CAPTURED BY ZULUS

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A Story of Trapping in Africa.

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"The King of Apeland;" "Ben Burton, the Slate-Picker," etc., etc.

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CHAPTER I.

A SCHEME.

BOB HARVEY was in a very despondent mood. A party of friends had just left the village on a short hunting excursion, and he remained at home because unable to purchase a proper outfit.

He was a fairly good marksman, as well versed in woodcraft as could be expected of a boy seventeen years of age who had spent several seasons in the Adirondacks, and passionately fond of hunting.

The single-barreled fowling-piece used during the previous excursions seemed too old-fashioned and small for such game as his friends expected to find, and because of lack of funds he could not purchase a better weapon.

He had just left the party at the depot, and was feeling so decidedly down-hearted that his cousin, Dick Ellsworth, hailed him twice before receiving a reply.

"Oh, it's you, eh?" he said, carelessly, halting for Dick to approach. "I thought you went to the city."

"So I did, and have come back with the biggest scheme you ever heard."

"Don't tell it to me. When a fellow can't raise money enough to go on a week's shooting he isn't of much account as a partner in any scheme."

"But this is something which won't require any outlay on our part. Father is going to Africa after zoological specimens for Riche. He sails from New York in a vessel chartered especially for the purpose, and will be away two or three years. Think of hunting there, where everything from a rat to an elephant can be found!"

"But there's no chance he would take you with him. You coaxed in vain for a long while to be allowed to make the Rocky Mountain trip."

"It has been three years since then, and I was only fourteen years old. Now he has almost promised that I shall go."

"You'll have a wonderful time. It ain't my luck to get such chances," Bob replied, more despondently than before.

"That's where you're making a big mistake, for you are included in the scheme. Father says if he decides to take me he'll ask your father to let you go."

Bob's despondency vanished in an instant, and he was now more eager than he had previously been indifferent.

The probabilities of their being allowed to indulge in the wonderful hunting-trip was discussed from all points of view, and then came the question of an

outfit, a subject of which they never seemed to tire.

The week which elapsed before Mr. Ellsworth returned home was a time of painful suspense. Nearly every boy in Haverstraw knew of the hopes Dick and Bob were indulging in, and the excitement, and perhaps envy, was intense. Fellows who had never been interested in the subject before now bought, borrowed or hired books relating to that country, and the younger portion of the population in the Hudson River village were, for the time being, walking encyclopedias of African travel.

Every night when Mr. Ellsworth came up from New York, a large crowd of boys met him at the depot, to learn if Dick and Bob were to become veritable hunters, and when the announcement was finally made the prospective travelers were literally deluged with congratulations.

"I have been talking with Bob's father," Mr. Ellsworth said, on a certain evening when, as usual, the two boys and their friends were escorting him to his home, "and we have concluded to make you members of the expedition. You will be called upon to do a full share of the work, and since it is decided to attach you to the hunting portion of the party, you will be under the command of Paterson, the chief hunter. Go to New York to-morrow, see him, and arrange for an outfit, for the Swallow sails in ten days."

"Is that the name of the vessel?" Dick asked.

"Yes. She is a brig of four hundred tons burden,

and lays on the East River, two docks above Fulton Ferry. Paterson will be expecting you, and there will be a good chance to look her over. The only difference in treatment between you and the other employes lies in the fact that during the voyage you are to have berths in the cabin, and share my quarters while traveling on shore."

It is doubtful if either of the boys slept on the night after this decision had been arrived at; the idea of hunting on such a grand scale was so bewildering and pleasing that they could do little else than talk the matter over.

On the following morning, accompanied by a small party of intimate friends, the two went to New York, and there had an interview with Paterson, a sharp-featured, bronzed-faced man whose snow-white hair rendered him conspicuous, however large a throng he might be among.

"So you belong to my gang, eh?" he asked, scrutinizing the boys closely as they advanced from the party to show they were the intending travelers. "Don't make the mistake of thinkin' that huntin' in Africa is such sport as you've been accustomed to here. There's a power of hard work to it, an' very often it's a case of killin' or gettin' killed."

"Then you have been there before?" Dick asked, as he in turn gazed curiously at the old man.

"Before? Why bless you, lad, I've spent the best part of my life there. It's only four weeks since I got back. But we've got too much work on hand for me to be loafin' here. We'll see about the

outfit, an' then I'm through with you 'till we arrive at Port Durnford."

Paterson made out the list of articles required, in the most matter-of-fact way; but the boys and their friends were highly excited as the old man wrote the following:

Two magazine rifles.
Two breech-loading fowling-pieces.
Two knives, eight-inch blades.
Cartridge belts.
Dungaree clothes.
Hip boots.
Woolen underclothing.
Two heavy blankets.

"Whatever else may be needed will be furnished from the general stores," Paterson said when the list was completed. "If your fathers agree to this you'd better let me select the weapons, for I don't reckon you are any too good judges of such things."

"We'll be here to-morrow."

"There's no pertic'lar hurry, any time before sailin' day will do."

"We'd best have the matter settled as soon as possible, so there can be no mistake," Dick replied, and then, with the hunter's permission, he led his friends over the trim little brig.

On that night the boys of Haverstraw were even more excited than before. The fact that they had seen the chief hunter and the vessel gave an air of realism to what had previously seemed almost like

a dream, and the amount of advice which Dick and Bob received was as great as it was impossible of being carried into effect.

On the following morning a yet larger party accompanied the fortunate boys to the city, and each appeared to think it his duty to examine the weapons shown before Paterson decided for or against them.

Now everything was ready, so far as Dick and Bob was concerned, for the voyage, and they were obliged to exercise no slight amount of patience since the time seemed to pass so slowly.

As often as possible they were in the city watching the stowing of the singular cargo.

Stout carts and stouter cages; bales of merchandise of the oddest character; a perfect arsenal of weapons; provisions without stint, and, far down in the hold, quantities of ammunition. Each day saw some queer addition to this jumble until, to the great relief of the boys, the last package had been placed below the hatches.

The Swallow was ready for sea, and despite the intense excitement under which the boys labored, as well as the wild anticipations which filled their minds, it was a sorry moment when they took leave of their mothers.

No matter how good a time a fellow may fancy he is to have, this parting with his best friend is calculated to make his eyes very moist.

While the brig was being towed through the narrows Dick and Bob thought a seafaring life very jolly; but when the vessel began to curtsey to the

long swell of the Atlantic they had a different opinion, and during two painful days they were very wretched.

After that they were in good trim to enjoy themselves, and the sailors' yarns contributed in no slight degree to their pleasure.

It would hardly be fair to devote very much time recounting the incidents of the voyage, since it is proposed to relate the adventures of the boys among the Zulus, therefore we will pass over several weeks during which the Swallow had kept steadily on her course, until she was in the Southern ocean, standing well up the South American coast.

As a matter of course she had encountered storms and calms; breasted mountainous waves, and been rolled lazily about by the glassy swell, with not wind enough to lift the thread of blue at the mast-head, and on this particular day was tumbling around as if bent on throwing her spars overboard.

A dead calm had come at sunrise. The sails flapped against the mast, and the water lapped heavily upon the hull as if she sailed in oil.

The moon shone clear, the port watch was on deck, and with them the boys, who were watching a brigantine about three miles away on the starboard quarter.

Only those who have been many days at sea, with nothing in view save the waves and sky, can understand what a friendly air another vessel has, even though she heaves in sight only for a short time.

Bob and Dick were standing aft with the mate,

speculating as to what nation the craft belonged, when they were startled by what seemed to be a ball of fire rushing through the air.

"Look at that shooting star," Bob cried, and he had hardly spoken when the light increased until it was as if the moon had been extinguished.

Nearer and nearer it came, giving out a strange hissing noise, and the crew stood like statues, gazing with fear-distended eyes at what nearly blinded them.

"What is it?" Dick cried in alarm, and the mate replied in a tone of awe:

"The Lord only can tell! Our last hour has come!"

These words so alarmed the man at the wheel that he fell forward as if in a faint, and more than one of the sailors sunk to his knees in an attitude of prayer, firmly believing the mate had spoken truly.

In a few seconds the glare was so nearly blinding that nothing save the gleam of it could be seen on the water.

Then came a crashing sound which the boys could liken to nothing they had ever heard before, and instantly it was as if a most profound darkness enshrouded the brig.

It was several minutes that the boys remained blinded by the dazzling light, and then as the mate succeeded in regaining his sight he shouted:

"The brigantine has gone down! That ball of fire has swamped her with all on board!"

By this time Bob could distinguish objects.

The moon looked pale and sickly. There was not so much as a floating spar in sight, and to starboard, where the doomed vessel had last been seen, was a rising and falling of short waves, marking the spot where the meteor struck the water.

The flash and roar of the falling star had aroused a portion of the watch below, and they, with the captain, first officer and Mr. Ellsworth, rushed on deck.

The brig was tossing to and fro more violently than before, as small craft do in the wake of a steamer.

"What is the matter, Mr. Hardy?" the captain asked of the second mate as he looked around wildly to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

"A falling star, sir, an' it has carried down the craft that was becalmed with us."

"Nonsense, man! You never knew of such a thing."

"That may be; but the brigantine has gone, all the same. Dick and Bob were looking at her when she disappeared."

The fact that the stranger, which should have been in full view, could no longer be seen, forced the captain to believe the story, and he immediately ordered the boats to be lowered.

The crew, superstitious as are all of their kind, hesitated about obeying the order to man the oars. The whole affair was so mysterious and awe-inspiring that they feared even to row over the place

where the craft had last been seen, but after two of the more sensible set the example, they followed.

The captain and Mr. Ellsworth went aloft in the hope of seeing some of the brigantine's men, but nothing met their gaze, and after an hour passed the boats returned.

A piece of deck-plank, scorched and blackened as if it had been subjected to most intense heat, was all that could be found.

The doomed craft had been literally consumed, and with her every soul on board.

CHAPTER II.

CRUSOE'S ISLAND.

NEITHER watch on board the Swallow had any inclination to go below for several hours after the descent of the meteor.

The more superstitious among them firmly believed the fall of this ball of fire, which sent so many to their final account, was a warning meant especially for those on board the brig, and one of the old sailors announced that some terrible catastrophe was in store for all hands.

"It may be we'll live to see the coast of Africa," he said, in a sepulchral tone; "but 'cordin' to my way of figgerin' that'll be about all. Them kind of things ain't sent for nothing."

"It looks to me as if them as was on board the other craft got the warning," a younger hand suggested. "If the thing was meant for us the brigantine would 'a come out of it safe an' sound."

"There's a good many things that you've yet to learn, Billy," the old fellow replied. "It'll be time enough to talk after you've been afloat as long as I have."

"I ain't sayin' but that's true, though I've jest as much right to my 'pinion as the oldest shell-back on this 'ere hooker."

"That stands to reason; but there's no call for you to chin about what you don't know," was the sarcastic answer, and Bob, who had overheard the entire conversation, asked the second mate:

"Do you believe what the old man says?"

"Of course not. A man would have his hands full to listen to these croakers. When a sailor watches for signs he can find plenty of them without tryin' very hard."

"But it was certainly a wonderful thing."

"Ay, lad, an' you'll see more'n that to wonder about the longer you live on the water."

This ended the conversation in regard to the meteor for the time being.

While the men were yet talking of the singular sight which had been accompanied by such loss of life, and the waves were rolling oily and sluggishly, a swift rush of wind which swept the foam out of the waters, came suddenly from the westward, bowing the little brig down to her covering board.

Fortunately the topgallant sails had been furled and the mainsail snugged to the mast.

The helm was put hard-a-weather, and the brig dashed on while even the most prosaic of the crew believed the sudden change had been caused by the meteor, or appeared in response to the omen.

It was not a time, however, to think of "signs." All hands were soon busy, and the boys, unable to keep their feet while the craft was dancing and plunging so madly went below.

The shrill whistling of the gale, the creaking of

the bulkheads, and the straining and groaning of the cargo caused it to seem as if a veritable tornado was raging, while to make one's way across the cabin was to invite a tumble.

"Of course the falling star didn't bring the hurricane," Bob said, forced almost to scream in order that his voice might be heard above the medley of noises; "but it does seem queer that the storm should have come so soon after it fell."

"Don't talk about the thing," Dick replied, with a shudder. "It is horrible to think how quickly the crew of that vessel were wiped out of existence, more especially now when it seems as if the brig must founder."

A sudden crash on deck, the trampling of many feet, and the hoarse cries of command gave startling emphasis to Dick's words, and in their blind terror the boys were about to rush on deck when Mr. Ellsworth descended the companion-way.

"Stay where you are," he cried. "It is dangerous to be outside now, and, besides, we must not hamper the movements of the men by going where they are working."

"Is there any danger?" Dick asked, in a voice trembling with fear.

"Very much. Some of the spars have been carried away, and we shall soon be at the mercy of the elements, if the gale increases."

Seating himself on a locker, where it was possible to prevent being thrown down by bracing his feet against the mainmast, Mr. Ellsworth forced the

boys to remain by his side, and in an agony of suspense three or four hours were passed, when, as could be told by the less violent plunging, the hurricane abated.

Not until past midnight did the captain come below, and he said in reply to Mr. Ellsworth's questions:

"We have lost everything forward but the foremast, and are now driving before the gale."

"In what direction?"

"Toward the South American coast. If everything holds 'till morning we should be well on to Juan Fernandez, where we can refit, and the boys will have a good chance to see Crusoe's Island."

Just at this moment, while the brig was pitching and tossing as if bent on going to the bottom, neither Bob nor Dick had very much interest in the island, save as it represented land; but on the following morning, after a sleep caused by utter exhaustion, they were delighted at finding the brig at anchor in a beautiful harbor.

"We are likely to remain here some time," Mr. Ellsworth said; "and after breakfast you can begin explorations under guidance of Paterson."

The morning meal was eaten very hurriedly, as may be imagined, and several hours before the brig had been warped in that the riggers might begin work, the boys were on the small hill reading the following inscription engraved on a marble slab:

In memory of Alexander Selkirk, mariner, a

native of Largo, County of Fife, Scotland, who lived upon this island in complete seclusion for four years and four months. He was landed from the Cinque Ports galley, 96 tons, 16 guns, A. D. 1704, and was taken off in the Duke, privateer, on February 12th, 1709. He died Lieutenant of H. B. M. S. Weymouth; 47 years. This tablet is erected upon Selkirk's lookout by Commodore Powell and the officers of H. B. M. S. Topaz, A. D. 1868.

It was only natural that the boys should remain here a long time discussing the wonderful story, trying to decide the location of each incident, and picturing to themselves the scenes so vividly depicted by words.

Paterson, whose personal experiences had been much more exciting, took no part in the conversation; but threw himself on the ground, puffing away at his pipe, until the forenoon was so far spent that it was necessary the party should return to the brig.

"If you boys are countin' on havin' any dinner to-day it's time we toddled down to the beach."

"Why it can't be noon yet," Dick exclaimed in surprise.

"That's jest the size of it. You've been moonin' over that yarn 'till the best part of the day has been wasted."

"We are likely to have plenty of time at our disposal before the brig is refitted, so no great harm has been done," Dick replied with a laugh, and then the three went swiftly down the hill.

Near the landing place they met Mr. Ellsworth, who, after asking where the forenoon had been spent, said:

"Some of the islanders are going out to hunt the man-eating shark to-night, and we are to accompany them, if you feel so disposed."

"It isn't likely we'd willingly miss any such chance as that," Dick replied laughingly. "When is the procession to start?"

"We are to wait for the signal; but after dinner, by walking around the outer point of the harbor, you can see them making the necessary preparations for the sport."

It can safely be said that the boys wasted no time over the noon-day meal, and immediately after it had been eaten they set out with Mr. Ellsworth to a spot on the beach where thirty or forty native men and women were busily engaged.

They were wrapping in broad, stout leaves the livers and flesh of some common shark which had been caught that morning, and cooking them in a rude stone oven built on the shore. When each package of this odd bait was baked sufficiently, it was stowed in the canoes ready for use.

While this was being done, two of the boats were lashed together by their outriggers to form one large craft with a broad platform in the center, on which was stowed a portion of the bait and a strong rope.

With the leaf-wrapped packages were several bundles of an herb often chewed by the natives to

produce a stupor somewhat similar to intoxication from liquor.

Gourds filled with fresh water were also provided, and finally, when the fleet was ready to sail, the priest or magician came to examine with critical eye all the outfit, and, by his incantations, to prevent the dreaded man-eater from devouring any of the fishermen.

A swift canoe, with four paddlers, was assigned to the white guests, and the orders were that they were to be taken where a full view of the scene could be had without the chance of danger.

Now, everything was in readiness, and two or three of the lighter boats were launched, their occupants paddling out to sea in search of the game.

Man-eating sharks never come voluntarily into shallow water; but must always be sought a mile or two from land, where their presence is indicated by the commotion among the smaller fish.

Under these circumstances it might be many hours before the sport would really begin, and the guests were warned to be in readiness for the signal to be given from the brow of the hill.

It was agreed that the white party should return to their vessel, and there await the commencement of the chase, when the boat would come to take them off.

The boys remained on the quarter deck, where there could be no question about mistaking the signal, and not until the sun had begun to descend behind the waste of waters did they see the watch-

man on the hill waving frantically his scarlet breech-cloth.

A shout of triumph went up from the expectant throng on the beach, and like an arrow just from the bow came the canoe propelled by lusty strokes, and with a thin spray of silver spouting up from the narrow cutwater.

The boys and Mr. Ellsworth sprung in as the light craft reached the brig's side, and in another instant the boat was darting over the smooth water inside the reef in hot chase after the double canoe, on the platform of which sat the magician, wildly tossing his arms about and howling out a dismal incantation.

All the paddlers sat on the gunwales of their boats, even when the frail barks were plunging on the inner line of breakers.

The boys looked in alarm at the roaring, hissing waves through which they must pass, and both involuntarily closed their eyes as they were raised high in the air on the crest of one mountain of water, to be carried by the next over the foam on the long swell outside.

By this time night had fully fallen, and the occupants of each craft lighted torches made of the baked kernels of the candle-nut, strung upon cocoa-leaf fiber.

It was a scene well calculated to excite the boys, who had never witnessed such a chase before, and each literally held his breath as the canoes dashed forward amid a silence broken only by the light swish of the paddles.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHASE.

IT WAS not many moments before the boys were at the spot where the man-eater was known to be.

By the smoky-red light of the torches they could see men scattering about the baked meat and half-chewed morsels of the herbs. As they did so there was the gleam of the fins and tails of hundreds of fish darting to and fro for the food, while now and then a larger one, his sides glowing with phosphorescent light, glided among the smaller fry, scattering them right and left.

Suddenly a massive bulk rose from the depths below, and one of the natives, touching Dick lightly on the arm, whispered:

"There is the great white shark," and a second later he pointed astern.

Looking in the direction indicated the boys saw, gleaming in the water, two bright spots that shown with a malignant, greenish light. They were set in a monstrous shadowy head, beyond which could be discerned a huge brown body. Below the cold, cruel eyes were traced the outlines of a formidable mouth that, even as the boys gazed, opened slowly, disclosing row upon row of strongly hooked, pearly-white teeth, with deeply serrated edges.

As this frightful mouth opened the monster rolled half over, and viciously snapped at a bundle of food sinking near him.

It was the fiercest and most voracious of his tribe, and as he moved along, the crowd of fish darted away in terror. Even the large, ordinary sharks sullenly gave place to this tiger of the sea, who swam slowly about, swallowing the food the fishermen kept throwing to him.

So intent had the boys been in watching his movements that they did not notice for some moments that while he was being fed the fleet of canoes were silently moving nearer the shore.

Now, looking down they could see the white, sandy bottom, and in a few moments the boats were in quite shallow water, opposite an opening in the reef where the surf did not break.

Their progress had been very slow, and for a few moments the canoes halted, while hovering beneath them was the man-eater, evidently somewhat stupefied by the herb he had swallowed with the food so freely given.

The old priest continued his pantomime in a quiet manner, while the fishermen kept close watch upon the shark, who, gorged to repletion, evidently intended to take a nap, and so settled down on the sandy bottom.

Then began a curious exhibition of skill and daring.

A noose had been made in one end of a long, stout rope, and this was taken by an experienced old fish-

erman, who quietly slipped overboard from his canoe and allowed himself to sink to where the man-eater was resting.

With infinite dexterity and skill the native succeeded in passing the noose over the brute's head and about his middle. Then he came quickly to the surface, regained his canoe, and the fleet was once more set in motion.

The craft to which the rope about the shark's body was attached, moved very slowly and carefully, just enough strain being kept on the line to raise the captive's huge bulk clear of the bottom.

Inch by inch the fleet worked shoreward, and all but two of the boats were hauled out of the water, the entire party waiting patiently on the beach, while those yet afloat watched the sleeping monster.

"Ain't they going to bring him ashore?" Dick asked, when the natives settled themselves down as if for a long resting spell.

The old priest overheard the question, and replied in a solemn tone:

"We have the right to snare the man-eater while he is drunk; but must wait for daylight, when he is sober, before we kill him."

It was now two hours past midnight, and both Bob and Dick were eager to see the conclusion of the chase, therefore they lay down beside some of the more cleanly natives, falling asleep almost immediately.

The sun was just rising from out his bath in the sea when the boys were awakened.

A signal had been given by those in the canoes tc the effect that the great fish was becoming restive, and an hundred pairs of hands grasped the long rope.

The priest began a loud chant, waving his hands frantically above his head; the crowd shouted and yelled as they started straight back from the beach, and the enraged man-eater was drawn, thrashing and floundering about, from the water over the yellow sands.

