant of South Africa in his native jungle. It was on this wise.

George was fond of sport, when not detained at home by the claims of duty. But these claims were so constant that he found it impossible to indulge his taste, save, as he was wont to say, "in the early morn and late at eve."

One morning about daybreak, shouldering his gun and buckling on his hunting-knife, he marched into the jungle in quest of an antelope. Experience had taught him that the best plan was to seat himself at a certain opening or pass which lay on the route to a pool of water, and there bide his time.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.