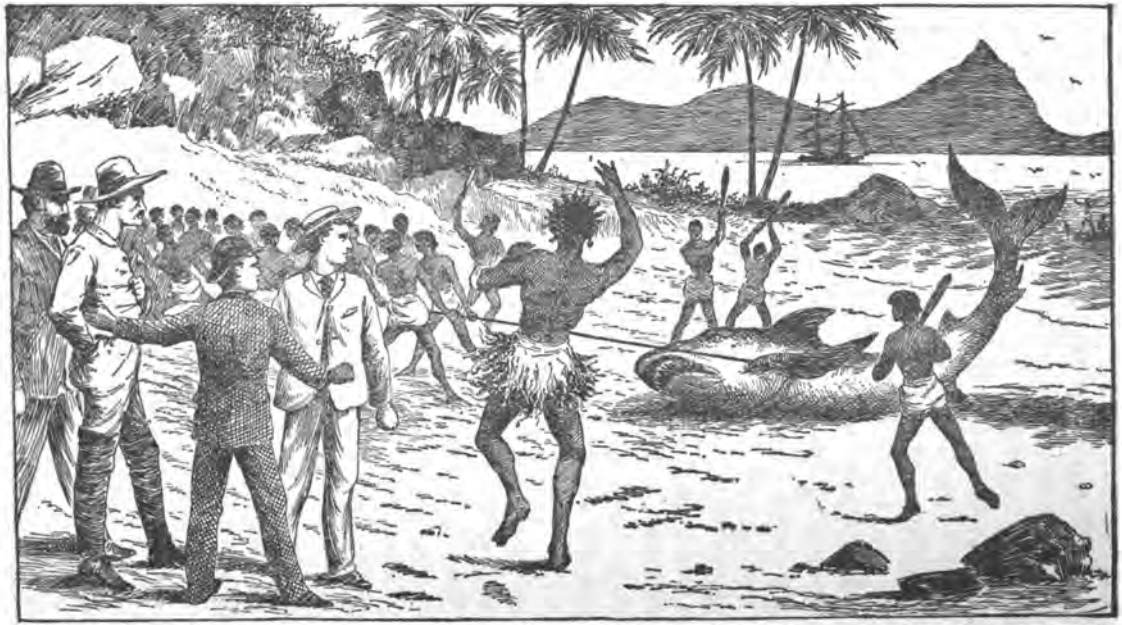
As his huge body plunged hither and thither, he snapped savagely at everything; but in vain. A crowd of the fishermen were always near, raining a shower of blows on his ugly head until he lay beaten to death on the shore.

Now began a veritable feast, which soon developed into a perfect orgy, during which the boys were only too glad to seek refuge on the brig.

This was by no means the last excursion ashore, for it was three weeks before the Swallow was made ready for sea; but it certainly comprised everything in the way of odd experience to be met with on Crusoe's Island.

Both the boys felt a sense of relief when the little brig finally left the harbor, heading as nearly in a direct course for the coast of Africa as the wind would permit.

Of the remainder of the voyage it is not necessary to speak, since nothing of importance happened from the time the anchor was weighted after the brig had been refitted, until it was dropped again in



Dick and Bob saw the priest wave his hands and heard the crowd shout as the enraged man-eater was drawn from the water over the yellow sands.

the mouth of the Tugela River, the dividing line which runs between Natal and Zululand.

From this point to the section of country where the trapping was to be done, a journey of many hundred miles must be undertaken, and during the next three weeks everything, so far as this particular party was concerned, appeared to be in a complete state of confusion.

It was necessary to transport nearly the entire cargo of the brig, and for this purpose many long-horned oxen were purchased to haul the heavy wagons and cages. Horses were to be selected, natives hired to act as guides, drivers or laborers, and this second outfitting seemed more tedious than the first.

The boys had but little to do, and as the country in the immediate vicinity was by no means inviting, either to the hunter or the lover of adventure, they were more than willing to remain under the brig's awning, where relief from the fervent rays of the sun could be had.

The time finally came, however, when the last bale of goods had been loaded on the clumsy vehicles, and everything was in readiness for the journey.

"The wagons will start at sunrise; but since they can hardly make more that fifteen miles in a day, we need not leave until to-morrow night," Mr. Ellsworth said to the boys, when the last instructions had been given to the chiefs of the caravan.

"But what are we to do about traveling?" Dick

asked. "I thought perhaps you intended for us to ride on the wagons."

"Paterson should be back to-night from Port Durnford, and he will bring horses for the white members of the party."

"And are Bob and I each to have one?"

"Certainly, and before a week passes there will be nothing very enchanting in the thought of spending a day in the saddle."

The boys had previously had a very dim idea of how they were to make the journey, and this information was so pleasing that the return of Paterson seemed, just then, of the highest possible importance.

The hunter arrived before sunset, and with the herd of horses were two small ones—a roan and a black.

"Yes, I picked 'em out for you boys," he said, in reply to Dick's question. "There'll be plenty of time to try them in the morning, an' I'll answer for it that both are well-behaved beasts, warranted to stand fire."

Dick decided that the black steed should be his, and Bob was perfectly satisfied with his friend's choice, for the roan pleased him better than the other.

"It's a good thing to be contented," Paterson said with a laugh; "but, except in the point of color, I don't believe there's a hair's difference between 'em."

It was hard work for the boys to go to sleep on

this night. They were about to leave the brig, which had served them as home for so many weeks, and before they saw the little craft again many dangers might be encountered. Besides, from the next day they were to be veritable hunters, charged with the duty of providing food, under Paterson's direction, for the entire party, and the prospect of one continuous hunt was very alluring.

With the first light of dawn they were on deck watching the departure of the long train of carts, and when the last disappeared over the slight incline which led from the sea-shore, a visit was made to the ponies, which were being groomed in a sorry fashion by the Kaffir laborers, who would soon start on foot to overtake the wagons.

Nothing better could have been desired in the way of saddle-horses; the little animals were tractable, with an easy gait, and one would almost have said they were well pleased with their new masters.

The boys enjoyed a long gallop before breakfast, and on returning to the brig were loud in their praises of the steeds.

"I wish we were going to start this very minute," Dick said excitedly.

"There is nothing to prevent," Mr. Ellsworth replied with a smile. "You can leave after the meal is finished, and I fancy it may be possible to help the drivers, for some of the oxen promise to be refractory."

"Perhaps it will be better to wait until you are

ready," and Dick's enthusiasm cooled wonderfully. "We know nothing about the country, and it would be a bad start to get lost the first day."

"I'll guarantee that nothing of that kind can happen. The wagons will keep straight on over the beaten road, and you have only to follow until a cloud of dust shows the exact location of our train."

The idea that they were really in Africa, and about to make a long journey through the trackless forests, gave the boys a degree of caution which almost amounted to timidity, and they wisely resolved to wait until the party were ready to start.

Paterson now dealt out the ammunition which each must carry, and while doing so he said:

"The heavy rifles have gone on with the train, because there will be no need of them for several days. Sling the fowling-pieces across your backs, fill the cartridge-belts, fasten on the knives, and I will show you how to roll the blankets so they can be tied to the saddles. From this time on you are under my orders, an' I allow you'll stand ready to do all that may be required."

"What is expected of us first?" Dick asked.

"Nothing in particular until we get among the game. The hunters must stay near the train, except when they have special orders, an' you'll be obliged to fall into line with the rest."

Dick and Bob promised strict obedience to the rules thus laid down, and when finally Mr. Ellsworth gave orders to make ready for the advance the boys' horses were already saddled.

CHAPTER IV.

TREKING.

THE TRAIN had not yet come to a halt for the night when Mr. Ellsworth and his party overtook it. It was Paterson's duty to select the place for an encampment, and not one of the drivers would have presumed to do such a thing.

The heavy wagons creaking in every joint as they were drawn over the dusty, rough road by fourteen wicked-looking oxen to each team; the shouts of the Hottentots as they urged the slowly moving beasts on by cries of "Juk! juk!" to start them ahead, or "Om!" om!" to turn them; the crowd of attendants straggling on either side the road; the spare horses fastened to the rear of the wagons, and the half-dozen scrawny dogs running here and there, made up such a picture as engrossed the boys' entire attention.

They rode ahead or alongside as fancy dictated, until the train arrived at the bank of a small stream, when the word to halt was given.

Here the wagons were drawn up in a circle, the cattle outspanned, fires built, and Dick and Bob were in the midst of such a camp as they had often read about, but never seen before.

"Yes, I s'pose it looks odd to you," Paterson said,

when the boys after attending to their steeds, threw themselves on the ground by his side; "but wait till we are where the beasts give a concert every night an' the cattle are brought inside the line of wagons to prevent their bein' carried away. Then you'll get an idee of what camp life means in Africa."

"How long before we shall be in such a region?"

"A week oughter be enough, an' if your father takes my advice about makin' a break for one of the mouths of the Amatikulu River we'll find rough country in less time."

There was little sleep for the boys during this first night in camp. Their beds were placed in one of the big wagons with that belonging to Mr. Ellsworth; but it was late before either could tear himself away from the fascinating scene, and even after retiring, the strangeness of the situation prevented slumber from visiting their eyelids until it was nearly time to begin the next day's journey.

Paterson's advice regarding the hunting-grounds was taken, as the boys understood, when the train, after following the course of the river until noon, made a sharp turn to the left, and before nightfall they began to understand what the hunter meant by a "rough country."

The way led over undulating land for half a dozen miles, and then the foot of a sharp rise was reached.

Knowing what was before them, the drivers urged on the oxen with a perfect babel of cries, hoping to get the loads up without a stop.

For a time this plan promised to be successful, but on arriving at a steeper inclination all the teams stopped, the animals refusing to pull any more.

The Hottentots yelled, cracked their long whips and showered cruel blows upon the discouraged beasts, who began twisting and turning in their yokes, some deliberately lying down and others forced from their feet by the press, until the boys believed it would be impossible ever to extricate them from the snarl.

Now the drivers plied their whips, bringing blood from the backs of the obstinate brutes with every blow, while the helpers pulled the oxen from one side to the other by the tails, and after a scene of confusion such as it is impossible to describe, the teams were in motion once more.

"We were lucky to get out of that scrape," Dick said, with a long-drawn sigh of relief, as the last wagon passed over the brow of the hill, and he, together with Paterson and Bob, who had remained in the rear watching the work, rode forward once more.

"That didn't amount to very much," the old hunter replied. "There's a worse place to be met before camp is made, an' neither of 'em amount to anything compared with what we will find before you're on board the brig again."

There was no necessity for the boys to ask any questions, for at this moment they were where it was possible to see the spot of which Paterson had spoken.

Before them, leading down to a beautiful valley, was a shelf of clay sloping gradually for a width of twenty feet, and ending abruptly in a sheer descent of an hundred feet or more.

The remainder of the hill was thickly covered with rocks and stout bushes, and the only passage was over this slippery road, where the slightest obstinacy on the part of the oxen would precipitate the teams to the depths below.

"Now, I reckon we'll have to bear a hand here ourselves," Paterson said, as he dismounted, and the boys followed his example.

Every member of the party aided in the perilous work. Ropes made of buffalo hide were fastened to the sides of the wagons opposite the precipice, and the entire crowd clung to these, thus preventing the broad wheels from sliding over the treacherous clay.

Since it was necessary to aid each team in the same manner, the task was a long one, and night had already fallen when the last of the train reached the valley, through which ran a small stream.

Now, the boys were so tired with the laborious trek that even the roaring of a dozen lions would not have kept them awake, and, after a hearty supper, they laid down on the narrow wagon-beds to fall asleep almost immediately.

On the following morning Paterson awakened them, saying as he did so:

"We are now where your work as hunters must begin, for there's a big crowd here to be fed, an' it

won't do to draw too heavy on our preserved goods."

"I'm ready," Dick cried, as he leaped from the wagon, and the old man laughed heartily as he added:

"I didn't count on your commencin' quite so soon. Get breakfast at once, so our portion of the party can set out well ahead of the train. A ride of a dozen miles or more should bring us among game of some kind."

Fried pork and ship's biscuit, washed down with the muddy mixture which the Kaffir cook called coffee, is not an appetizing meal under the most favorable circumstances; but when served before daylight, and in the midst of a crowd of ill-smelling negroes, horses and cattle, one must be exceedingly hungry in order to eat it.

Very little satisfied the boys, and they were in the saddle waiting for orders sometime before the remainder of the hunters.

"We have as yet nothing to fear from the Zulus, because we are only on the border of their country," Paterson said, when all were ready. "Game isn't very plenty hereabouts, therefore the word had better be 'every one for himself.' We will cover as much of the country as possible, and the camp tonight will be due north from here."

"How can we find it? Dick asked, as the majority of the party started at full speed in various directions, leaving Bob and Dick alone with Paterson.

"Try to measure a day's journey for the cattle—

say fifteen miles with your eye, keeping true to the point of the compass as given out," the hunter replied. "Then fix in your mind some prominent landmarks. That done, you'll have no trouble in findin' the train at any time. It isn't possible to get lost here, so I propose to let you go by yourselves. Remember that you are after food, not sport, and bring in all the game you can."

As he said this Paterson spurred his horse off at an abrupt turn, and the boys were virtually alone.

"I suppose this is what he calls a lesson in hunting," Dick muttered, as he gazed after the old man. "I don't like things of this kind, no matter what they are done for."

"Well, we can't turn back without admitting that we're afraid, so the best course is to push ahead," Bob replied, with a laugh.

"But we know nothing whatever of the country, and it's hard telling what may happen before we see the train again."

"There's yet time enough to get back to the camp before all the wagons have left."

"Of course we can't do that; but I think it's rather rough to set a couple of fellows adrift like this."

"There isn't much chance of getting lost, unless we stray out of the valley, and that we're not likely to do, so let's put in our best licks to show what we can accomplish in the way of finding game."

Dick hesitated but an instant, and then he said, his face growing brighter:

"Come on; it'll be hard lines if we don't find the wagons before night, and there's no reason why we should continue the hunt all day."

"None except that game is needed, and we must do our share toward getting it."

Dick was already riding at fast speed toward the westernmost end of the valley, and if he heard Bob's remark he made no reply. Now was the time when they must show whether they could be of any service to the expedition, and it was not impossible that both might be sent back to the brig if the result of this day's work was unsatisfactory.

After ten minutes both the boys had forgotten their fears in the beauties which surrounded them.

Dotted here and there in the valley were clumps of timber, the tops of the trees seeming to rise above the summit of the hill down which the party had traveled so laboriously; a rich carpet of green covered the land as far as the eye could reach, and on every hand were flowers of the richest hues.

The boys were giving vent to cries of admiration as they rode along, never thinking of the reason why they were alone, when a graceful little animal darted from the cover near at hand, followed in its mad race for life by a dozen others.

"That's the kind of an antelope they call klip-springer!" Dick cried, excitedly. "I've seen them in some of the zoological collections father brought home. Come on, and we'll have one or two to show for our day's hunt!"

There was no thought now of getting lost, as

they rode at full speed after the herd, forgetting to take heed of the landmarks as Paterson had suggested.

On went the pursuers and the pursued, the latter gaining so decidedly in the chase that Bob cried, in a tone of dismay:

"We lost our chance by not shooting when we first saw them. Now they are running a great deal faster than our horses can."

"Don't give up beaten. We'll try to tire them out."

The boys' knowledge of hunting was so decidedly limited that they really thought Dick's plan was the only one which could be pursued with any degree of success, and they continued on at full speed until their horses began to show signs of exhaustion.

The antelope had vanished some time before, and when Dick's steed slackened his pace to a slow trot there could be no question but that the race had come to an end.

"We are making fools of ourselves," Bob said, angrily, "and it would be a good idea to take a few lessons of Paterson before starting out alone again. Let's get back to the train and admit our ignorance."

"All right," and Dick brought his willing pony to a full stop as he gazed around. "Which point are we to strike for?"

Bob looked in every direction, an expression of bewilderment overspreading his face as he failed to recognize any prominent feature of the landscape.

"I declare I don't know where we are. Those antelope doubled back three or four times, and I'm completely turned around."

Dick did not reply. The startling fact that they were lost began to dawn upon his mind, and the situation seemed very desperate.

CHAPTER V.

LOST.

IT WAS several moments before either of the boys ventured to speak, and then Bob asked, in a tone of utter helplessness:

"Do you suppose we are lost?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Let's ride in one direction half an hour, and then, if we see nothing of the train, take another course."

"Do you forget that the horses can't go much farther without a rest? We have urged them on at full speed three or four hours, and one look at yours will show that he needs a long breathing spell."

Bob leaped to the ground, Dick following his example, and one glance was sufficient to show that quite a lengthy halt should be made.

"It is nearly noon, and we may as well wait until the heat of the day is past," Dick said, as he quenched his thirst by a long draft at the canteen. "If we could give the ponies a drink matters wouldn't be quite as bad."

"We'll take off the saddles and bridles; that will afford them some relief, and with plenty of grass to eat they ought to be all right pretty soon."

"We've got nothing with which to hobble them,

and in case either strays away we shall be in a bad plight."

"There's no danger of that while they are so tired; and Bob set his horse free, the little fellow at once plunging his muzzle in the thick, green herbage. "See, he isn't likely to leave this place while there is plenty to eat."

Not without some misgivings did Dick allow his horse perfect freedom; but he felt assured shortly afterward that all was well, because neither animal showed any disposition to stray.

"This is a bad beginning for us," Bob muttered, as he threw himself on the grass under the shelter of a clump of bushes. "We are supposed to be hunters attached to the expedition, and yet the first time our services are needed we lose ourselves in an ordinary sized valley."

"We can't be lost, for it is only necessary to ride from one side to the other in order to find the trail."

"That is true; but it would have been the same in the forest, without the chance of running across the others so easily. If this is taken as a sample of our work we can count on being sent back to the brig mighty soon."

"Don't mention such a possibility, Bob, I was thinking of the same thing at that moment. It would be terrible to tell the boys at home that we came all the way to Africa without hearing so much as a lion roar because father couldn't trust us."

"It isn't a very pleasant subject for conversation I'll admit, so let's change it by trying to decide

which is the best course for us to take after the horses are rested."

"As near as I can judge we have been riding almost at right angles with the course the train was to pursue. If that is correct we should find the trail by striking straight across to the right."

"That will be a pretty long journey."

"It won't count for much if we finally succeed in finding the party."

"We'll hope there'll not be any trouble about that. It'll be two or three hours before we can leave, and I'm going to take a nap; I didn't get more than half sleep enough last night."

Bob suited the action to the words, and in a few moments his heavy breathing told that he was wrapped in the blissful unconsciousness of slumber.

Dick had a very well defined idea that one should remain awake; but he also was weary. The heat, the hum of insects and the waving grass caused his eyes to close very quickly.

The ponies attended strictly to the business of getting dinner. Growing fastidious as their hunger was appeased, they moved further and further away from the clump of bushes which sheltered their masters, searching here and there for more delicate mouthfuls, until suddenly an inquisitive dassi—a long-eared fellow who might have been first cousin to our domestic rabbits—sprang from out the grass, under their very noses.

This was so entirely unexpected and startling that both the horses forgot their training, and kick-

ing up their heels, started at full speed across the valley.

Two hours later Dick awakened, rose to a sitting posture, and rubbed his eyes violently as he cried:

"Come, Bob, it's time we made a move. The sun is getting well down in the sky, and the ponies are surely in good condition for a canter."

Bob was on his feet before Dick ceased speaking, and, after one hasty glance around, he said in a tone of alarm:

"They must have got into condition some time ago, and went off by themselves. It's certain they're nowhere around here."

"What?" and Dick came from under the bushes with marvelous celerity.

It was in vain that they searched with their eyes the green plain in every direction. Nothing could be seen save one solitary dassi—perhaps the very fellow who had caused the mischief — solemnly engaged in executing a series of marvelous leaps.

"It wasn't enough that we should make such fools of ourselves as to get lost; but we must further prove our idiocy by letting the horses run away," Dick said bitterly, after a long pause. "I reckon there's no question now about our being sent back to the brig."

"Well, we deserve it," was the emphatic reply.

Then followed another long pause, which was finally broken by Dick, who said impatiently:

"We musn't stand here like statues. It's a question of walking, and the sooner we start the better."

"What about the saddles and bridles?"

"We've got to carry them."

"But we shall never be able to cross the valley on foot, and loaded down with those things."

"We'll never find the train any other way. Unless we carry the saddles with us it'll be a case of finishing the hunting trip without any, for harness-makers are not plenty in this country."

In silence the two gathered up their accouterments, and started on the long journey, Bob pleasantly suggesting when they had reached a small grove of trees and were walking in the shade:

"What we need now is to run across a lion or two, so's the adventure can be finished up in proper style."

"I'd almost as soon meet half-a-dozen as to face Paterson in this plight."

"I'd be willing to take what he may say for the sake of seeing him just now. Do you suppose we can walk the remainder of the day and all night?"

"That's about what we shall have to do, unless we propose to stay here forever."

Now that so much mischief had been done through carelessness the boys neglected no precautions to prevent themselves from straying out of a direct course. Taking a series of landmarks which were within range, they traveled from one to the other, conversing but little, and stopping to rest only when it became absolutely necessary because of the excessive heat.

Hour after hour passed and yet they neither saw

nor heard anything to betoken the proximity of the train. The alternate patches of green sward where the sun beat down pitilessly upon their defenceless heads, and the clumps of trees whose branches impeded their progress, succeeded one another with unvarying regularity; but not a sign of human beings could be found.

"There can be no question but that we took the wrong course," Dick said, as they halted a few moments when the sun hung low in the western sky.

"So much the worse for us," was the despairing reply. "It would be impossible to retrace our steps, more especially in the darkness, and if it wasn't for the hope of finding water, I'd say let's camp here for the night."

"I couldn't sleep while I am so thirsty. It seems as if my mouth was parched."

"Then let's push on again; but I can't go a great deal further."

"It would be death to give up now."

"And it surely will be death to keep on much longer. I am so dizzy that at times it is impossible to see the ground."

Bob's tone was one of despair, and to Dick's anxiety was added the fear that his companion would succumb to fatigue.

Now he also lost hope, and the two staggered on, taking no heed to the course, like boys in a delirium of fever.

How far they traveled while in this semi-uncon-

scious condition neither ever knew. It seemed as though many hours had passed when they were electrified by hearing a familiar voice shouting:

"Halloo! Boys! Dick! Bob!"

Nothing less than this more than welcome hail could have aroused them from the apathy into which they had fallen.

Turning quickly, as if fatigue or thirst were unknown sensations, they ran from the shelter of the trees to the open plain, where could be seen three men riding rapidly down upon them.

In another instant Paterson was asking, as he dismounted, just in time to prevent Bob from falling:

"What's the matter, lad? Surely a little tramp can't have used you up like this."

"We're dying with thirst," Dick said with difficulty.

"I don't reckon it's quite as bad as that, because you had a day's supply when we left camp."

"We drank without thinking how precious it might be, and not until the canteens were empty did we realize that it should have been used more economically."

"Then, perhaps, it's jest as well that you've suffered some at the start, for the lesson will be remembered, an' it's a very important one to learn in these parts."

While speaking, the hunter had given the boys a small quantity of the desired liquid, allowing them to take no more than one mouthful at a draught, and when they were partially relieved he continued, sternly:

"Don't forget again that you must limit yourselves for a day's consumption to the contents of the canteens, even though we may be traveling along the bank of a stream. I'll give you credit for savin' the saddles, since we're spared the trouble of looking for them. We'll harness the ponies and get back to camp as soon as we can."

Until this moment the boys had not observed that two of the riders had led horses, and Dick cried in surprise:

"Where did you find them?"

"They came into camp just as we halted, and had probably been following the train some time. It didn't require much guessing to hit the truth of the case pretty nearly, an' I came out to find you."

"Did you have much trouble?"

"A man who can run down a wild beast oughter pick up a couple of stupid boys in short order. I counted on your strikin' straight across the valley without takin' into consideration the distance traveled on horseback, an' the rest was easy."

"Were we walking in the right direction?"

"Hardly, unless you counted on takin' in the breadth of Zululand. The train is a dozen miles to the right, an' you'd been on the range before it came any where near here."

"Do you suppose father will send us back to the brig?" Dick asked, after a pause.

"Jump into your saddles, an' I'll see that you have another chance of tryin' to get sport out of this kind of hunting."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PERMANENT CAMP.

WHEN they arrived at the camp the boys fully expected to receive a severe lecture from Mr. Ellsworth, but in this they were happily mistaken.

He greeted them as if they had just returned from a successful hunting trip, and said, as he moved toward one of the fires from which a savory odor was arising:

"Riding with the train all day gives a person a good appetite, but those who have been scouring the country since morning, as members of the hunting portion of the expedition are forced to do, can generally hold their own, even with a Hottentot; so I fancy you are ready for supper."

To this remark the boys made no reply. They followed Mr. Ellsworth, looking very ill at ease, and the fact that there was plenty of game in camp did not tend to make them feel any more cheerful.

"Don't you suppose he has heard what happened?" Bob whispered.

"I'm sure I don't know. We'll keep quiet, at all events, and won't be the first to speak of our foolishness."

Paterson joined the little party, which, according

to camp etiquette, took their meals apart from the others, and while cutting some juicy slices from the roasted leg of an antelope said, pleasantly:

"I reckon Dick and Bob are ready for their full share of these. Boys who spend a day in the saddle are usually hungry."

"Those who walk a good deal want considerable, too," Dick replied, as he took a generous portion, and during the remainder of the meal he did not speak again.

Both Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson had so much to say regarding the labor a hunter was necessarily forced to perform that there could be little doubt the former had a very good idea of the boys' misadventures, but no direct allusion was made to the subject, and at the earliest possible moment Dick and Bob crawled into bed.

On the following morning Paterson did not accompany his men, but rode near the train with the boys by his side, and before the tedious journey came to an end both the young hunters had learned very much relative to the mode of life they would be forced to conform to before the expedition returned to the coast.

The other hunters brought in a plentiful supply of small game, and the natives gorged themselves with food in true African fashion.

On the sixth day Paterson said to Dick and Bob as they rode up to where he sat on his horse:

"You are to stay with the main body of the party 'till night."

"Does that mean we are to do no more hunting?" Dick asked.

"Not a bit of it. Some of the men brought in news yesterday which induces me to leave a part of my force behind, and you are simply with those who are to stay."

Among one of the lessons which the boys learned on the previous day was that no unnecessary questions should be asked, therefore they reined in their steeds without comment, riding near the advance wagon with the other hunters until Mr. Ellsworth said:

"You boys may come with me. I have decided to make our permanent camp in this vicinity, and if I am not mistaken there is a desirable spot a few miles ahead."

The ponies were in the best possible trim for a gallop, and although Mr. Ellsworth's powerful horse could distance them in point of endurance, they made a very creditable showing during a race of half an hour, when the leader halted on the slope of a hill, forming one side of a small valley, through which run a sparkling stream.

Opening from the upper end of the depression was a level plateau extending half a dozen miles to a lofty mountain range that shut out a view of the country beyond.

"This is the spot where our camp should be located, for if I am not mistaken plenty of game can be found near by. We'll set to work to-night building a stockade, and before morning you boys are

likely to hear a serenade by lions. Ride back to the train, and send forward all who can be spared, so that the work can be done without delay. Then you may strike across the open, and tell Paterson a location has been found."

The first order was quickly obeyed, and then as Dick and Bob set out to meet the chief hunter, distrusting not a little their ability to find him, the latter said:

"I wonder why your father thinks it necessary to build a stockade? There doesn't seem to be many animals about."

"Perhaps he fears trouble from the natives."

"And are we to stay in this place five or six months?"

"I suppose so, if it is to be our permanent camp."

"Then, perhaps, by the time we leave, it will be possible for us to go out for a day without losing either ourselves or the ponies."

"It is to be hoped so; but thus far, Bob, I don't think we have reason to be very proud of our skill as hunters."

"Before another week goes by I'll show that something can be done by boys, even if they never were in Africa before."

"We'll ask Paterson to take us out with him to-morrow, instead of sending us off alone, for I suppose just so much food must be provided every day."

"I wonder when the trapping is to begin."

"Not for some time after we are located, father

days. It is necessary to let the animals get quieted down, and all the shooting is to be done a long distance from the camp."

Under different circumstances a ride across the grassy plain would have been rare sport; but now, stiff and lame as they were from so much exercise in the saddle, neither felt like deviating ever so slightly from the course. They guided the ponies toward that point among the foliage at which the hunters might be expected to appear, and proceeded at a leisurely pace.

The messengers were nearly at the base of the range before the party came from the forest, and then Paterson rode directly toward them as if surprised by their approach.

"What's the matter?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Nothing except that we have gone into permanent camp at last. Father has decided to remain here until the cages are full."

"Where has he located?"

"Across the plain at the foot of the hill."

"Yes, yes; I can see the smoke."

"Why do you look so disturbed? Isn't this good hunting-ground?"

"The best that could be found within an hundred miles. Four or five miles south from here is a rice-swamp, where there will be no trouble in taking one or two black rhinoceros."

"And that is an animal father is most eager to carry home, but you act as if it was a misfortune to have found them."

"It's not them as frets me, Dick, for we can't get too many on this trip; but one of the Kaffirs has seen a crowd of Zulus, and they haven't come so far from their kraals except to work mischief. This is a bad part of the country jest now, although I did advise comin' into it, an' I hoped no long halt would be made for a number of days."

"The trouble can't be very serious," Bob replied, with a laugh. "You have only to tell Mr. Ellsworth what has been seen or heard, and it will be an easy matter to find another location as good as this."

"It isn't as easy to convince him as you seem to think," the chief hunter said, with a shake of the head. "Once speak of danger an' he'll be bound to stay if for no other reason than to show he's not afraid."

The boys were but little disturbed by Paterson's report. They had heard of Zulus hovering in the neighborhood from the time of their arrival on the coast; but since no absolute show of hostilities had been made, the matter came to be looked upon as a harmless bugbear.

The hunter said nothing more on the subject, but ordered some of the men who carried the heaviest loads to divide with the boys, and then the word was given to push for the camp.

When the party arrived at the spot selected by Mr. Ellsworth as the base of his trapping operations, the general arrangement of the camp had already been decided upon, and some of the natives were working on the stockade.

Paterson noted these details as he entered the line of enclosure marked out by stakes, and went at once to Mr. Ellsworth.

The two men withdrew a short distance that their conversation could not be overheard, while the boys watched curiously the work which was being done. The wagons no longer formed a compact circle; but were placed some distance apart in order that there might be ample room for the entire party within the shelter thus formed, and the stakes, to which fluttering rags had been tied, showed the stockade would be extended to the very bank of the stream.

"They are building a regular fort," Bob said, in surprise. "After it is done I don't believe the Zulus will dare attack us, no matter how large a crowd there may be in the neighborhood."

"Paterson ought to know what they can do, and he appears to be pretty badly scared," Dick replied, as he pointed beyond the wagons where, from his gestures, it could be understood the hunter was talking with great vehemence.

At this moment Mr. Ellsworth called to Dick:

"Bring my rifle and cartridge-belt."

Bob followed his companion as the latter obeyed, and the boys gained the side of the leaders in time to hear Dick's father say:

"It would be folly to leave a place like this if the reports your men bring in are true. We should hardly find a better spot, so far as defending ourselves is concerned, and it is best to wait here until the natives quiet down a little. Let us take a look

around to make sure there is no immediate danger and by to-morrow we shall have nothing to fear, unless a regular army is sent against us."

The expression of Paterson's face told that he was thoroughly dissatisfied with the decision, but his ideas of discipline prevented him from offering any further suggestions, and with a very ill-grace he followed the leader up the hill.

"That settles the question of staying, and I'm glad," Dick said, as the men disappeared among the underbrush. "If there is any fighting we'll be much better off here than while traveling, and it doesn't seem possible we shall be troubled so near the coast."

"At any rate there can be no danger yet awhile, so let's watch the work. I like to see the Hottentots handling the thorn-bushes, of which they are making the stockade."

In strolling around the encampment the boys talked with several of the hunters relative to a possible attack by the Zulus, and what they heard served to make them feel decidedly uneasy and restless.

"If we'd come out here to fight, I should say this was about the right spot," one of the oldest members of the party replied to Dick's question; "but it's a mighty poor lookout for trappin', unless we're willin' to stay a year or so."

"I don't see how much mischief can be done after the place has been fortified."

"Nor I; but we didn't come here to stay cooped

up in camp, an' if a big crowd fools 'round four or five days, rations will be pretty slim."

This was a view of the case which had entirely escaped the boys' attention, and they felt seriously disturbed by the time Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson returned.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UGLY CAPTIVE.

THAT there was to be no change in the location of the camp could be told when the leader and the chief hunter returned from their tour of observation.

Every one except the cooks was ordered to work on the stockade, and when night came no slight amount had been done.

Heretofore only one of the hunters remained on guard at a time, the force of sentinels being made up from the natives; but now Paterson's entire party, including the boys, was divided into three watches, each division going on duty two hours at a time.

Never had an hundred and twenty minutes seemed so long to the boys as now, while they paced to and fro between the wagons, listening for any sound which might betoken the coming of enemies or wild beasts. The orders were that no conversation save such as was absolutely necessary should be indulged in; therefore, even this poor method of causing the time to pass more quickly was denied them.

The stamping of the cattle, the tread of the other sentinels, and even the soft murmur of the night wind, caused them to start in alarm. The relief of

both was indeed great when the second watch turned out, and Dick whispered to Bob as they crawled into the wagon, knowing the same disagreeable experience must be repeated four hours later:

"We're beginning to find out that Paterson told the truth when he said there was more work than sport on an expedition like this."

And Bob replied:

"I don't like to say so to any one else, but if I could be at home this minute by wishing, there wouldn't be many more seconds spent in Africa."

Dick squeezed his companion's arm as if to say he was of much the same opinion, and then the two attended strictly to the business of going to sleep.

The second watch was not quite so tedious, and during the last half of the day which followed the boys were posted on the brow of the hill to keep a lookout over the plain beyond.

All of the hunting party acted as guards during the hours of daylight, while the natives worked on the stockade, and this dreary round was continued seventy-two hours, when the preparations for defense were completed.

Not a Zulu had been seen. It was as if this portion of the country had been deserted by all human beings save those comprising the hunting party, and even Paterson began to think his fears were groundless.

When the camp was completed men were sent out

for game, since the fresh meat had been exhausted; but neither Dick nor Bob were allowed to accompany them.

"I don't think we have anything to fear from the natives," Mr. Ellsworth said, when Dick pleaded that they be allowed to give their ponies some exercise; "but you boys must remain close at hand until we are absolutely certain there are no war parties in this section."

Three more days elapsed, and, save for an occasional roar of a lion at night, everything was in a state of peace and repose. Paterson, with half a dozen of his men, had scoured the country within a radius of twenty miles, and reported that the information given by one of the hunters must have been without foundation in fact.

"I see no reason why we shouldn't begin the work for which we have come at once," the boys heard him say to Mr. Ellsworth. "By keeping a sentinel on the hill we will be able to get early information in case the Zulus take it into their woolly heads to pay us a visit."

"How do you propose to commence operations?"

"We'll start by trying the rice swamp for a black rhinoceros. I was in there to-day and saw plenty of signs."

"Very well, get to work as soon as you like, and it may be best to take the boys; they can be of considerable assistance."

This was good news to Dick and Bob; they had been shut up in camp so long that anything in

the way of work or sport would be an agreeable change, and the idea of beginning with one of the most dangerous animals known to man had in it a spice of adventure which was decidedly exciting.

From the celerity with which Paterson made his preparations it was evident he had attended to nearly all the details before broaching the subject to Mr. Ellsworth, and in less than half an hour the boys were ordered to saddle their ponies.

"Take your heaviest guns and plenty of amunition," the hunter said, "and it won't be a bad idea to carry something in the shape of a lunch."

When the party was ready to start one of the stoutest cages had been drawn out of the circle, and six oxen attached to it.

"That looks as if Paterson was pretty sure of getting the first specimen without much trouble," Dick said, laughingly, and overhearing him, the hunter replied:

"I am pretty sure, but it isn't best to reckon that there'll be no trouble about it."

Then the word to start was given, and the white members of the party set out at a sharp gallop, while a crowd of natives ran on behind.

It was yet early in the morning, and on arriving at the swamp the horses were hobbled in a small grove near by, the hunters pushing forward until they reached a well-defined trail, where Paterson had already decided the trap should be made.

Selecting a spot where the broad path ran in nearly a straight line for about fifty rods, the

natives, who arrived very shortly after the horsemen, were set at work digging a pit twelve feet long, six wide and four deep. The edges of this was lined with stakes to prevent the earth from caving in, and the whole was covered with brush and dirt until a careful scrutiny was necessary in order to discover that the trail had been disturbed.

At the outer end of this a staff, to which was attached a red flag, was stuck firmly in the ground, and while the laborers rested until the time to begin the real work of the day should arrive, Paterson explained his plan to the boys.

"Unless the black rhinoceros is excited, he is very crafty, and would give this flag a wide berth if we left him alone. The best runner among our crowd of blacks will strip himself presently, after two of the men, who went off a short time ago, come to tell us they have found our game asleep, as he probably will be at this time of day. Then the naked fellow is to stir up the brute, provoke him to follow and lead him into the trap."

"But suppose the man should be overtaken?" Dick asked.

"In that case we shall lose one of our crowd as well as the beast."

Dick said no more. African sport, if such this business could be called, was fast growing into disfavor with those who had been so eager to participate in it.

Two hours later the hunters came up and gave the native who was to act the part of human bait, full directions where the game could be found.

Without any hesitation the man started off, carrying in his hand a second red flag, and the white men made their way to a bare knoll which commanded a view of the trap. This elevation seemed to have been thrown up by the ants and abandoned, therefore, save for being a trifle soft to the feet, it was a good position for a stand in case the brute made a charge.

The boys could see nothing of the black fellow for a long while, and then as the red flag appeared above the grass, Paterson shouted:

"He has found him! Now stand ready and make no noise."

Five minutes passed, and then a crashing, as if the very earth was being shaken, told that the race was nearing the end.

Dick and Bob hardly breathed when the native, straining every muscle to the utmost, came in sight, with a huge black animal hardly twenty feet behind, and apparently gaining at every bound.

Each second the distance between the two grew shorter; but now the trap was close at hand, and the panting negro skirted the edge of the trail while the rhinocerous thundered along in the center.

It seemed to Dick that the wicked-looking brute was lowering his head to impale the man on the long horn, when he pitched forward, and a second later a grunt that could have been heard a long distance away told that the ugly brute was a captive.

The native fell headlong when the chase was thus finished, and for several moments lay upon

the ground so nearly exhausted that he was unable to rise.

When the hunters approached the pit with a shout of triumph it was found that, in falling, the rhinoceros had rolled over on his side, and was completely at the mercy of his captors; but in a towering rage.

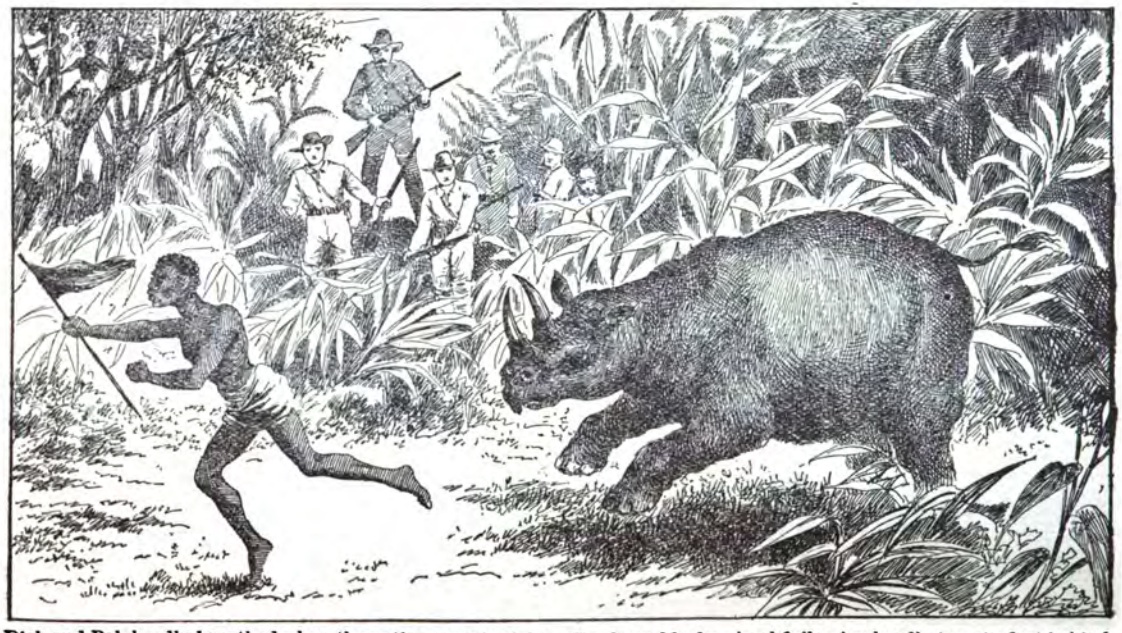
The game had fallen into the trap; but it was necessary now to get him out, and this, so the boys thought, would be the most difficult portion of the work.

Paterson went about the task very leisurely. He first turned his attention to tying the old fellow's hind legs together, a job that was not completed until many trials had been made, and more than one man placed in danger of losing his life.

This prevented the brute from struggling so violently. Then a quantity of ropes and chains was taken from the cart, which by this time had been brought up to the trap. Stout stakes were driven where they might be needed, and three uprights lashed together to serve as a derrick.

When everything was in readiness chains were passed around the prisoner's body, and carried to blocks at the top of the tripod; purchase tackles were rigged to each foot, and the mass of disagreeable looking, angry flesh was slowly hoisted to the surface, when the squealing brute was literally swung into the stoutly built cage which permitted of but little freedom of action.

Now, the foot ropes were made fast to the four



Dick and Bob hardly breathed when the native came in sight with a huge black animal following hardly twenty feet behind.

corners of the cart, and, rage as he might, there was no chance that any mischief could be done.

After he quieted down a bit, and arrangements had been made in camp, more liberty would be given him; but during some days he must remain fastened to the floor of the cage without the power to so much as lift his feet.

It was nearly dark before the cart had been made ready for the journey to the camp, and with its occupant squealing in unison with the creaking wheels, it was started, Dick and Bob receiving permission from Paterson to ride ahead, and be the first to give Mr. Ellsworth the good news.

"It's a pretty fair job to begin the collection by trapping without accident a black rhinocerous," Dick said, in a tone of triumph, as they rode across the plain. "Two or three like this, and it will seem as if we were being paid for having remained in camp so long."

"I fancy it is different kind of work when they tackle lions, for there are claws to be looked out for while tying him, and the rhinoceros was so clumsy that that part of the work was easy. You see——"

Bob ceased speaking very suddenly, and reined in his pony with a force that brought the little fellow to his haunches, for directly in front of him, as if they had risen from the ground, were two Zulus.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGERS.

AS A MATTER of course the boys had had no experience in bush life, therefore they allowed their surprise to so far overpower them that for fully a minute nothing was done in the way of preparing for a fight.

Had the Zulus been so inclined both could have been taken prisoners or murdered before they were ready to strike a blow in self-defence.

Dick was the first to recover sufficiently to draw his revolver, and, as he did so, one of the strangers, a boy not more than sixteen years old, held up both hands as if to show that he was unarmed.

Then the other, apparently not many months older, who had also raised his hands, came so near Dick's stirrup that it could be plainly seen he was wounded.

The boy had an ugly looking cut on the breast, from which the blood was yet flowing, and his arm had apparently been pierced with a spear.

Dick uttered an exclamation of horror, and, thus understanding that the sight of his wounds had excited the pity of the white lad, the Zulu pointed to his companion, from whose side the crimson fluid

had flowed and dried until it resembled a piece of raw beef.

Then both the boys went through an expressive pantomime to show that they were hungry, thirsty and exhausted, at the end of which each held out his hands as if imploring protection.

"They've been in some kind of a fight, and want us to take them into camp," Bob said, at the conclusion of this mute appeal. "Hadn't we better ride back and tell Paterson?"

"It won't take us nearly as long to find father."

"But is it safe to carry them to the stockade?"

"They surely can't do any harm, wounded and unarmed as they are."

"Not by themselves; but they may be spies."

"It don't look like it, and, besides, from what I have read, it isn't the custom of the Zulus to do such things. They could easily learn all that might be required by creeping up on us in the night."

Bob was at a loss to know what should be done; he had quite as much sympathy for the boys who stood looking from one white lad to the other during the conversation as had Dick; but he was more cautious, and feared they might be blamed for thus acting upon their impulses.

"I'll run the risk," Dick finally said, after a long time of thought. "We'll let them ride while we walk, for neither of them looks as if he could travel half a mile further."

While speaking he dismounted, Bob following his

example, and did his best to make them understand they were to get into the saddles.

This proposal was met with a most decided declination. The Zulus literally forced the white boys to mount, and then each grasped a stirrip strap to show they would run alongside.

"I'm certain they'll never be able to travel as far as the camp," Dick said; "but it seems that there is no other way to arrange it, so let's go on at a slow trot."

The horses were started; but the Zulus were evidently dissatisfied with the pace, for they ran ahead to show it was possible for them to move faster, and Dick said with a laugh:

"We'll give them all they want, and take the chances that one or the other drops before we reach camp."

Then he urged the little steed to a gallop, and the boys, wounded though they were, had no difficulty in keeping up with the pace, owing to the slight aid afforded by the stirrup leather.

Mr. Ellsworth was standing near the entrance to the stockade watching for the return of the hunters, when the boys arrived, and he asked with no little show of anxiety:

"What is the meaning of this? Have the men had a fight with natives?"

Dick briefly explained under what circumstances they had met the strangers, concluding by saying:

"It seemed brutal to leave them wounded and starving; but if it was wrong to let them come here

then I am the only one who should be blamed, for Bob was afraid you wouldn't like it."

"These two boys do not disturb me, save as it shows there has been fighting going on somewhere near, and that there are others in the vicinity. Paterson speaks their language, and when he comes back we will hear their story. Give them food and water, and do not allow them to leave the camp."

Before attending to their horses Dick and Bob set provisions before the strangers, and then the latter remained with the boys as guard, while the former groomed both ponies.

It was quite late in the evening before the creaking cart-wheels told that the first specimen of the intended collection was approaching the camp, and a few moments later the chief hunter was questioning the strangers.

The Zulus had a long story to tell, and it was yet further lengthened by Paterson's interruptions, as he asked for different details which, in their excitement, they would have omitted.

The boys and Mr. Ellsworth listened to the conversation which neither could understand, for nearly half an hour, and then the hunter, looking very grave, said in a low tone:

"They are sons of Mangaleesu, a petty chief, whose kraal was about ten miles from here. While we were crossing the hills word was sent from the head man of the district—it may have been one of the king's sons; but I can't understand what power he has—that Mangaleesu should attack and kill us for the sake of our outfit.

"This he refused to do, and last night a party of about fifty men visited his kraal, set the buildings on fire, killed the chief and as many of his family and followers as could be caught. These boys escaped only after a hard fight, as their wounds testify, and, knowing the location of our camp, came to claim the protection they think should be given them because of the part taken by their father in our favor.

"Until noon to-day they remained in hiding, for the Zulus did not leave the scene of the outrage before then. They think we shall be attacked; but not for two weeks probably, since it will take the war party nearly that length of time to go to their own village and return."

"Is that the nearest point from which we need fear any trouble?" Mr. Ellsworth asked, and after speaking with the boys Paterson replied:

"There is but one kraal between here and there. and in that place only a few men live."

"Then we will spend the time trapping and laying in a stock of provisions, since the only way we can avoid a battle would be to return to the coast, abandoning the enterprise entirely, which is not to be thought of for a moment. Send three or four of your men for game to be made into beltong, so we can stand a siege, and there is little chance the Zulus will do us very much harm."

"I fancy another rhinoceros can be taken from the swamp before those there become frightened."

"Try it to-morrow. This is a good place for our business, and we will take what animals we can before the trouble begins."

Then Mr. Ellsworth walked away to direct where the captive's cage should be placed, and Paterson set about dressing the strangers' wounds.

"What are their names?" Dick asked, as he watched the boys making brave efforts to repress any sign of pain while the hunter worked over them with no very gentle hand.

"The larger one is Mapeetu, and the other Kalida. I shall not be sorry to have them with us if we are to row it with the natives, for, as sentinels or scouts, they will be worth half a dozen white men."

"Where are they to sleep?"

"Under your wagon is the best place, and you and Bob must keep an eye on them; not that I think there's any probability they'll try to leave us; but it won't do any harm to make sure."

Then the hunter told the strangers what would be expected of them, insisted that both lie down at once, and sent them off with Dick and Bob to get blankets from the extra stock.

The Zulus followed the hunter's directions to the letter, and before the white boys got their supper, both were sleeping soundly despite the pain which must have been caused by the wounds.

As Dick said, it was pretty tough to be obliged to stand watch after working all day; but since neither was willing to ask to be excused, both took their places with the others who were stationed on that side of the stockade nearest the hill.

The night passed without incident, save that it

seemed as if the camp was surrounded by lions. Their roars and snarls could be heard from every quarter, and Paterson said in a tone of satisfaction:

"There are two reasons why I like that music. In the first place it proves that there are no natives in the immediate vicinity, and in the second it tells us that we stand a good chance of trapping one before many days have passed."

"When shall you try it?" Dick asked.

"After we have made sure there is nothing more to be gotten out of the swamp."

At daybreak, on the following morning, five of the hunting party were sent in search of game, with orders not to discharge fire-arms within five or six miles of the camp, and the remainder of Paterson's force, together with such of the natives as could be spared, went to the swamp, Dick, Bob and the Zulu boys accompanying them.

This time a genuine surprise was in store for all.

The party was divided into four sections, each of which went in search of the game; but not so much as a single fresh trail could be found. It seemed as if the animals had been alarmed by the capture of one of their number, and deserted the rich feeding ground.

Paterson, in whose division the boys were, was on the point of ordering a return to the camp, and had just begun to give orders to that effect, when from behind a clump of bushes a loud "woof" was heard, and, looking up quickly, the little party saw a black fellow charging down upon them.

They were on high ground overlooking a stream which ran through the swamp, and the only way of escape was directly toward the water.

"Run for your lives, boys!" Paterson shouted, as he set the example; "but be careful about the stream. It is hidden by this fringe of bushes."

There was little time to decide which was the safest course. Dick thought of nothing else save that huge black form which seemed even now to be close upon his heels, and he dashed into the line of bushes, saving himself from falling only by catching at the stoutest branch.

His momentum had been so great that he slipped half-way down the bank, his feet almost touching the stream, and this mishap saved his life.

The rhinoceros had singled him out as a victim, and on reaching the spot where the boy disappeared, could not check himself. It seemed to Dick as if the entire bank was giving way; he was overwhelmed with a shower of earth, and at the same time conscious that a heavy body passed over his head.

The rhinoceros was in the water, able to swim, of course; but not in a condition to attend to much of anything else.

Paterson comprehended the situation in an instant, and shouted before he leaped into the stream:

"Each of you fellows take a rope an' follow me."

The entire tackle lay close at hand, and his order was obeyed by all save Bob, who did not care to trust himself so near the swimming monster, and

Dick, who was struggling to free himself from the covering of earth.

The two Zulu boys were among the foremost, advancing boldly to the side of the brute, and as Paterson afterward said, without them the capture could hardly have been effected.

The shouting and splashing of the natives confused the rhinoceros to such an extent that Mapeetu was soon able to pass a rope around each fore-foot, and his brother, with Paterson's assistance, fastened tackles to the hind legs.

It was now possible to steer the beast, and he was soon on shore, much against his will.

By this time the remainder of the party, attracted by the noise, had come up, and the captive was obliged to move as they chose, since the force was divided in such a manner that an equal strain could be put on each leg.

The same timbers which had been used to raise the first animal taken were put in position, and the afternoon was not more than half-spent when everything was in readiness for a return to the camp.

As before, Dick and Bob rode on ahead, while the two Zulus ran by their side, keeping pace with the ponies as if accustomed to such rapid traveling.

"We've got another black rhinoceros!" Dick shouted, when the camp was reached, and they rode into the stockade, "and you should have seen, father, how much our Zulus did to help Paterson."

"You have had rare good fortune," Mr. Ellsworth replied, in a tone of satisfaction. "I should not have

thought the time wasted if we had been at the job a month, and yet in two days a couple have been taken."

Mapeetu and Kalida did not appear to think they had done anything worthy of notice. They went to the fire where one of the Kaffirs was cooking gemsbok steaks, and, helping themselves to the meat, retired under the wagon to eat their long-delayed dinner.

Dick and Bob, after caring for the ponies, prepared some meat for themselves, and then, as on the previous day, all hands awaited the return of the trappers.

CHAPTER IX.

A LION HUNT.

THE CAPTURE of the second rhinoceros had caused every member of the party to feel particularly good-natured. It was, of course, to the interests of the white hunters to complete the collection in the shortest possible space of time, and the natives had been stimulated by the promise of a reward in case the object of the expedition was attained within a certain number of weeks.

Therefore, it was that nearly every one, even including the Hottentot cooks, believed the coming of Mapeetu and Kalida had brought "luck" to the enterprise, and when, at about sunset, the second rhinoceros was drawn into camp, he received such a welcome as awakened the echoes.

"If we can get them kind of fellows without turning a hair," one of the hunters said, "it is safe to count on fillin' out our list mighty quick after we start on the smaller game."

This feeling, in which all shared to a greater or less degree, was intensified when the hunters returned bringing with them a young wildebeest or gnu which they had captured, with but little difficulty, after shooting the mother.

"This is bound to be the greatest trapping expedition that has ever set foot in Africa," a white member of the party said, in a satisfied tone, as he broiled a steak cut from one of a dozen antelopes which formed a portion of the game brought in by those detailed to provide the food. "I've been here half a dozen times on this same errand; but never before did I see the business open so promising."

Dick and Bob took possession of the young gnu immediately after it arrived in camp, and Paterson said laughingly, as he saw them petting it, "I shall appoint you keepers of all the deer tribe which we may capture, and I'm not joking when I say that kind treatment has a great deal to do with the condition of the animals on our arrival. Of course, I don't expect that you will pet a rhinoceros or a lion; but we propose to take back plenty of beasts which, like your Zulus, might die from homesickness."

"I thought when we started that there was no sport like hunting," Dick said with a smile; "but it won't take long to disabuse me of the idea, and I shall be perfectly willing to act the part of keeper and trainer. How did the men capture this little fellow?"

"By the aid of a lasso, after his mother had been killed. Those things are liable to happen every day, and if the natives keep away long enough there'll be plenty of such orphans for you to take care of."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival

of the second rhinoceros, and his cage was wheeled into the circle near the first captive, where the two could console each other on their proposed trip across the ocean, if, indeed, they were aware of the long voyage before them.

During the next forenoon Paterson laid his plans for capturing a lion.

A sheep—nearly an hundred had been brought from the coast for the purpose—was tied by the side of the lion's spoor, made, as he came to the stream for a drink, and there left to be killed by the king of beasts at his leisure, the poor animal not being put out of its misery until the evening of that day.

In the meanwhile the hunters were off for food as usual, and at noon the manufacture of beltong was begun.

This was done by cutting the flesh of the game into long strips, and after being slightly salted it was strung on a rope to be dried by the sun and air. Fully five hundred weight was ready to be prepared, and Dick and Bob, with the two Zulu boys, were called upon to attend to the work, and a most disagreeable duty did it prove.

Mapeetu and his brother appeared to think nothing of such a task, having probably done it many times before; but the white boys were decidedly out of humor at being obliged to perform the laborious duties, more particularly since they did not seem to be sufficiently dignified for members of the hunting party.

The two Zulus were most industrious, as well as being experts in the business; but yet the unpleasant job did not come to an end until nearly time for the boys to go on guard.

On this night Mapeetu and Kalida were ordered to do their share of work as sentinels, and, in response to Dick's earnest request, they were assigned to the division of which he and Bob were members.

Next morning Paterson went very early to where the sheep had been left, and found that the lions had accepted the supper provided.

"I do not believe more than one was there," he said to Mr. Ellsworth, "and unless you think it is rushing things too lively, I would like to make a try for him to-night."

"There is danger of arousing his suspicions by attempting to bag him so soon; but you may do whatever you think best."

"Then I'll go ahead, for he is sure to be asleep by this time."

The preliminary work was simply a matter of digging a pit; but the boys were eager to see everything connected with this trapping on a large scale, and accompanied Paterson and the natives to the place where it was hoped the king of beasts would be made a captive.

By following the spoor a short distance the whereabouts of the lion was ascertained with reasonable accuracy, and then the pit was dug a dozen feet or so from where the sheep had been tied.

The excavation was four feet wide, eight long,

and fifteen deep, and was so carefully covered that the sharpest-eyed native could not have told the ground had been disturbed.

Another sheep was fastened exactly where the first had been, and, in addition, several pieces of the game killed on the previous day were scattered in the immediate vicinity.

When this had been done, Paterson searched for a tree in which he and his assistants could hide, selecting one an hundred yards from the pit, and to the leeward of where the lion's lair was supposed to be.

From that time until sunset the boys lounged around the camp with their Zulu friends, and then Paterson gave the word to start. The party was composed of a dozen white men and natives, in addition to the four lads, and before night had fully settled down all were concealed in the lofty trees.

Two hours were spent in almost perfect silence, and Paterson was beginning to fear he had been too hasty, when a low muttering in the distance told that the lion was awakening. Then these noises were changed to roars, which sounded nearer and nearer each instant, and the watchers knew the beast was coming down the path.

The sheep bleated pitifully, and the boys literally held their breaths, for a few seconds would decide if this third attempt at trapping was to be successful, like the others, or result in failure.

Now, it was possible to see the dim outlines of the king of the forest as, with slow steps and great yellow eyes seeming to burn into his victim, he advanced until he stood over the sheep.

The poor thing shivered and sunk down, and for two or three minutes the lion sniffed at it, touching it playfully with his paw.

Then the huge animal passed on as if to examine his surroundings before beginning supper, and instantly a smothered roar rang out.

"Hurrah! we've got him at last!" Paterson shouted, as he leaped from the tree; but not to approach the pit any nearer than was necessary to drag away the terrified sheep.

Although it was known that the infuriated beast, who was making the air literally tremble with his cries of rage, could not leap out of the trap, having no room to gather for a spring, there was danger in venturing too close, and the party returned to the camp, where the loud roaring had already apprised Mr. Ellsworth that the game had been bagged.

Hardly once during the entire night did the lion cease to rage, and shortly after day-break twenty men, headed by Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson, taking with them ropes and a cage, made their way to the pit.

The captive heard them coming, and his roars of rage were redoubled.

Had the trap lacked a single foot of its depth he would certainly have escaped. Cramped though he was in the narrow space, he leaped up until his paws almost touched the surface. He growled, roared, gnashed his teeth, and tore at the roots in the side of his prison.

Twice he leaped so high that it seemed certain he would escape to inflict deadly punishment on some of his captors, and the natives were forced to beat him back while the delicate operation of fastening a slip-noose over his paws was performed.

The transfer of the rhinoceros from his trap to the cage was but as child's play compared with this work. No one dared to approach those terrible claws within striking distance, and the prisoner tore and snapped at the ropes which were lowered into the pit.

Finally, a lucky cast of Paterson's resulted in fastening the rope around the lion's neck, and after that it was possible to choke him into partial submission.

Even with this advantage the day was more than half-spent before the task had been accomplished, and the boys walked back to the stockade well satisfied with what they had seen. Mapeetu tried to tell them about something of the same kind he had witnessed, or, at least, Dick thought that was his desire; but his pantomime was not expressive enough to give all the details, and his white friends were no wiser than before he began.

On this evening the hunters returned with a very large supply of game, and, what was equally as valuable, they brought two water-bok which had been run down, and then being blindfolded led to the camp.

The zoological collection was beginning to assume good proportions. Two black rhinoceros, a lion, a

gnu, and two water-bok, all in fairly good condition, was a showing for three days' work, such as caused Paterson to feel on very good terms with himself.

"Of course we must have plenty of beltong if the natives should happen to besiege us," Dick said, as he looked ruefully at the great amount of dead game; "but this means a lot of mighty disagreeable work for us, Bob, and I would be perfectly contented if there was not half as much."

"It can't be helped, old fellow," Bob replied, with a sigh. "We proposed to do the work of men if we were allowed to come on this trip, and it would be babyish to shirk duty now, when your father can't send us back."

"I know that, and in order to show that we intend to do our share of the work, let's begin now. With the Zulu boys to cut the meat into strips while we salt and hang it up, a good portion of the work can be done to-night. By that means the time of our standing watch will pass more rapidly."

Mapeetu and Kalida were willing to set about the task, and until late in the night all four worked with a will, causing Paterson to say in a tone of approval:

"Now that's what I call actin' like men. In the morning the others shall turn to, until the job is done, so you can go out with me to look up a fresh trapping-ground."

CHAPTER X.

TRAPPED.

TRUE to his promise, Paterson detailed a sufficient number of his men next morning to finish the work the boys had been obliged to leave undone, and there was nothing to prevent them from accompanying the party which set out in search of another trapping-ground as promising as the swamp.

Since the permanent camp had been formed the boys saw very little sport in the saddle, and both Dick and Bob were highly delighted at the prospect of a long canter, while the Zulus appeared no less pleased at the prospect of being forced to keep pace with a horse during the greater portion of the day.

When Paterson led the way across the plain these last two followed without evident distress; their wounds were healing rapidly, thanks to the natural lives they had led, and on this morning one who saw them running by the side of the ponies would have found it difficult to believe that, but a few days previous, both had been wounded nearly unto death.

An hour before the searching party set out the regular number of hunters had been despatched in quest of game, for the double purpose of providing fresh meat for the inmates of the stockade, and to

add to the supply of salt provisions, therefore the division led by Paterson were under strict injunctions to shoot at nothing unless it might be in order to save human life.

It was a glorious gallop, and the white boys would have enjoyed it hugely but for the fact that their Zulu friends were on foot, for, despite Mapeetu's pantomimic declarations that they were by no means distressed because of the pace, it did not seem possible they could run so many miles without excessive fatigue.

Paterson made a careful survey of the surrounding country, decided where he would made arrangements for the capture of different specimens of the deer family, and also marked out an inclosure from which he believed several pythons could be taken. Then, it being in the heat of the day, the explorers rode slowly homeward, and when they were within two miles of the camp Dick proposed to have a look at the pit which had served so successfully as a trap for the lion, whose roarings disturbed every one in the stockade during the previous night.

Bob objected to accompanying him, alleging as the reason for refusing that he was already tired by the long ride, and, piqued at this answer, the boy branched off from the main party alone, shouting as he left them:

"I'll be at the stockade as soon as you are, and, perhaps, have something of interest to tell you."

Dick was not more than half a mile away when one of the hunters who had been detailed to supply

the camp with food, rode up to say that three small elephants had been seen just beyond the hills to the north, and advised that an attempt to capture them be made.

"I believe they are young ones who have been separated from the herd—for there are no signs of others in the vicinity—and, if such is the case, we shall have no trouble in taking them."

Paterson was highly elated at the prospect of securing this specimen at no greater expense than a hard day's work for the horses, and he gave the word to push forward at full speed.

Bob shouted and waved his hat to attract Dick's attention; but without success. The boy was already within the thicket, and gave no heed to his companions, whom he believed were simply returning to the camp.

"He'll be sorry to miss the fun," Bob muttered; "but if I ride back to tell him the news we shall both be left, therefore he must bear the disappointment with the best possible grace."

The two Zulus knew by the sudden air of excitement which came over the hunters that big game was to be pursued, and, regardless of previous fatigue, they redoubled their exertions, apparently as well pleased as the remainder of the party at the promise of sport.

Bob was surprised at the ease with which they kept the pace, and said as much to Paterson, when two or three miles had been traveled at a sharp gallop, and the boys appeared no more fatigued than did the horses.

"The Zulus are great runners," the old hunter replied, "and I've seen them as would hold a place at my stirrup all day without being winded. Most likely these fellows could wear out your pony."

"It seems cruel to allow them to do it."

"Nonsense; the cruelty would come in if we sent 'em back to the camp now when both know somethin' exciting is goin' on."

"Do you believe we can catch young elephants simply by riding them down?"

"That depends a good deal on the age; but what puzzles me is that such animals are in this section of the country. It can only be accounted for by allowin' that they have escaped from other hunters. Perhaps that Hamburg firm, which has trappers all over Africa, sent men after elephants, and, while making their way to the coast, the natives have attacked them. I can't figger it out any other way."

"If that theory should prove true there'd be little trouble in taking them."

"You're right, lad, an' if we do find elephants here, an' can ever get to the truth of the matter, we'll learn that's the case."

This supposition brought the possibility of an attack upon the stockade very forcibly to Bob's mind, and no slight portion of the pleasure of the chase was thus dissipated.

While the party were scampering over the plain, hoping to capture what no one had fancied would be found in this section of the country, Dick rode into the thicket wholly unconscious that on this very

morning, owing to orders given by his father after the hunters left the camp, the pit had been recovered as carefully as before, while the bottom was filled with soft, brown clay of such a tenacious character as to hold an animal of ordinary strength much in the same fashion as does half-melted rubber.

When he arrived at the trail, the sight of an odd-looking flower caused him to dismount in order to examine it more closely, and, his curiosity gratified, he walked to and fro in search of the trap.

The excavation was found in a different manner than had been anticipated. Without warning the earth suddenly gave way beneath his feet, and in an instant he was waist deep in the dark mud which held him prisoner, powerless to move his lower limbs.

After the first disagreeable surprise had passed away, he struggled to free himself; but in a few moments he understood that these efforts only served to make his position worse, and settling back with a laugh which had in it very little mirth, he said aloud:

"I'm in a nice box if a lion happens along this way, and concludes to fish me out with his paw. If the pony doesn't come tumbling on top of me, I've got to stay here two or three hours anyway, and Bob will have a fine time at my expense when I'm taken back to camp."

The situation was far from being pleasant, and did not improve when three or four repulsive-looking, yellowish-green toads peered over the top of the

excavation at the prisoner, as if debating whether it wouldn't be the jolliest kind of a lark to jump down on his head.

Dick gazed at them for a moment, and then turning his head away in disgust, shrieked aloud in terror as his eyes fell on a sinister object.

There, within a foot of his face, having apparently just emerged from a crevice in the side of the pit, was the glittering head of a snake, which, with distended jaws and outstretched tongue, was moving slowly to and fro as if making ready to attack.

To say that Dick was frightened would be expressing it far too mildly. For an instant he was literally stunned with terror, and then succeeded a frenzy which caused him to act without reason.

The one idea in his mind was that the last moment of his life had come, and, hardly conscious of what he did, Dick struck at the glittering head with his hat.

As a matter of course, this only served to enrage the snake, and in another instant the boy was battling for life, knowing full well that a single scratch from the sharp teeth would cause death.

His revolver had fallen from his belt when he plunged into the excavation, and the only weapon at hand was the hunting-knife; but, fortunately, this last had been lately sharpened.

Holding the hat in his left hand to ward off the lightning-like dashes of the enemy, Dick plied the blade rapidly, succeeding now and then in inflicting a trifling wound.

Hampered in his movements by the tenacious clay as the boy was, he labored at a great disadvantage. Several times the venomous teeth almost grazed his skin; but he succeeded in beating the enemy back, and, when the silent struggle had been waged a quarter of an hour, the snake attempted to retreat, by wriggling into the crevice.

This was Dick's opportunity. Striking one blow with the hat to knock down the head, he followed it immediately with a sweeping cut of the knife, and the snake was literally chopped into two pieces.

Both parts, yet writhing, fell upon the clay, and Dick forced them beneath the surface with the blade of his weapon.

Then, when the sinister objects could no longer be seen, the prisoner's consciousness deserted him, and he sank further into the mud like one dead, while above, the faithful pony cropped the herbage as he waited patiently for his master's return.

When next he realized his position the shadows of night were beginning to gather in the thicket. The heat was so intense as to be almost overpowering, and the low mutterings of distant thunder could be heard.

Now, no living thing was to be seen; even the toads had left him to his fate. Clouds were gathering in the sky, heralds of the coming storm, and Dick knew that with a tropical tempest to swell the water-courses, and send newly-formed streams down from the hill, it would not be very long before the pit must be filled.

Once more he struggled to free himself, shouting all the while at the full strength of his lungs; but no reply came, and he only succeeded in burying himself still further.

Then followed utter exhaustion, and, like one in a dream, he knew that a drop of water had fallen on his face. Another and another in quick succession, and, after these couriers, the tempest descended.

It was as if the rain fell in sheets rather than drops, and in a few seconds he was drenched to the skin.

The unfortunate boy was revived somewhat by the cold bath, and he renewed both the struggles and the cries; but, as before, without avail.

The clay was soon covered with a thin surface of water, and, apparently fascinated by the sight, Dick watched it intently as the flood rose inch by inch up the sides of the excavation.

During nearly an hour the tempest continued, and then the clouds broke away. The storm had ceased; but the water deepened. From every hand he could hear it rushing down the hill-side, and it flowed into the pit until he was submerged to the shoulders.

"It won't be much longer," he muttered to himself. "In less than half an hour all must be over. Father will never fancy I fell in here, and search will be made on the plain until it is too late to save me."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELEPHANT CHASE.

WHEN the hunters reached the ridge of the low-lying hills it could be seen that the reports of elephants being in the vicinity were true.

Half a mile away stood three little fellows feeding amid a clump of bushes, and, after examining them carefully through his glass, Paterson said, decidedly:

"They are very young animals, probably not more than two years old, an' I'd be willin' to swear they've been captives for the past three months."

"I thought the Hamburg firm shipped from Natal," one of the party said, "and in that case these elephants are considerably off the track."

"They may have been frightened during the fight which unquestionably ensued when the natives overhauled the hunters, and ran across the country, or, possibly, the men were attempting to reach the coast near where we landed."

Nothing could be gained by discussion, and considerable might be lost in case the animals took it into their heads to run away, therefore word was given for several of the party to ride around the game in order to prevent an escape, and advance when the leader made the signal from the brow of the hill.

"You are to follow me," Paterson said to Bob, while these preparations were being completed. "Under no circumstances are you to ride ahead, or even alongside, for, small though these fellows are, considerable damage could be done by a charge."

"How do you intend to catch them?" Bob asked, curiously, while the two Zulus appeared almost beside themselves with joy on getting a glimpse of the game.

"There is only one way, owing to lack of time, and I do not dare leave them long enough to make the arrangements, on which we usually rely in such cases. It is possible we shall be able to advance without causing alarm, and the work will be very simple, otherwise we'll trust to luck in throwing a lariat."

Bob looked at the coil of horse-hair rope hanging to Paterson's saddle, and observing the glance the hunter added:

"I suppose you think they won't be of much account in ropin' an elephant; but these are small ones, and once they feel the noose tighten I predict all will become very submissive."

By this time the other hunters were in position, and, repeating his instructions to Bob, Paterson gave the signal.

Slowly and in silence the party advanced toward the animals, and it was soon seen that the chief hunter's conjecture as to why they were in that section of the country, must have been correct.

The elephants looked up as the circle of men was

drawn tighter; but neither made any attempt to run away.

"It will be a short job for us, unless something happens to frighten them mighty soon," Paterson said, in a tone of satisfaction, and Mapeetu eagerly spoke a few words in his native tongue.

"All right, you may try," the hunter replied, as he unfastened the lariat from the saddle, and motioned for Bob to give Kalida the one which he carried. "The Zulus think they can go up on foot without alarming the animals," he added, as the boys started off in advance of the horsemen, "and I wouldn't be surprised if they were right, for most likely the natives have taken care of these little fellows while they were in the hands of the trappers, consequently a black face is more familiar than a white one."

Bob was where he could see all that took place, and he pulled at the bridle nervously as the boys went directly up to the elephants, who paid no further attention to them than was shown by their ceasing to eat.

It seemed to Bob that no more than two minutes elapsed before the Zulus had yoked two of the elephants, by lashing the left fore leg of one to the other's right fore leg, and this had just been done when a hunter incautiously gave vent to a shout of triumph.

This was sufficient to alarm the third animal, and he started up the valley at a rapid but clumsy pace, the two prisoners struggling to accompany him; but each impeding his companion's movements to such

an extent that anything like a swift flight was out of the question.

Instantly the majority of the men were in full pursuit. Being without a lariat Paterson was forced to remain behind, and, to the delight of the Zulus, he praised them for having done their share of the work so well.

"It will encourage them by telling exactly what I think," he added to Bob, "an' if that fool had bitten the end of his tongue off before he let the yell out of his lips, all three would be in condition for driving by this time."

Then the hunter proceeded to shackle the captives more securely; but Bob was interested only in the chase, which was not of long duration.

The fugitive was literally surrounded by men, and before he could travel more than a mile the small but strong ropes were fastened to each foot, after which the work of driving him in any desired direction was an easy matter, regardless of his own wishes.

When the herd was together once more each was shackled to the other, and the Zulus volunteered to act as drivers.

"You can try it," Paterson said, speaking in their own language, as a matter of course; "but we'll take good care not to get too far ahead in case assistance may be needed."

"Kalida and I will drive them safely to the white man's camp," Mapeetu replied, with an air of pride, and, when the words had been translated, Bob added:

"I believe they can do it, too; but why must all of us stay with them? Two or three men will be enough, and by riding on some of us can get back before dark."

"I was going to propose that after we climbed the hills. There will be plenty of time then, an' less chance they'll get into trouble."

"Are you thinking the Zulus may be about?" Bob asked, noting the searching glances cast by the leader from time to time.

"We're bound to think somethin' of that kind now it's certain one white party has been robbed, if not murdered outright."

Bob made no reply. He thought it foolish to attach so much importance to the finding of the elephants in that particular locality, and rode on in silence until they were at the point where the chief proposed the party should separate.

The captives had allowed themselves to be driven in the most docile manner, and the Zulus were urging them along at the rate of four or five miles an hour.

Three of the hunters were detailed to keep pace with the boys, and the remainder of the party started for camp at a swift pace.

When they rode into the stockade the thunder clouds were gathering, and before the animals had been unsaddled the rain was descending in torrents.

As soon as his pony was cared for Bob crept into the wagon which served him as a sleeping-room, and, not seeing Dick, asked Mr. Ellsworth, after

telling him of the important capture, where the boy was.

"Didn't he go with you?" was the sharp question, in a tone of sudden anxiety.

Bob explained how it was that the party had been separated, and instantly, regardless of the heavy fall of water, Mr. Ellsworth ran in search of Paterson.

Immediately it was understood that Dick was missing, the entire camp was in confusion. Men ran to and fro searching among the wagons for the boy, in the hope that he might have returned just as the storm broke. Horses were saddled, weapons covered with oiled cloths to prevent the cartridges from being rendered useless, and before the rain ceased falling half a dozen men and one lad were riding swiftly toward the lion trap.

As a matter of course, Bob was the lad. Instantly he learned that Dick had not come into camp, he insisted on accompanying the searchers, regardless of his own or his pony's fatigue, and now he took up a position by Mr. Ellsworth's side.

Paterson's advice was that they go to the pit, in the hope that it might be possible to strike Dick's trail before the rain had obliterated every sign, and, as is already known, there was no necessity of hunting further.

The storm had ceased, and Dick was shouting feebly for help when the party rode up to the excavation. The worst of the frightened fellow's troubles were over when he heard the welcome sound of his father's and Bob's answering cries; but

nearly half an hour elapsed before the rescue was complete.

The water was nearly up to the prisoner's chin when Bob looked into the excavation, and the clay held Dick even more firmly than at first.

It was necessary to tie two lariats around his body just below the arms, and the united strength of the party barely sufficed to drag him from the imprisoning clay.

The faithful pony was found within twenty yards of the pit, and after a short time Dick felt able to mount him; but Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson rode on either side of the almost exhausted boy in order to support him in case his strength failed.

Not until just before the elephants arrived at the stockade did Bob find an opportunity to tell his companion of the chase, and then Dick had so far recovered as to leave the wagon to see them.

The little fellows were apparently well content to be captives once more, and the Zulu lads insisted, partly by signs and partly by appeals to Paterson, that they be allowed to take exclusive care of this portion of the collection.

"Let them do as they choose," Mr. Ellsworth said. "They can probably do the work as well as any natives we have got, and we shall be able to count our force just so much the stronger."

Then, while Mapeetu and Kalida were caring for their awkward looking charges, Mr. Ellsworth read Dick and Bob a lecture, which was very severe toward the former, on the criminal carelessness of

allowing themselves ever to be separated from their companions.

"Even in this case, when the dangers confronted were less than might be encountered at another time, your life, my son, was very nearly forfeited. If Paterson had remained to come into camp with the elephants, or had the storm arisen one hour earlier, only your lifeless body would be here. Of course, I cannot now punish by sending you back to the brig; but should you stray off again, unless it became absolutely necessary to do so, I shall order that you be confined to the limits of the camp."

There was hardly any necessity for this threat so far as Dick was concerned. His experiences during the afternoon had been so painful that he felt very positive he should, at least while they remained in Africa, never voluntarily leave those with whom he started on an excursion.

Then he told Bob of his encounter with the snake, of the toads, and of the utter despair which came into his heart when the waters crept slowly but surely up to his face, and even now, when the danger was happily passed, something of the old terror could be seen in his eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

CATCHING PYTHONS.

PATERSON had decided to spend the following day catching pythons, or rock-snakes, as they are called in this portion of Africa; but early next morning, while the hunters were making ready to leave camp, and while the cattle were feeding just outside the stockade, Dick and Bob saw a most curious sight.

A monstrous python, fully thirty feet long and as large around as a keg, had approached unobserved, owing to the height of the rank grass, and was in the act of striking an ox when the boys discovered it.

Dick gave the alarm, and would have rushed forward to kill it; but Paterson prevented him by saying sharply:

"Hold on! It's too late now to save the ox, and we may as well capture another specimen since he has been so kind as to come into camp."

The snake struck the poor beast in the neck with its fangs, and in a twinkling had three coils around his body, the ox bellowing and struggling without apparently interfering with the monster's movements.

Like lightning the python rolled his prey over and over fifteen or twenty times, and then taking a turn with its tail around one of the posts of the stockade, tightened his coils like springs, literally crushing the animal to pulp.

Never once did the snake pay any attention to the crowd of whites and blacks that stood around watching his maneuvers, and when the slaughter was finished he began to drag the carcass toward the thicket.

Paterson gave orders that he should be allowed to go wherever he chose; but detailed the four boys to watch him in order to ascertain where the repast was eaten.

"It will be a couple of days before the ox has been entirely swallowed," he said, "and for the next week we need have no fear of his moving very far away. There will be nothing then to do but pull him into one of the cages. Take your guns with you, for he probably intends to go into the thicket, an' we've got good proof that there is plenty of big game close around."

Then Paterson called his men together, directed that a wagon, which had been loaded with meat and live sheep, should proceed straight down the bank of the stream, and rode away.

The boys had not lost sight of the python, even while the hunter was talking. Standing at a respectful distance they saw him drag the carcass along by taking a couple of turns with his tail around a tree, and, with a single coil to hold the ox, pull it

as readily as a man would have done a fifty-pound load.

It was a marvelous exhibition of strength, and the monster continued to work from tree to tree until he had penetrated the wood for half a mile, when he stopped at a ledge of rocks.

Dick wanted to wait and watch while the python made ready for his dinner; but Mapeetu explained, in pantomime, that it would be many hours before the operation could be begun, and that there was no danger the snake would leave the place for several days.

The boys returned to the stockade, hoping Paterson might come into camp at noon, when they could go out with him; but in this they were mistaken.

The hunters did not put in an appearance until nightfall, and then they reported that it was probable the stock of pythons would soon be complete.

"We fed five," Paterson said, "an' I reckon that'll be all we shall care for. To-morrow morning you boys can look after the one who stole our ox, and while we are bagging the others, you'll have plenty to keep you out of mischief, for we've brought home five or six hundred pounds of meat to be made into beltong."

"Of course we don't intend to complain," Dick said, ruefully; "but we're getting precious little hunting, and there isn't much fun curing meat."

"I guarantee you will have enough before we start for home. Remember that we've only just begun work, and are likely to be here several months longer."

Having said this by way of consolation for the boys, Paterson went to see that the sentinels were on duty, and the four younger members of the party were soon pacing to and fro just beyond the circle of wagons and cages.

On the following morning, after the hunters left camp to secure the snakes they had fed, Dick, Bob and the Zulus started out. Their specimen had gorged himself with the ox, which had almost entirely disappeared, and was lying across the rocks in a helpless state, his body distended, his eyes closed, and seemingly dead.

"He has killed himself with too much beef," Dick said, as he kicked the apparently lifeless folds; but a slight movement told that this was a mistake, and Mapeeta was sent into camp to say that there was nothing to prevent the men from taking the monster to the stockade.

An hour later, Mr. Ellsworth arrived with half a dozen natives and a stout cage, when the work of housing the helpless glutton was begun.

A bag made of goatskin was first drawn over the python's head and secured by cords, in order to prevent him from using his wicked-looking teeth, and then all hands set about pulling him into the cart.

Before gorging himself he had taken two twists of his tail around a rock, and some idea of his strength can be formed from the fact that the entire party had a difficult job to unwind the turns even though the snake was apparently helpless.

Two hours elapsed before the task was finally ac-

complished, and when the cage arrived at the stockade, Paterson's party was already there with five more captives.

"If these fellows live we won't try to take any more pythons," Mr. Ellsworth said, when the wagons were pulled into their proper places. "To-morrow we must look for lions; I don't want to leave here with less than four or five."

Now that nearly all the hunters were in camp with nothing to do outside the stockade until the following morning, Paterson rescinded the orders given on the previous evening, and set the men at work preparing beltong, thus giving the boys a short vacation.

"Since you are at leisure," Mr. Ellsworth said, when the heat of the day had passed, "I propose that you four boys and I take a short ride. I want to have a look around, in order to understand better the lay of the land if the Zulus should make an attack. Mapeetu and Kalida shall be mounted if they choose, and we can then make quite an excursion to the southward."

Paterson repeated the last portion of this announcement to the Zulu boys, who gave vent to the most extravagant demonstrations of pleasure, and in a very few moments the little party were riding straight away over the rising ground.

Five miles were traversed at a rapid pace, and nothing in the way of game had been seen, a fact which caused Mr. Ellsworth no slight uneasiness.

"What is the matter?" Dick asked, as he noted the expression of disquietude on his father's face

"I don't understand why we have seen no animals. This is a rare feeding place, and the last time Paterson and I were out here game of all kinds was abundant."

"I suppose the hunters have driven it away."

"My orders were that no shooting should be done this side the camp."

"Are you afraid the food supply may be cut off?"

"That isn't what troubles me, for there appears to be plenty toward the north. Something or somebody has frightened the animals, and it stands us in hand to learn the cause."

Even now Dick did not understand why there was any reason for uneasiness, and, observing the perplexity, his father said gravely:

"There is good reason to fear the natives are approaching. Keep a keen look-out for anything suspicious, and I will try to make the Zulu boys understand that they are to watch closely for signs."

It was quite a difficult task to convey his meaning by pantomime, but Mr. Ellsworth finally succeeded, and in an instant Mapeetu and Kalida were out of their saddles, leading the horses as they scanned carefully every inch of the ground.

Now, the advance was very slow, and, when half an hour had passed, Dick suggested that they turn slightly to the left in order to gain higher land.

"We can see a long distance ahead from there," he said, "and if——"

He did not finish the sentence, for, at that moment, Bob cried in alarm, as he pointed to the right:

"There's a whole village! Nothing can save us from being seen unless everybody is out of town."

Instead of being alarmed Mr. Ellsworth smiled, after taking one hasty glance in the direction designated by Bob, and the Zulu boys were seemingly ignorant that they were so near the enemy.

"We'll have a look at your village," Dick's father said, as he rode rapidly forward. "The inhabitants are all there; but there is nothing to fear unless we get too near."

Dick and Bob followed; but the Zulus continued searching the ground with their eyes, and proceeded in the same direction as before.

Upon arriving at what appeared to be a collection of twenty or thirty huts, Mr. Ellsworth dismounted as he said:

"Now have a good look at your village, Bob, and then I'll introduce you to the inhabitants."

The boys went on foot to the seeming dwellings, and to their great surprise found that they were simply mounds or domes of clay, ten or twelve feet high, in which no aperture, however small, could be seen.

"What are they?" Dick asked in surprise.

"Houses; but built by ants, not Zulus," and as he spoke Mr. Ellsworth cut with his knife the top from a turret which projected out of the side of one of the larger huts.

Instantly a white ant was seen to appear through the opening thus made, apparently surveying the damage done.

Immediately afterward hundreds of other ants came to the spot, each carrying a small lump of clay with which he began to fill up the breach, and the result of their labors could soon be perceived.

"How do they get in there? Dick asked, and his father replied:

"I will explain later. It seems rather cruel to destroy what has cost them so much labor; but I want you to see the interior of this strange building."

With a fragment of the branch of a tree Mr. Ellsworth attacked the upper portion of the hut, exposing the whole center to view, when it appeared literally crowded with thousands and tens of thousands of ants, who issued forth with pincers out, evidently intending to attack the intruders.

Dick caught one of the little fellows to examine him, and before his curiosity was satisfied received a savage bite, while Mr. Ellsworth pulled both the boys to a safer distance.

Despite the pain, Dick held on to his captive sufficiently long to see what he looked like. The ant was a quarter of an inch in length, with a flat, hard head terminating in a pair of sharp, horizontal pincers, something like the claws of a crab.

It was not safe to remain very near the partially demolished hut, for its inmates were bent on attacking their enemies, and before the boys could mount they were bitten by several of the savage little

insects, who, crawling up the legs of the intruders, cut through the garments, drawing blood with each vicious snap of their pincers.

While they were riding back to where Mapeetu and Kalida were yet searching for signs that members of their tribe were in the vicinity, Mr. Ellsworth related such particulars of white ants as he had learned by observation, he having once cut a hut completely in two that he might see the whole interior.

"The under part alone of the mound is inhabited by the ants; the upper portion serving as a roof to keep the lower story warm and moist for hatching the eggs. In the center, just above the ground, is the chief cell, the residence of the queen and her husband. Around this royal chamber is found a labyrinth of small rooms, inhabited by the soldiers and workmen. The space between them and the outer wall of the building is used partly for store-rooms and partly as nurseries.

"A subterranean passage leads from a distance to the very center of the building. It is cylindrical, and lined with cement. On reaching under the bottom of the fortress it branches out in numerous small passages, ascending the outer shell in a spiral manner, winding round the entire building to the summit, and intersecting numerous galleries one above the other, full of cells.

"The outer end of the great gallery, by which the mound is approached, also branches off into numerous small ones, so as to allow a passage into it from

various directions. As the ants cannot climb a perpendicular wall without difficulty, all their ascents are gradual. It is through this great passage that they convey the clay, wood, water and provisions to the colony.

"To give you a correct idea of the way these curious mounds are built and stocked with inhabitants, I should tell you that the perfect termites are seen at certain seasons in vast quantities covering the earth, each having four narrow wings folded on each other. They are instantly set upon by their enemies—reptiles of all sorts, and numerous birds—who eat such quantities that out of many thousands but few pairs escape destruction.

"There are besides them in the fortress vast numbers of laborers, who only issue forth with caution to obtain provisions and materials for their abodes. When these discover a couple of the perfect termites who have escaped destruction they elect them as their sovereigns, and escorting them to a hollow in the earth which they at once form, a new community is established. Here they commence building, making a central chamber in which the royal pair are ensconced, while they go on with their work, building the galleries and passages I have described, until the mound reaches the dimensions of those we have just seen.

"The king dies in a short time, but his consort continues to increase in bulk until she attains the enormous length of three inches, with a width in proportion. She now begins laying eggs at the rate,

it is said, of sixty each minute during two years, when fifty million have been deposited. The laborers carry these to the nurseries, and provide the young with food when they are hatched by the heat.

"Then there is another class—the soldiers. These are distinguished by the size of their heads and their long, sharp jaws, with which they bravely attack any intruders. When an unwary creature approaches the hut, one soldier comes out to see what the matter is. He summons the remainder, and a battle begins, the laborers meanwhile repairing the damage which may have been done to the fortress. Those who have watched their proceedings state that in a single night they can build a gallery three or four yards in length."

At this point the story, which had become almost a lecture, was interrupted by a shout from Mapeetu, who waved some slender object above his head, and the little party rode quickly forward to learn what had been discovered.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISCOVERY.

THE DISCOVERY which Mapeetu had made was well calculated to cause Mr. Ellsworth great alarm.

The boy held in his hand an assegai. The weapon was broken in such a manner as to render it useless, and had probably been thrown away; but it was a sinister-looking object, in view of the fact that it told beyond a question of enemies in the vicinity.

"If Paterson was only here I could ask the boys how many men have been around and which way they were traveling," Mr. Ellsworth said, impatiently; "but since that is out of the question, we must get back to camp as quickly as possible."

Then by signs he signified that the Zulus were to mount, and when all were in the saddle he led the party at a furious gallop, slackening not the pace until they were inside the stockade, the chief hunter coming forward at once to learn the cause of the evident disturbance.

"Ask those boys what they saw," Mr. Ellsworth said, hurriedly.

Paterson obeyed, and Mapeetu at once entered into a detailed explanation, which required several

minutes in the telling. When it was concluded, the hunter said:

"The boy thinks a large party has been near here, probably in order to spy out the camp. He says there could not have been less than twenty men, and the trail led in both directions, thus showing that they are now returning with a report."

"In which direction were they traveling?" Mr. Ellsworth asked.

Paterson repeated the question in the Zulu tongue, and replied, when Mapeetu ceased speaking:

"Straight toward the north, and probably passed the spot where the assegai was found within the last twenty-four hours. There can now be no question but that we shall be attacked, and it is mighty fortunate there's a good supply of food on hand."

"Do you think we can count on seeing them very soon?"

"I believe it will be unsafe to go very far from the stockade again. Those fellows can travel swiftly, an' there's no good proof they can't get back before morning."

"Give orders to have all the cattle brought inside the inclosure, and to-morrow they must not be allowed to feed more than a quarter of a mile away, under a strong guard. The sentinels are to be doubled, each watch remaining on duty only an hour, to insure the keenest look-out."

Before the hunter could obey these instructions, Mapeetu, who had been speaking in a low voice to his brother, advanced quickly, and said something to Paterson in a tone of great excitement.

The hunter shook his head very decidedly, at which the boy repeated the speech, this time in the most energetic manner.

"He an' his brother want to go outside an' stand watch from there," Paterson finally said. "He argues that by followin' up on the trail a few miles they can give us warnin' at least two hours before any attack will be made."

"Do you see any reason why they shouldn't try it?" Mr. Ellsworth asked, after a moment's reflection. "They are the best scouts we could possibly have, and understand every movement made, therefore their report would be valuable."

"Yes, if they should happen to make any?"

"What do you mean?"

"How do we know but that they want to get out in order to tell their friends—for they may have acquaintances among the party—exactly how we are fixed? It's two to one if they didn't come here for that same purpose."

"I can't believe anything of the kind, and, besides, it would be a good idea if the Zulus could be told how strongly we are intrenched. Let the boys go, Paterson, and warn the sentinels to be ready to admit them promptly in case of trouble."

"And at the same time we might let in a crowd of natives," the hunter said, under his breath, and, hearing the words, Mr. Ellsworth replied:

"I'll answer for their honesty. Unless our people are asleep it will be impossible for very many to approach the stockade without our knowledge."

Paterson did not venture to make any further remonstrance; but told the boys that they were at liberty to do as they pleased, and at the same time offered them two guns.

Mapeetu shook his head in reply to this proposal. For such work as he intended to do fire-arms would be too noisy. From some of the Kaffirs he borrowed light but serviceable spears, and without other preparation the two left the stockade, waving an adieu to Dick and Bob with the weapons.

By this time every one in the camp was excited. Although the party was prepared for a battle, a seige might prove disastrous, and everything depended upon the celerity with which the Zulus could be repulsed in a decisive manner should they really attack the stockade.

All the animals were driven inside the inclosure; every available vessel was filled with water, even though, save in the very heat of a fight, it would be possible to gain the bank of the stream, which was just outside the stockade, and could readily be reached by digging a short trench.

Orders were given that no fires should be lighted, since the reflection of the flames on the sky would serve to show the enemy the location of the camp from a distance, and an extra amount of ammunition was dealt out to each man.

When the preparations for defense had been completed, all save those detailed for the first watch were instructed to retire, and from the encampment nothing could be heard but the angry hissing of the pythons, or the lion's deep muttering.

Three hours had passed. Dick and Bob were on guard near the south wall of the stockade where, by peeping through the timbers and vines, it was possible to have a view of the outside, when the former whispered excitedly:

"Come here, Bob; I believe I can see some one creeping this way through the grass."

"Fire at him!" Bob replied nervously. "Paterson gave strict orders that we were to shoot at the first suspicious thing we saw."

It seemed to Dick as if his heart literally came up into his throat at the thought of attempting to kill a human being; but he realized how necessary it was to check an advance, and was levelling his weapon when the figure arose from the grass with both hands held high in the air.

Then another could be seen, and, after one quick sigh of relief, Dick said, in a loud whisper:

"Is it you, Mapeetu?"

The well-known tones of the Zulu boy could be heard as he answered the hail in his own tongue, and Dick started toward the gate just as Paterson came up to learn the cause of the noise.

The old hunter, still fearing treachery, would not admit the boys until after a dozen men had been stationed near the entrance to repel a possible attack; but he looked a trifle ashamed at having doubted them when the scouts entered, panting and breathless as if from severe exertions.

Mapeetu made his report without delay, while Kalida clasped Dick and Bob by the hands much as

if he was congratulating himself on having returned in safety, and the white boys followed Paterson as he went to tell Mr. Ellsworth what the spies had learned.

"The Zulus have just come in," he said, awakening the leader of the expedition from a light slumber. "They found a party of an hundred or more about five miles from here, and believe they will try to surprise us before morning."

"Is there any question about their coming to attack us?"

"Evidently not; the boys got near enough to hear some of the conversation while the party had halted, and found out that they were only waiting for the rest of their gang before beginning business. Since we are the only people in this vicinity there isn't much chance of a mistake."

Mr. Ellsworth was in the open air some seconds before this brief story had been told, and while he and Paterson made a tour of the stockade, Dick and Bob went in search of the young scouts.

The Zulus had already taken up a position where they could aid in the work of guarding the camp; but now, instead of the spears, they were armed with repeating rifles.

Paterson, ashamed because he doubted them, had taken from the general stock of weapons two of the best guns, and the boys were decidedly proud on being told later by Mr. Ellsworth that the rifles were a present to them individually as reward for the services rendered.

Dick and Bob would have tried to enter into one of their famous conversations where neither could convey his meaning save by gestures; but the Zulus refused to divert their attention from what might be passing on outside, and Mapeetu was so vehement in his pantomime that Dick said to Bob:

"We ought to have better sense. These boys, whom we think do not know as much as we do, want to make us understand that our duty is to stand guard, not talk, and it's time to follow their advice."

Then the white lads took their positions a short distance away, and the two hours which followed were passed in almost perfect silence. The darkness was profound, and it was impossible to distinguish objects ten paces away.

"What chance have we got to see any one even if a thousand Zulus should be creeping up?" Bob whispered at length. "It seems to me that if they are making ready to attack the stockade we must expect to be surprised, for a cat couldn't hear a man walking around the outside."

Before Dick could reply Kalida moved toward them, touched both boys lightly on the arms to attract attention, placing his finger on his lips in token that they should remain silent, and pointed toward the south as if to say the enemy were near at hand.

Bob was about to say it was impossible the Zulus could have seen or heard anything; but before he had the opportunity a flash of light came from the

direction where Mapeetu was on guard, a loud report followed, and a shrill cry of pain from the outside told that the boy had not only seen an enemy, but had warned him very emphatically to remain at a proper distance.

Twice more in rapid succession the watchful sentinel discharged his weapon, and then a shot from one of the hunters on the opposite side of the stockade told that the place was surrounded.

For a single moment Dick thought the enemy did not intend to make any reply to this greeting, and then Mapeetu caught him suddenly by the shoulder, spinning him around like a top just in time to prevent a wound from a spear which was thrust through the barricade.

At the same instant Kalida fired on a line with the spear, and then to the white boys it seemed as if every person in the camp was discharging his weapon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE.

IT WAS fortunate indeed for the party in the stockade that they had been warned of the attack, otherwise the surprise would have been complete.

Now, however, every man was on the alert with his weapons ready for use, and, protected as they were by the barrier of posts and vines, great execution could be done with but little chance of being injured.

Save for the reports of fire-arms, mingled with savage yells, Dick and Bob knew nothing of what was happening in any portion of the encampment, except where they were stationed, and even at this point the battle was to them more like a horrible nightmare than reality. They discharged their weapons frequently, very often at random, almost unconscious of what was to be accomplished.

It was not so with Mapeetu and Kalida. Young though they were, both had been in fights before, and where men struggled hand to hand. Now they acted as if engaged in some ordinary but exciting business; darting from point to point one or the other was always ready to prevent an attempt to

scale the stockade, and it was seldom either wasted a shot.

The noise of the conflict excited the caged animals, and their cries of fear or rage were added to the tumult of the battle until the din was bewildering.

This hideous confusion reigned for about half an hour, although to Dick and Bob it seemed as if fully half the night had passed, and then it ceased as suddenly as it began. The attacking party, realizing the uselessness of continuing an assault when it was impossible to so much as see the opposing force, beat a precipitate retreat, and the defenders of the stockade set up a great shout of triumph as the shadowy forms could be seen running across the plain.

Mr. Ellsworth's first care was to ascertain what damage had been done, and, to the surprise of all, it was learned that but one man was injured. A Kaffir displayed a trifling wound in the fleshy part of the leg, received through his own carelessness by venturing too near the line of posts in direct opposition to positive orders.

The man acted as his own surgeon, and then Mr. Ellsworth impressed upon all his party the necessity for keeping vigilant watch during the remainder of the night.

"It is by no means certain that they will not make another assault before morning," he said, "and our lives depend upon the possibility of preventing a surprise. Such food as does not require cooking will be dealt out, and to-morrow there shall be no lack of fresh meat."

The latter portion of this little speech was directed to the native contingent of the party, and had the desired effect, for an African is a very poor fighter when his stomach is not full.

Then both Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson made a round of the entire stockade, halting a moment where the four boys were on duty, as the former gentleman said to Dick:

"Compared with the two Zulus, you and Bob are of but little service as sentinels while there is a chance of the enemy crawling up in the darkness; but the orders are for every one to remain on guard, and you must share the labor with all hands."

"I couldn't sleep to-night, no matter how hard I might try," Dick replied. "It is horrible to think that a crowd is close by trying to kill a fellow."

"It isn't pleasant, I'll admit; but before this trip is ended you will be able to sleep without much coaxing, even though twice as large a force of Zulus should be skulking near. Do you know who fired the first shot? I fancied it came from this direction."

"So it did. Mapeetu discovered the natives, and he and his brother fought like tigers."

"They have been a valuable addition to our party, and you are to tell them, Paterson, that we fully appreciate their services. From this time on they shall be supplied with horses, and may consider themselves members of the hunting squad."

These words were repeated to the boys, much to their satisfaction, and Mapeetu replied through the hunter:

"Our lives belong to the white men, for, unless they had given us shelter, my brother and I must have died. We were hunted down by our own people for no other reason than that our father refused to attack this kraal. We are still sons of the dead Mangaleesu; but no more Zulus at heart."

"You shall remain with us as long as it pleases you, and be paid as are the others; but try to learn the English language so that it will be possible to converse without the aid of an interpreter," Mr. Ellsworth said, and when Paterson had repeated the words the two men moved on to visit the other sentinels.

As a matter of fact both Mapeetu and Kalida had been trying each day, since they came into the encampment, to learn the language of the white men. By pointing to different objects, and asking in mute show the names of each, the boys had quite a vocabulary already; but the instant Mr. Ellsworth left they began to increase their knowledge, as if determined to be able to speak English fluently before morning.

Even while peering through the crevices of the stockade they induced Dick and Bob to give them object lessons, and the night passed before either appeared to grow weary of being taught.

The enemy did not attempt to make another attack during the hours of darkness, and when the sun rose the weary sentinels gazed anxiously out in the vain hope that the one repulse had been sufficient to dishearten the Zulus.

There was no such good fortune in store for the hunting party, however. Far up the stream could be seen a large body of natives evidently making arrangements for a long stay. Slight huts of leaves and bushes, sufficient to shelter them from the rays of the sun, had been erected, and the numerous fires told that they were preparing for a feast.

Far off toward the north were small bodies of men, all of whom appeared to be making their way to those encamped by the stream, and it did not require any very extensive knowledge of native warfare for Dick and Bob to understand that these new arrivals were reinforcements.

"It looks as if they meant to have us out of here," Dick said, after a long survey of the scene. "I wonder how many days it will take to starve us into surrender?"

"A good many with all these oxen, and, besides, if it came to a pinch we could have elephant steaks or rhinoceros stew," Bob replied, laughingly, as if he had no especial fear of a protracted siege.

He viewed the matter in a different light, however, when he saw how anxious the white members of the party were because of the Zulus' movements.

Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson spent several hours with glasses to their eyes watching the enemy, and many were the private consultations they held.

It was no longer necessary for more than two or three to remain on guard, and, although orders had been given that all but those designated could seek rest, Dick and Bob joined a party of hunters who

were discussing the condition of affairs near the big gate.

"It's my opinion," one of them was saying as the boys came up, "that we'll be mighty lucky if we get to the coast with whole skins. We'll jest about light out of here some day, half-starved and with that mob at our heels, an' fight every inch of the way."

"If you reckon Mr. Ellsworth is a man to give up beaten you're mistaken," another replied. "He'll hold on to this outfit, an' what game we've got, 'till the last minute."

"An' when the last minute does come, he's got to run like any other man."

"Them fellers out there'll get a taste of bullets a good many times before then. I'm countin' that we'll be ordered to charge on 'em."

"An' a mighty poor fist we'd make of it, tryin' a hand-to-hand fight with ten times the number of our crowd. There ain't less than two hundred, an' by night we can count on twice as many."

"I never knew the time when you wasn't croakin' about something, Tim Dean. We've all hands been in this country before on the same errand, an', although things has been tough sometimes, there was allers a way out."

"But we never got penned up like this, an' the trap ain't to my fancy."

"You can't change it very well, so there's no use in cryin' before we're hurt."

This conversation was interrupted by Paterson,

who called Tim Dean to where he and Mr. Ellsworth were standing, and the boys moved away in response to a signal from Mapeetu and Kalida.

Fires had been built at early day-break, and the Zulu lads were preparing breakfast for themselves and the white boys.

With half a dozen steaks, cut from a water-bok which the hunters had brought in on the previous day, broiled over the glowing coals, a most appetizing breakfast was served, and, in the pleasure of appeasing their hunger, all thought of the danger which threatened was temporarily forgotten.

When the meal had been eaten the desire for sleep came, and, with their weapons by their sides, all four lay down under one of the wagons.

Not until late in the afternoon did either awaken, and Dick's first thought was one of surprise that he could have so lost himself in slumber while danger of the gravest kind threatened.

"Father said I would soon be able to sleep soundly," he said, laughingly, to Bob; "but I didn't think it was possible to get broken in so quickly."

"Sleep—good," Mapeetu said, with a grin at being able to give an opinion, and when the white boys nodded their heads approvingly he looked decidedly pleased with himself.

As a matter of course the first movement was toward that portion of the stockade from which the enemy could be seen, and the sight which met their gaze was far from reassuring.

The encampment on the bank of the stream ap-

peared to have doubled in size, and yet more natives could be seen approaching from the north.

The big gate was open, and on the plain, but not more than an hundred yards away, the oxen, guarded by a large force of white men and natives, were feeding. In case of a threatened attack it would be possible to drive all the animals inside the stockade before the Zulus could arrive near enough to do any injury.

A short distance to the right fifteen or twenty Kaffirs were cutting grass for such of the captives as nature intended should eat it, and, inside the walls, yet another party were curing the game brought in on the previous day.

That Mr. Ellsworth was making all possible preparations for a protracted siege could readily be told; but Dick would have been better pleased had the men turned their attention to strengthening the defenses. There were many gaps in the stockade through which an assegai might be sent, and he fancied they should be closed.

"Fight—quick," Mapeetu said, much as if the prospect pleased him, and Bob replied with a sigh:

"I'm afraid the fight will come a good deal quicker than I care about."

CHAPTER XV.

BESIEGED.

THE LEAST evil which the hunting party could look forward to was a long siege, and it was more than probable that when the enemy received sufficient reinforcements a desperate battle would ensue.

No company under similar circumstances could have had better leaders than Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson. These two were brave, and, what was quite as essential, understood thoroughly well what measures should be adopted.

The first day was spent as has been described, and at night all hands were stationed as sentinels, the two Zulu boys continuing their lessons in English during the long hours.

On the following morning only about one-third the force was sent out with the oxen; another small party continued the work of gathering grass, which was converted into hay inside the inclosure, and the remainder of the besieged were set at work building small platforms near the top of the line of posts, where the defenders could have a good view of the surrounding country, and at the same time be, in a certain degree, beyond reach of the enemy's assegais.

In event of a battle these elevated positions would give the hunters better opportunity to take aim at the human targets.

Before the sun set again it seemed likely that the besiegers had received all the agreed-upon additions to their numbers, for the arrivals ceased, and there was good reason to expect some decided movement within a short time.

There were no more juicy steaks to be eaten. All the meat had been converted into beltong, and at supper on the second day of the siege the white boys did their best to look cheerful while chewing industriously on the tough, but not very appetizing meat.

"With three or four days of this kind of work, and I shall be able to make a good dinner from a piece of leather," Bob said, with a feeble laugh, and, overhearing the words, Paterson replied grimly:

"Leather may seem like a luxury before we get out of this scrape."

There was more truth that jest in the remark, and Bob had nothing additional to say concerning the bill of fare.

When night came again the four boys were posted on one of the platforms, and Mapeetu and Kalida were deep in the mysteries of English when a shot rang out from that side of the stockade nearest the water, while a shriek of pain from one of the Kaffir drivers told that the enemy had crept near enough to hurl a weapon into the camp.

"Now we're going to have another battle," Dick

said, hoarsely, his cheeks paling as he tried to peer through the gloom.

Instead of the expected rush and fierce yells, a most profound silence followed, and for several moments nothing could be heard save the noises made by the animals.

Then, twenty yards from the boys one of the hunters discharged his weapon, and again all was still.

"Come—look," Mapeetu said, in a low tone, and it was some time before the boys understood that the meaning he intended to convey by these two words was, that the Zulus were simply spying around the stockade, probably to discover which would be the best point of attack when the assault was decided upon.

Half a dozen times during the night spies were seen and fired at, and twice an assegai was hurled at the sentinels.

"It makes the cold shivers go down a fellow's back to sit here knowing a lot of savages are prowling around to run a spear through him," Bob remarked, when the rising sun had put an end to the long watch.

"I have often laughed at stories about the hunter being hunted," Dick replied; "but when it comes to personal experience there's no fun to be found."

"And this sort of work is to go on until they kill us, or we shoot them."

"The only other chance is that they get tired and raise the siege."

"There's no reason why they should do that. It's not difficult to get all the game they can eat, and the crowd may as well be here as at home."

"Well, it isn't a very pleasant prospect, which ever way you look at it; but, nevertheless, I'm hungry enough to go for my share of beltong. Father said that, beginning with this morning, each person was to have only a certain amount of food, and I'd like to see how the rations fit my appetite."

"Then we are really on short allowance."

"I suppose that's the size of it."

Bob spoke of being put on short allowance as if it was to be a deprivation; but when the four boys reached the wagon from which all food was to be distributed during the siege, the quantity certainly seemed large enough to satisfy any person with an ordinary appetite.

"This isn't very bad," he said, laughingly, as he seated himself on the ground by Paterson's side; but before he had been there sufficiently long to take a single mouthful, he jumped up in alarm, pointing toward a large red spider, which, having seized upon a beetle, disappeared almost immediately.

"Why, where did that fellow go to so suddenly?" Bob asked, in surprise, as he scrutinized the earth in front of him.

"What was it?" Paterson asked.

"A red spider almost as large as a sparrow."

"I reckon you dreamed it," the hunter said, carelessly. "Spiders as big as that generally stay round

long enough to give a feller an idea of where they're going."

"But I know—— There he is now!"

All could see the insect which had rushed out, apparently from the solid earth, to seize and swallow a large fly, when he repeated what Dick called his "vanishing trick."

"He's the cousin of an old friend of mine," Paterson said, laughingly, "and I've learned how to find their holes. Do you see what looks something like a piece of silk about the size of a quarter of a dollar? That's the cover to his nest."

As he spoke the hunter leaned over and raised the object referred to until the boys could see that it was a regular trap-door with a hinge, while inside the aperture or excavation, visible when the spider leaped angrily out, were what appeared to be eggs.

"You needn't be afraid of these fellers," Paterson said, when the investigation was concluded. "They never do any harm, but there are plenty in this blessed country that have only to bite an ox in order to kill him. I've seen big, hairy chaps, with a body an inch an' a half long an' nearly as broad, that had front feet like a scorpion's tail. By squeezin' 'em you could actually see the poison drop. Then there are jumpin' spiders that'll leap ten or twelve inches, an' some a good deal like our friend here, who build regular nests in trees, with out-an'-out good covers to 'em all."

Paterson had the air of a man who can and is about to relate many wonderful things, but just at

this moment Mr. Ellsworth called, and he hurried away, with a huge piece of beltong in each hand.

Quite naturally the boys talked more of spiders than of Zulus during the remainder of the time they were at breakfast, and then, after one more look at the enemy, all four crawled under the wagon for a nap.

The forty-eight hours which followed this conversation brought with them no more changes than might have been expected from the labor of the large body of men.

Now and then, during the time of darkness, a spy was seen and fired at, but otherwise the natives acted as if well content to remain in camp.

Grass had been brought in until there was a supply on hand sufficient to feed the animals at least a week, if it should become necessary to keep the oxen within the stockade that length of time, and the defenses had been strengthened in many ways.

Mapeetu and Kalida had been most industrious in learning the language of their friends, and it was possible to understand, in a general way, what they said.

The inactivity of the enemy troubled Mr. Ellsworth not a little. Both he and Paterson feared that even more natives were on their way to join the first party, and the question of making a sortie was seriously discussed.

Perhaps Mapeetu had the same idea regarding his countrymen, for on this particular night, as the leader and chief hunter made their first round among the sentinels, he said to the latter:

"Are you willing that the men of Ongla's army shall come here to learn what is being done, and not try to know what they are about?"

Before translating the words to Mr. Ellsworth the hunter replied:

"We would like right well to find out what is goin' on over there; but it would be little better than death for any of our party to make the attempt."

"What one Zulu does another can. Give me an assegai and one of the baby guns, and I will go this night."

The look of surprise which came over the old hunter's face as he listened to the bold proposition, caused Dick's father to ask what had been said.

"The boy wants to spy out the Zulu camp, providin' we let him have a revolver and an assegai."

"Do you think he could get there?"

"Perhaps so; but there ain't one chance in a thousand he'd live to come back."

Mr. Ellsworth turned away thinking it a waste of time to discuss the matter if the danger was so great, and Mapeetu understood that his request was refused.

"I have done more than that before," he continued, earnestly. "Ongla's men are no more than women, except when they number five times as many as their enemies. They think we do not dare try to approach their camp, and this makes them careless. There is not much danger to one who knows how to move in the night."

"Is he still coaxing to go?" Mr. Ellsworth asked.

"Yes, an' I'm beginnin' to think that it would be a good idea to let him try it."

"There are probably many spies of their own out, and if he should meet one his life would pay the forfeit."

"That's exactly what he's bound to look after. If he succeeds we will know whether its best to venture from the stockade or not. Besides, he might learn how we could surprise them."

Mr. Ellsworth listened in silence, and did not speak for some seconds. Then he said:

"I dislike to send a boy on an errand which a man would have good cause to hesitate at."

"But he's so crazy to go that I shouldn't be surprised if he started off without permission."

"Do as you choose," Mr. Ellsworth finally said. "If you think best give him all he wants, and have plenty of men near the gate, so we could get to him quickly in case assistance should be needed."

"That won't happen," Paterson said, grimly. "He'll go through all right, or die before there is time to call for help."

Dick's father made no reply this time. He walked swiftly away, as if unwilling to remain while the details of what he feared would end in certain death was discussed, and Paterson said to Mapeetu:

"Mr. Ellsworth thinks as I do, that the risk is so great we ought to prevent you from going; but if you insist, take what you wish, and we'll do all we can to help in case you come to trouble near the stockade."

"I shall go, and come back," the Zulu boy said proudly. "If Mangaleesu, my father was here, he would say, 'Do your duty by those who are friends, and fear not.' When may I start?"

"At any time."

"Then it shall be now."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPY.

MAPEETU was as eager to set out on his dangerous mission as if he anticipated rare pleasure, and instead of appearing sad because his brother was about to jeopardize his life, Kalida seemed really sorry that he could not share the peril.

When Dick understood what the Zulu boy proposed to do, he began to remonstrate with him; but Paterson cut the conversation very short by saying:

"Now the matter is settled it's worse than useless to make any more talk. If the lad can do what he wants to, it'll be a big help to us, an' it ain't well to let it be seen that we fear a failure. I'll call some of the men to take your place here, an' you can stand by the gate, with the others, ready to help him if he runs across any of the spies who may be near the stockade."

The boys were soon released from their post of duty, and then all four accompanied Paterson to the store-wagon, where Mapeetu was armed with a revolver, two rounds of cartridges, and an assegai.

He inspected both weapons carefully, buckled on the cartridge-belt, to which was attached a holster, and then walked swiftly toward the entrance.

Here he was forced to halt while Paterson made preparations for opening the gate, and in the short interval of time he clasped the white boys by the hands as he said:

"Mapeetu come soon."

"I sincerely hope so," Bob replied, with a sigh; "but for the life of me I can't see how it will be possible for you to get to the camp, much less come back again."

"He at least stands as good a chance as any one he may meet, for the revolver counts five or six assegais," Dick replied, and then the men, whose duty it would be to guard the gate, had arrived.

Paterson spoke earnestly to the Zulu a moment, probably advising him what course to pursue, and then all was in readiness for the dangerous journey.

While the men stood with weapons ready for immediate use the heavy barrier was swung open only far enough to admit of the passage of Mapeetu's body, and in silence the boy crept forth.

"Close the gate; but be careful not to make a noise," Paterson said, "and stand by ready to make a dash at his first cry for help." Then to the sentinels on the nearest platform, he added, "Can you see anything of him?"

"Not so much as a hair. It seems as if he must have sunk right through the ground."

"Don't fire at any figure you may see until he has had time to get out of the way. He'll most likely lay close around here quite a spell to make sure there are no spies near at hand."

Dick, Bob and Kalida were standing close against the timbers of the gate listening with painful intentness, and fearing to hear a cry, since that would be the signal that Mapeetu was in danger.

The moments passed slowly. Dick felt positive that any one on the other side of the stockade could hear his heart beat, so violent was its pulsations. The men remained drawn up within four or five feet of the place of exit, and one stood with his hand on the heavy wooden bar, ready to raise it at the first alarm; but the minutes passed in silence until half an hour had elapsed.

"He's well on his way by this time," Paterson said, with a sigh of relief.

"How long do you suppose he'll be gone in case they do not discover him?" Dick asked.

"That's hard to tell. It may be ten minutes more, and then again we mightn't see him much before morning."

An hour passed, and yet no sign. The white boys remained by the gate; but the hunter had sent Kalida to the further end of the inclosure to carry an order to some of the Kaffirs who were on guard there.

During the last five minutes of the hour the silence had been most profound, and Dick was on the point of speaking to Bob regarding this fact,

when a smothered cry sounded on the night air with startling distinctness, and a second later the report of a revolver was heard.

In a twinkling the gate was thrown open, and Dick and Bob, forgetting danger in the thought that their black friend was in trouble, rushed out in advance of the hunters.

With all speed they ran in the direction from which the noise had come, and speedily outstripped the men, who, fearing there might be a large body of Zulus in the immediate vicinity, were proceeding with proper caution.

"There he is!" Dick cried, when they had run fully a quarter of a mile, and were nearly out of sight of the hunters, and the two increased their pace, going directly toward a solitary figure which appeared to be waiting for them.

"Mapeetu!" Bob cried, softly, and the figure turned with outstretched arms, Dick running straight into them as a form arose from the grass in the rear of Bob.

In another instant the arms had encircled Dick as if they had been bands of iron, while his face was pressed so tightly to a naked chest that he could make no outcry.

At the same moment Bob was seized from behind, a strong hand clutching his neck, another covering his mouth, and the owner of the hands hurried him forward at a run.

Dick was held by his captor only until some one else could grasp him in the same fashion as Bob

was secured, and then he, too, began an involuntary march up the stream.

It seemed to the almost bewildered prisoners as if they traveled fully two miles before the pace was slackened, and then they found themselves in the Zulu camp, where, in front of a bright fire, Mapeetu stood securely tied to a tree.

Instead of being treated in a similar manner, the white boys' hands were fastened behind their backs, a short length of grass-rope confining them to each other, and, with a guard on either side, they were forced to remain, while a crowd of fantastically dressed, cruel-looking black men plied Mapeetu with questions.

"Will they kill us?" Bob asked, with a suppressed sob.

"I expect so," and Dick's voice was so tremulous that the words sounded indistinct and strange. "They'll most likely have a regular powwow over us."

The captives did not indulge in conversation to any very great extent during the time Mapeetu was being questioned. There was every reason to believe they would soon be murdered, and at such a moment one thinks rather than talks.

It was half an hour before the Zulus had finished trying to extract information from the boy regarding the condition of affairs at the stockade, and then the proceedings were interrupted by the arrival of two who may have been scouts, or at least Bob believed they were.

These men evidently brought some very important information, for all those near the prisoners leaped to their feet, seized their weapons, and otherwise made preparations for battle.

"Father is coming after us," Dick said, in a firmer tone. "The fellows who brought the news have been near the stockade and learned that a sortie was to be made."

"There are not men enough in our party to whip this big crowd."

"By charging down on horseback a good deal can be done by a few. It can't do any harm to hope for the best."

The boys were fated to have very little time for hope. The Zulu who appeared to be the leader gave some commands to half a dozen men, and in a twinkling Mapeetu was lashed firmly to the other two prisoners, after which the three were driven like cattle toward the north.

"Father come. Big fight," Mapeetu said, as the despairing captives were urged to greater speed by the points of the Zulus' assegais.

"Where are we going?" Dick asked, and after repeating the word "where" several times Mapeetu replied:

"Ongla see us."

"That's the name he used when speaking of the army," Bob said. "I suppose this Ongla is some sort of a king, and we're to be taken to him for fear your father may succeed in freeing us."

"Then there's mighty little chance for us, for once

in the interior of the country it will be impossible to get away without help."

Mapeetu could understand by the tone in which his companions spoke that they were fast giving way to despair, and he tried to cheer them by saying:

"See father soon," and this he repeated over and over until Dick said, in a trifle less dismal voice:

"It may be that he can help us get away. He knows the country, and if we could give these villains the slip he could lead us back to the camp."

"But they have taken all our weapons, and without something with which to defend ourselves it would be worse than folly to think of walking through these forests where a lion could pick us up for supper."

Dick said no more. He also understood how slight were their chances of ever seeing the camp again, and no longer attempted to cheer his companion.

Meanwhile, the Zulus were hurrying the captives forward on a run, pricking them most unmercifully whenever they faltered, and Mapeetu did all he could to aid them, by pressing close against Bob's shoulder to force him along.

When an hour had passed the white boys were so nearly exhausted that the pace was necessarily slackened despite the punishment received.

Ten minutes more, when they were ascending rising ground, Bob could keep his feet no longer, and fell head foremost to the earth, bringing his companions upon him.

By a liberal use of their weapons the men tried to force their prisoners to rise; but it was in vain. Before half a dozen blows had been struck Mapeetu spoke a few sharp, angry words which had the effect of causing the Zulus to be more lenient. They loosened the bonds slightly, and threw themselves on the ground for a halt.

Mapeetu followed up the advantage he had gained by talking earnestly at considerable length, and Dick knew that he and Bob were the subject of his remarks by the manner in which the men gazed at them from time to time.

"How far do you suppose we are from the camp?" Bob asked, after he had recovered his breath sufficiently to speak.

"Not less than six miles, at the rate we have been traveling."

"I wish we could find out how far it is to where we have got to go."

"I never could make Mapeetu understand such a question. He must be giving the villains a long story about us."

"Perhaps he's trying to make them let us go."

"Then he's wasting his breath, for they're bound to take us, according to orders, or get into such trouble as might cost them their lives."

At this point the Zulus motioned for the boys to rise, and then so far relaxed their severity as to tie the hand of each white lad to both of Mapeetu's, thus giving the native an opportunity to aid them by pushing on slightly in advance. The relief of

being able to move their arms, however slightly, was so great that both Dick and Bob felt decidedly refreshed, and as the men did not urge them on at such a rapid pace, the boys traveled as comfortably as could have been expected under the circumstances.

CHAPTER XVII.

A ZULU VILLAGE.

IT WOULD be needless to recount all the horrors of that night march. Now and then the Zulus would allow the unhappy prisoners an opportunity to rest after Mapeetu had evidently insisted upon it; but the white boys' strength was taxed to the utmost before the terrible journey came to an end.

More than once did Bob declare he would positively refuse to take another step, and allow his captors to inflict any punishment they chose, rather than struggle longer; but on each occasion Dick persuaded him to hold out until the final moment, and Mapeetu literally dragged them the last few miles.

It was about an hour after daylight, and the prisoners had gained the brow of a small hill, when in the valley below could be seen a large kraal, in and around which were a considerable number of warriors.

"Ongla's kraal," Mapeetu said, as he pointed toward the valley.

Although there was good reason to believe that this peaceful-looking spot might be the scene of their death, the boys felt a certain sense of relief

because the distressing march had come to an end, and all three moved more briskly, animated as they were by the prospect of a rest.

During the descent of the hill the boys had ample opportunity to observe the kraal in which they would be held prisoners, if, indeed, nothing worse befell them.

It was built on open ground, after the Zulu fashion, in a ring fence, with bee-hive shaped huts. Behind, and a little to the left, was the cattle kraal, while between the two were several shed-like structures.

Two of the warriors hurried on ahead of the prisoners, and when the latter entered the inclosure they were led directly to the largest hut, in front of which, surrounded by forty or fifty soldiers, was seated a tall, rather stout Zulu, whom the boys had every reason to believe was the chief Ongla.

After glaring fiercely at the prisoners for fully a minute, he spoke angrily to Mapeetu, and the boys distinguished among the latter's reply, the words uttered in a tone of pride:

"Mapeetu," and "Mangaleesu," thus showing that the lad had been asked his name.

Then ensued a long conversation, or, rather, a series of questions and answers, after which an old man approached in obedience to a signal from his master, and asked Dick in passably good English:

"Why have you come to Zululand?"

"We followed my father."

When this answer had been translated to the chief

or king, which ever might be his title, the interpreter asked:

"Why did he come, and why has he entered this country without the permission of the great Ongla?"

"He simply wished to carry to his home across the water some live animals, and he did not know it was necessary to consult any one."

"Then why has he killed our people when they wished to visit him?"

"The Zulus did not come in peace; but in the night, and then only that they might kill us all."

After this answer had been duly translated Ongla held a long conversation with those nearest him, and when it was concluded an order was given, which resulted in the prisoners being led to a hut close by.

Here, after the ropes were removed from their arms, the three were thrust into the ill-smelling place, and two fierce-looking Zulus were stationed in front as guard.

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

"I wonder if we have been put in here to wait till

that black villain gets time to kill us, or are we to be kept as prisoners to force your father into buying our freedom?" Bob asked, in a lugubrious tone.

"It's a pretty blue outlook which ever way we take it," was Dick's reply. "But it won't change matters to discuss them, and will only result in making us feel worse. I'm going to get some sleep."

"There's nothing to lie on but the bare ground."

"That's a good deal better than one of these Zulu's beds, I fancy."

"If we could only talk with Mapeetu we might find out exactly what they intend to do with us," Bob persisted, the knowledge of their danger having driven all desire for sleep from his eyes.

"Try it, if you don't care about lying down."

The Zulu lad had squatted on the ground at the side of the hut, opposite the door, and, with his chin between his knees, appeared to be sleeping.

"Will Ongla kill us?" Bob asked, repeating the question several times as he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and although he had professed to be so eager to sleep, Dick raised himself on his elbow to hear the reply.

The Zulu hesitated a moment after understanding the question, shook his head as if to imply doubt, and then, pointing in the direction from which they had come, said, in a low, earnest tone:

"To-night Zulu sleep. We go quick to white man's kraal."

"I sincerely wish we could," Bob added, with a

sigh; "but according to the looks of things we are likely to stay here just as long as Ongla cares to keep us."

"He means that we are to run away," Dick whispered, excitedly, all desire for sleep gone now, "and I'm sure he's got some kind of a plan."

None knew better than Mapeetu how short a time the prisoners had in which to make an effort to escape. He realized that every moment was precious, and, a few minutes after Bob asked his opinion, began the venture by whispering to his companions:

"Talk hungry; make big noise for meat."

Then he immediately approached the guard, speaking alternately in an angry and an imploring tone, and, without knowing how this could aid them to escape, his companions began to beg loudly for food.

When this outcry, for such it certainly was, had lasted ten or fifteen minutes the old interpreter came to the door of the hut, and, pushing Mapeetu aside, asked the white boys what was wanted.

"We must have something to eat," Dick replied. "It surely can not be Ongla's intention to starve us, no matter what he may intend to do finally."

"Why should he feed those who have killed his people?"

"Because we are prisoners, and can not help ourselves. Besides, none of his men have been killed by my father's party, save in self-defense."

"I will tell him what you have said."

"Will you also ask him to send us back to the camp? If he does so my father will give many presents."

"It is not for me to say such a thing to Ongla It will only be decided what your fate is when she who reads the future comes to the kraal."

"I wonder what he means by that?" Bob asked, in a whisper, and Mapeetu took advantage of the lull in the conversation to address a few remarks to the old fellow, at the conclusion of which the latter walked gravely away.

The Zulu boy did not appear to have gained any satisfaction from what the interpreter told him. The knowledge that one of the witches had been sent for to pronounce their sentence signified that they could not hope for mercy.

"Go to-night," he said firmly, as he pointed first to his companions and then himself. "Ongla will kill."

Dick nodded his head, and was about to attempt a pantomime expressive of their faith in any plan Mapeetu might make, when the guard in front of the door moved lazily aside, and a Zulu woman appeared with a basket, the interpreter, who was immediately behind her, saying, as she pushed the burden into the hut:

"Ongla has sent you this, that you may eat and be thankful; but remember, if there is any attempt at escape all will be killed."

"We are satisfied with this," Dick replied; "but you must say to the king that if we are murdered my father's party will destroy this kraal and every one in it."

"One does not threaten Ongla and live. I will

not repeat your words, because death would come to both you and me if I did."

"Can we make any promises to the king that will induce him to send us back?"

"Not until after she who reads the future has spoken."

As if afraid to talk any more the old man hurried away, and the boys turned their attention to the contents of the basket.

It contained a gourd of whey, some mealy cakes and cooked buffalo flesh.

"This isn't bad," Bob said, as he began to eat, "and, in spite of the pretty tough lookout, I feel like having breakfast."

To the surprise of both the boys, Mapeetu prevented them from making a hearty meal, by laying before each one a mealy cake, and emptying the contents of the basket in a corner of the hut, where he covered it with Bob's coat.

"What's the trouble now?" Dick asked.

"Carry to-night. No guns, no game."

"We are to save it to take with us if we succeed in escaping," Dick said, as he cast one longing glance at the meat. "I wish I could believe it would be possible to get away."

Bob had nothing to say. One of the guard had just pushed his ugly head into the hut within a dozen inches of his own face, and the sight was well calculated to destroy his appetite.

Mapeetu spoke angrily to the man, and, as Dick thought, from the tone of his voice, ordered him to

remain outside; but the fellow paid no attention whatever. He moved nearer the boy, as if pleased at the idea of causing him fear or disgust, and might have carried his sport to the point of positive cruelty had not the old interpreter arrived with a message from the king.

The insolent guard scrambled out of the hut in a hurry, and the old man said, speaking in a more friendly tone than before:

"Will the white prisoners wash in the pool before she who reads the future comes?"

"I don't know why we should," Dick replied, in perplexity. "Is there any especial reason for doing so?"

The interpreter did not quite understand what the boy had said, and he repeated the question to Mapeetu, who answered in an angry tone.

"Will you tell me what Mapeetu has just said?" Dick asked.

"He will not do anything to defend himself. She, who reads the future, may not be able to harm one who has invoked the spirit of the waters."

"If that was the reason why we should go to the pool, I agree with him," Bob said, quickly. "We don't intend to make fools of ourselves in that way, no matter what happens."

"The king was kind, and you insult him," the old man said sternly, as he left the hut.

"I suppose that means we're in a worse box than before," Bob said, ruefully, and for several moments each prisoner was too deeply occupied with his own gloomy thoughts to care for conversation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE READER OF FUTURE EVENTS.

IT IS impossible to say how long the boys might have remained in gloomy silence speculating upon the evil which threatened, had not a loud outcry from the further end of the kraal caused them to look through the door-way.

The guards were not at their post of duty, and, eager to learn what great event had caused such dereliction, Dick and his companions crawled out of the hut.

It seemed as if every warrior in or around the kraal had been drawn up in two long lines which extended from the entrance far down the valley, while behind them the women and children struggled to obtain advantageous positions from which all that occurred could be seen.

In the distance appeared one of the strangest figures imaginable. It was, as the dress betokened, a woman.

Slowly she advanced between the two lines of warriors, followed by a dozen men or more, each of whom carried a large shield against which they beat with their clubs, making a drumming sound.

As she drew nearer, the boys were able to see her curious decorations.

Her nose was painted white, as was also one of her eyelids, while the other was dyed with red pigment. Her long hair was plastered together by a mixture of grease and clay blackened with charcoal. Around her neck were suspended coils of the entrails of animals stuffed with fat, while her hair was further ornamented with small, distended bladders. Several dried snakes, a human skull, and the heads and claws of birds, hung from her shoulders, beside which she wore a necklace of bones, with rings of the same description on her ankles.

The only actual garment was a short skirt.

In her left hand she held a wand with long tails at its end, which she flourished vigorously above her head while advancing with prancing steps. In her right she shook violently an alleged magic rattle, waving it from one side to the other.

The men drew aside to let her pass and to avoid being struck either by her wand or rattle, evidently holding her in great awe.

When approaching Ongla, who had advanced as if to meet her, she increased the rapidity of her movements, springing forward in the most wonderful manner, now turning to one side, now to the other, and bounding high in the air, while the charms she wore rattled and bumped against her body.

Dick and Bob watched this strange creature with no slight curiosity, never dreaming she could exercise any influence upon them; but Mapeetu showed evident signs of perturbation, following her every movement with his eyes.

The woman danced around Ongla several moments, and then as if but just aware of the presence of the prisoners, she went rapidly toward them, striking one after the other in rapid succession with the magic rattle.

Dick was disposed to laugh at the mumery, for the blows were by no means heavy; but the effect produced by them was, to say the least, startling.

As the woman bounded away the soldiers and people rushed toward the prisoners with weapons ready for use, and there could be no mistaking the fact of their murderous intentions.

In an instant Dick understood the whole matter. The old hag was "she who reads the future," and her blows with the rattle had been the signature to their death-warrants.

At the first threatening advance Mapeetu sprung in front of his friends: not that he could hope to avert their fate, but with an instinctive desire to shield them if only for an instant.

Bob closed his eyes as those terrible assegais were flourished above his head, and Dick mentally braced himself for the supreme moment; but the murderous blows were not delivered.

Just as the weapons were descending Ongla shouted some command, and in a surly, disappointed manner, the blood-thirsty crowd drew back a few paces, while the alleged enchantress danced to and fro as if in the wildest excitement.

The boys could see her in front of Ongla gesticulating violently, waving her arms about, and leaping

from side to side in the most extraordinary fashion. Now and then she pointed at them in a way which told she was urging that they be put to death, and all the while the crowd advanced and retreated as if only with the greatest difficulty they were able to obey the king's commands.

Ten minutes were spent in this fashion, the prisoners expecting each second would be their last, and then, carrying a fancifully decorated stick, which was probably the insignia of royalty, the old interpreter came toward the boys, literally obliged to force his way through the crowd despite his authority.

He spoke a few sharp words to Mapeetu, and then cried to the boys:

"Go into the hut! The king spares your lives till morning."

The boys obeyed very quickly, and, as the old man followed, Dick asked:

"Has it really been decided that we are to be killed?"

"She who reads the future has spoken, and who can stand against her words? Ongla gives you the honor of dying like men, rather than by the assegais of the crowd."

"Does he understand that my father will make him answer for this crime?" Dick asked, trying to speak bravely; but there was a decided tremor to his voice.

"Ongla fears no man. It is not well to threaten, or he may decide that you shall be thrown to those who are howling for your blood."

Now, Mapeetu held a short conversation with the interpreter, and then the latter said, warningly:

"Do not try to escape, for it will be useless. The guards must answer for you with their lives, and every eye will remain open."

"It would be better to be killed while fighting, than to wait until the king's butchers get ready to practice on us," Bob said, in a tone of desperation.

"There are many ways of putting prisoners to death, and there are but few who do not fear torture."

With this ominous remark, which was neither more nor less than a threat, the old man left the hut, and the prisoners were alone once more, with the positive knowledge that a speedy death awaited them, unless it should be possible to escape.

"If Mapeetu has any plan, we will try it," Bob said, after a long silence, "We can't fare very much worse, no matter what happens, and, of course, there's always a chance, however small, that we shall succeed."

"That's the way I look at it," Dick replied, forced to speak very loud in order to be heard, because of the howling, shrieking mob which surrounded the hut. Then he said to the Zulu boy, "Can we go away?"

Mapeetu nodded his head, and then, partly in pantomime and partly by words, he gave his companions to understand that nothing could be done until after the inmates of the kraal were wrapped in slumber.

"Sleep now," he said, as he stretched himself upon the ground.

"It's good advice, for we must be fresh when the decisive moment comes," Dick added; "but I doubt very much whether we can follow it. A fellow don't feel like sleeping when he has just been sentenced to death."

Dick laid down, however, and for half an hour the two white boys talked of the home they might never see again, or of the chances for escape.

Then kindly sleep came to their aid, and until nearly nightfall both were blissfully unconscious of the doom as spoken by the old witch.

An unusual din from the outside caused them to awaken with a start, and they had but just sprung to their feet when an hundred grinning faces, one after the other, peered through the door of the hut to make sure the prisoners were still securely caged.

Mapeetu did not even rise. He seemed to understand exactly what this visit meant, perhaps had been expecting it, and remained lying upon the ground in such a position that the pile of provisions was hidden from view by his body.

When the visitors had departed a second basket of food and some water was brought, after which the sentinels resumed their positions, the tumult in the kraal slowly died away, and night had come.

Now had arrived the time when the Zulu boy proposed to make the attempt which might end with his life.

"Here!" he said, pointing to a spot near the door and motioning for Dick and Bob to sit down. "Talk. Talk much."

The boys obeyed. They could conceive of no way by which they could leave the kraal unobserved; therefore both were prepared to follow Mapeetu's instructions implicitly.

Dick and Bob tried hard to do so in a natural manner. Seated near the door, they began to talk of what might possibly be happening at the stockade, but the excitement of the moment was so great that their voices sounded strange and unnatural, despite all efforts to the contrary.

Meanwhile Mapeetu had gone to work with a will. He had no tools save his hunting-knife, which the Zulus had not seized, probably through an oversight, or perhaps because they thought this weapon so insignificant that it was a waste of time to take it from the boy, and with this he cut away the earth at the edge of the hut furthest from the point where the guards were sitting.

Then it was necessary to scrape out the dirt with his hands, but he did not make undue haste. Working deliberately but effectively, he formed a tunnel sufficiently large to admit of a passage of their bodies, throwing the earth on either side in order to prevent the piling up of such a mound as would readily be seen in case one of the sentinels chanced to look inside the hut.

As may be supposed, the boys watched his every movement, and when, because of their interest in

what he was doing, the conversation lagged, his softly spoken words: "Talk much," caused them to renew what was really an exertion.

During two hours this work continued, and then a gesture from the Zulu boy told that his portion of the task was finished.

"Sit still," he said, as Dick and Bob were about to examine the result of his labors, and they had hardly sunk back upon the ground when the interpreter's head appeared in the door-way.

"Do you bring us good tidings, or have you come because we are cooped up here like chickens waiting for the butcher," Dick asked, curtly.

"The king has sent me to see if you are reposing in comfort."

"Ask him if he would feel comfortable in case the white men had him in their power and promised to kill him when the sun rises again?"

"It is not he who has said you must die; but she who reads the future."

"It would be easy for one so powerful as he to say the cruel sentence should not be carried out, and I insist that you warn him of the vengeance which my father will take if we are killed."

The old man's face was wrinkled with a frown, and Mapeetu warned Dick with a gesture to be quiet.

"The Zulu who has forsaken his country knows that it is not wise to threaten the king," was the angry reply. "Because you are boys I will not repeat your words."

"I can't see that it makes much difference since we are doomed to be killed," Dick added, and the old man departed as if in anger.

Now unless their escape should prove successful, there was no ground for hope.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

AFTER the interpreter had left them Mapeetu remained seated near the door like a statue, looking down at the ground, and paying no heed to what was passing on around him. It was as if he had suddenly lost all hope at the very moment when he should aid his white friends.

"Isn't it time to make a move?" Dick asked, impatiently.

"Wait," was the whispered reply, and the boys did their best to appear patient.

Every second now was valuable, for in a few hours the executioners would come to lead them forth to death, and then no plan, however bold, could be successful.

Each minute seemed to Dick to contain twenty times the ordinary number of seconds, and he felt positive the Zulu boy would delay until it was too late. More than once did he make up his mind to insist that they start immediately; but when the interpreter looked in for the second survey, he understood that Mapeetu was acting wisely.

Not until every sound had died away did the boy move, and then, stealing nearer the door, he remained a few seconds with bent head listening to

the loud breathing which told that the sentinel had fallen asleep.

Touching each of his companions in succession, and, placing his fingers on his lips to signify that there must be no noise, he began to crawl through the small tunnel, followed by Bob, and with Dick bringing up the rear.

When he broke through the earth on the outer side (for in making the excavation he had been careful not to complete it, lest some straggler should see the aperture) he waited two or three minutes, despite Bob's energetic proddings from behind, intended to convey the idea that he was being strangled in the confined space.

Not a sound could be heard. The night was dark, and, for all the boy knew, half a dozen men might be on guard in the rear of the hut; but that was one of the chances it was necessary to take if they would escape death, and he emerged carefully, lying at full length on the ground, as he waited for his companions.

When all three were on the outside Mapeetu arose to a stooping position, Bob and Dick copying every movement, and made his way slowly toward that portion of the fence between the cattle kraal and the main entrance.

It was necessary to walk with the utmost caution lest they stumble against a hut in the darkness, and during the short but painful journey the perspiration, caused by fear and apprehension, rolled from the white boys' faces in tiny streams.

Mapeetu was a good leader, and he brought them to the fence without mishap; but the barrier was yet to be scaled, and this part of the undertaking promised to be more dangerous than all the rest.

The Zulu boy motioned for Bob to make the venture first, and by exerting strength, such as one would hardly suppose his slight frame capable of, lifted him clear off the ground, holding him in that position until he found a foothold.

"Drop easy," Dick whispered, as Bob mounted to the top, and a few seconds later the boy had disappeared from view.

Now it was Dick's turn, and with no other mishap than an ugly scratch on his cheek, he reached the opposite side, where he crouched close to Bob until Mapeetu should join them.

They had not long to wait. The Zulu came over so nearly noiselessly that his white companions were not aware he had attempted the feat until he touched them on the shoulders to signify that the flight should be begun in earnest.

Mapeetu ran swiftly ahead, with his body bent that there might be the least possible chance of being seen, and continued in this manner for a distance of four or five hundred yards, when, standing erect, he said, in a low tone:

"Now quick."

Seizing each of his companions by the hand he started at full speed, and during the half-hour which followed not a word was spoken. At the end of that time, however, it became necessary to make a brief

halt. Bob was so nearly breathless that even with the prospect of a cruel death before him he could continue the race no longer.

Mapeetu allowed his white companions to lie down, but he remained standing, as if to show that the rapid pace had caused him no suffering, and Dick thought with fear that those who would come in pursuit when the escape was discovered, could travel as long and rapidly as the boy who was leading them.

"Unless we make a big effort Ongla's men are certain to overtake us two or three hours after it is light enough to follow our trail. If Mapeetu was alone there'd be a good chance of his getting away; but we're holding him back."

"I couldn't have run half a mile further if it had been to save my life," Bob replied, in a tone of distress.

"And I was pretty nearly as badly off; but unless we do better than this the chase will be ended before noon to-morrow."

"If I can't hold out, you fellows must go on, and leave me behind."

"Now, Bob," Dick said, reproachfully, "I didn't mean to find fault because you had to rest. I was only thinking how slim our chances are, even after we have got clear of the kraal. Mapeetu may go ahead; but you and I will stick together to the last."

"Let's start again. I've got my breath now, and am good for another half-hour at the least."

The Zulu boy appeared pleased that the halt was ended so quickly, and, holding his companions' hands as before, he set off, traveling toward the south in such a direction as he believed would bring them on the side of the stockade opposite the enemy.

In this manner, halting for a few moments only when it was absolutely impossible to run any longer, was the flight continued, and when morning dawned all believed they must be within a few miles of the hunting party.

They were at the edge of what appeared to be a wide extent of forest when the sun rose, and Mapeetu at once sought shelter among the enormous trees.

"Are we going to stop here?" Bob asked, as the Zulu halted.

"I believe he means to stay until night," Dick said, in surprise. "We must be near the stockade, and there's no reason why we shouldn't keep on."

Mapeetu walked from one tree to the other, scrutinizing each carefully, as if deciding upon a hiding-place, and Dick tried to make him continue the journey by declaring that the encampment might easily be reached before their pursuers could overtake them.

It surely seemed as if the boy understood all that was said, for he replied emphatically:

"White men far off. Zulus near. Stay here."

"But we only traveled one night when they carried us to Ongla's village, and at not as fast a pace as we've kept up. As a matter of fact, we should be past the camp by this time."

"Stay here," Mapeetu replied, and this was all he would say to the many arguments Dick brought forward to prove the folly of remaining in hiding when, by one supreme effort, they might reach their friends.

"Of course he knows best," Bob said, after the useless controversy had been continued several moments with no result. "Perhaps he has been making a circuit to avoid those who were besieging the stockade, and we may yet be many miles away."

"I suppose we will have to do as he says; but it is provoking to halt now when we should be putting just so many more miles between ourselves and Ongla's warriors."

During this conversation between the white boys Mapeetu had been cutting a long, slender palm shoot, to which he lashed his knife with vines in such a manner that he had quite a serviceable weapon, something after the fashion of an assegai.

This done, he pushed further into the heart of the forest, and, half an hour later, stopped at the foot of a wide-spreading tree.

"There," he said, pointing among the branches, and motioning the boys to ascend.

With a sigh Dick made the first attempt to climb up the almost smooth trunk, and, by aid from Mapeetu, he finally succeeded, Bob following immediately after.

It was not only a good hiding place; but a very comfortable one in which to spend a few hours. The huge branches afforded reasonably good and secure

seats, while the foliage sheltered them from the rays of the sun which had been beating down with great force.

To the surprise of both the white boys Mapeetu disappeared as soon as they were in the tree. He had not intimated that he intended to leave, and Dick came very near fancying it was his intention to abandon them.

"Where is he?" Bob asked, after looking in vain for the Zulu.

"I'm sure I can't tell. Perhaps he thinks he can be more certain of giving Ongla's men the slip if he's alone."

"I don't believe he would desert us, otherwise he'd have done so last night when we held him back because of not being able to keep pace with him."

"Well, all we can do is to wait until he comes, for I haven't the slightest idea of the direction in which the stockade is located. Now is the time to eat the food we've been carrying so long. It's lucky we divided it before starting, or we might have to wait for breakfast."

While they were prisoners in Ongla's village the Zulu boy had portioned out the cooked meat and mealy cakes into three parts, and each fugitive carried it as he thought best, therefore there was sufficient for a hearty meal.

"I'd give more for a drink of water just now than for all the meat in the country," Bob said, as he forced himself to eat. "It seems as if my throat was literally parched."

"I don't understand why Mapeetu didn't try to find a stream before making a halt. It will come pretty tough if we are obliged to stay all day without anything to drink."

"I wonder how it would do to chew some of these leaves? They look cool and moist."

"You mustn't think of such a thing until he comes, for they may be poisonous."

Bob replaced the meat and cakes in his coat pocket, saying as he did so:

"Then I don't care for breakfast. If Mapeetu don't come soon I believe I'll run the risk, and hunt for water."

"Well, I believe you won't. It isn't hard to suffer from thirst, compared to what we should undergo before death, in case the Zulus caught us. We'll stay exactly where we are until Mapeetu arrives, or the sun sets."

These words had hardly been spoken before a rustling among the foliage proclaimed the passage of some heavy body, and, as the boys crouched close to the tree-trunk to escape observation, their companion appeared.

He carried in his arms half a dozen oblong objects, looking not unlike bulbs, of a light green color, and handed them up to the boys carefully, as if they were something very precious.

"He has got something more to eat," Bob said, petulantly, "and we're about dead for—— Why these things are full of water!"

He did not stop to say anything more just

then; but raising one of these natural cups to his lips drank until it was impossible to drink any more.

While the boys had a suspicion that Mapeetu had deserted them, he was searching for the pitcher-plant, and, with these cups full of the precious liquid, the prospect of spending the day in the tree did not seem so terrible as it had a few moments previous.

CHAPTER XX.

AN OMINOUS SCENE.

IF IT had been possible to make the Zulu boy understand all he said, Dick would have begged his pardon for having been so ungenerous as to fancy, for a single moment, that he would desert them.

As it was, however, Mapeetu could not have comprehended the words, and the boys tried to make amends by shaking hands with him heartily when he clambered up beside them.

Now Bob was more than willing to breakfast, and all the party made a hearty meal; but at the expense of the entire stock of provisions.

"We shall be pretty hungry by morning, unless we succeed in reaching the stockade before then," Dick said, cheerily, disposed to be merry, now that escape seemed assured.

Mapeetu certainly understood sufficient English to know what was said, for he tapped his impromptu assegai significantly as he replied:

"Plenty eat to-night."

"I'll agree to swallow all he can kill with that knife lashed to a stick," Bob said, laughingly, and then the conversation was brought to a close by the Zulu.

"Sleep now. Walk much soon."

The boys were sadly in need of rest. With the exception of the short sleep in Ongla's village, they had not really taken repose since the morning prior to the capture, and the three curled themselves up on the broad branches, where it was not impossible that one or all might tumble to the ground in case the slumber should be too profound.

Before they had time to fall asleep the wisdom of making the halt was apparent.

Dick was on the point of closing his eyes with that delicious sense of being able to journey into dreamland at a moment's notice, when Mapeetu touched him lightly on the shoulder, motioning that he should look toward the foot of the tree.

At the same time he had aroused Bob, and to the dismay of the white boys a large number of Zulu warriors could be seen marching through the forest, evidently following the fugitives' trail. They were led by the interpreter, and it did not require any very great stretch of the imagination to fancy what might be the result if they should find their late prisoners.

Dick's heart thumped in his breast until it actually seemed as if its beating could be heard, as the savages peered first in this direction and then that, scrutinizing the ground carefully at each step, and not until they passed on, unsuspicious that their prey was immediately above them, did he dare to draw a long breath.

Now he understood why Mapeetu had spent so

much time at the foot of the tree before ascending, and he had reason to believe the boy had taken equally good care to hide his trail while hunting for the pitcher-plants.

The foliage of the tree was so heavy and thick that the fugitives could not have been seen unless one of the searchers had climbed up the trunk, and the fact that Mapeetu appeared to be undisturbed, even though the enemy was so near, caused the white lads to gain the needed courage.

"If we had done as I wished, there is no question but that we would have been made prisoners by this time," Dick whispered to Bob, "and from now out I'll never question any plan he may propose."

"It isn't sure yet that they won't come back and pull us out of this," Bob replied. "If they've been able to follow our trail so far, I'm afraid it isn't going to be a hard job for them to put their hands on us."

"While hunting for water he probably fixed it so that there's little chance of their tracking us here, otherwise he wouldn't appear so unconcerned," Dick said, confidently, "and we can count on him every time."

There was no thought of sleeping just then; but when another hour had passed and nothing was heard of Ongla's men, the fugitives settled down once more for the repose which all needed so sadly.

The shadows of night were beginning to lengthen when Dick was aroused from a most delicious sense of perfect rest, by Mapeetu, who, on being assured

that his companion was fully awake, pointed to the foot of the tree, where two members of the deer tribe were cropping the grass, as if confident in the security of isolation.

The Zulu boy raised his imitation assegai, and was on the point of descending the tree when Dick clutched him by the shoulder.

In the shadow cast by the thicket the latter had caught sight of a pair of glaring eyes. Looking more intently he saw a large tiger-like animal of fawn color, its back variegated with round, black spots.

He understood, as did Mapeetu immediately he saw the object, that it was a cheetah or hunting-leopard, lying in wait for the deer until they should approach within its power of making a spring.

The boys had hardly comprehended the situation before the animal sprung out of ambush, alighting on the back of the unfortunate deer, which it brought to the ground from its own momentum.

Dick and Bob were watching the spotted murderer with never a thought of trying to save the venison; but the Zulu boy had no idea of allowing so much meat to be wasted while he needed it.

Leaping from the tree before the others were aware of his intentions, he raised the knife-pointed shaft, held it immovable for a second, and then launched the rude weapon full at the heart of the leopard.

The animal bounded in the air with its prey yet in the cruel mouth, and then fell backward dead,

Mapeetu withdrawing his weapon from the wound to plunge it into the heart of the deer, which was so terribly mangled that it could not have lived many moments longer.

"Cook to-night," the Zulu said, as he ascended the tree again, leaving the game where it had fallen, and this incident ended all thought of sleeping any more for the remainder of the day.

During the next two hours Mapeetu remained very nearly motionless on his perch, as if fearing the Zulus might return, and only when the shadows had begun to lengthen into night did he give the signal to descend.

For him to cut the deer into portions that might be carried readily was but the work of a few moments, and then, with the single word "camp," he started toward the south once more.

Laden as they were with the venison the white boys found it extremely difficult to keep pace with the leader; but the thought that in a few hours they would be at the stockade served to inspire them with a certain fictitious strength, and they marched on resolutely, stopping to rest only when it was absolutely impossible to take another step.

Mapeetu walked straight ahead, like one who travels over familiar country, until, as nearly as his companions could judge, it was several hours past midnight, and then the welcome sight of the stockade was presented.

It was with difficulty that Dick and Bob repressed a cheer, which might have been dangerous if the

siege was still being kept, and in the most cautious manner the Zulu boy led the way to the entrance, when he stopped suddenly, with an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter?" Dick whispered. "Why don't you keep on? It may not be safe to stand here where the savages can see us."

Mapeetu pointed toward the wide gate, which his companions could now see was open, and in a faltering voice, whispered one word:

"Gone!"

"That can't be?" Dick cried, regardless of whether his words were heard or not. "Father wouldn't leave here until we come."

Instead of replying, Mapeetu started forward swiftly, taking no heed to silence, and a few moments later the boys stood within an inclosure, the timbers of which were charred and blackened as by fire.

Not a living being could be seen; where the wagons had stood was now vacant space, and the embers in the places where the cooks had formerly worked, told that the encampment had been abandoned many hours.

"What has happened?" Dick cried, in agony of apprehension. "Can it be possible that the Zulus have murdered every one?"

Bob appeared to be stupefied with grief, and stood on the spot where Mr. Ellsworth's wagon had formerly been, staring vacantly around.

"There has been an attack, and the savages overpowered them," Dick cried, the big tears rolling down his cheeks.

Up to this point Mapeetu had not spoken. While the others were gazing helplessly, he was examining everything within the inclosure, and now he said:

"White men gone to find boys. Zulus not come here."

Dick could hardly believe that the camp would have been abandoned without other cause than the capture of himself and Bob; but the black boy repeated the assertion so emphatically, and no signs of violence being found, he was finally forced to admit that the Zulu might be correct in his statement.

"What are we to do?" he asked, after a pause.

As if in reply to this question Mapeetu shut and barred the gate, after which he set about building a fire, Bob and Dick standing idly by like boys who had received some severe mental blow.

"Cook meat. Get supper. To-morrow find father," he said, in a cheery tone, and the words aroused his companions from the apathy which had come upon them.

"Do you think it possible father could have left here to find us?" Dick finally asked.

"It must be so, or else we should see some signs of a struggle. The white members of the party would have fought to the end; but I can find nothing to show that anything has happened."

"I build fire; you cook," Mapeetu said, as he approached his friends. "To-morrow we find white men."

"I wish I believed we could," Dick said, with a sigh, and then, as Bob cut the venison into steaks, he set about cooking them, while the Zulu brought water from the stream in a tin basin which the former occupants of the camp had left behind.

Despite the causes which they had for anxiety, every member of the party made a hearty meal, and when it was finished Mapeetu motioned for his companions to lie down while he stood watch.

"Unless you want to sleep we'll all stand guard," Dick said. "I'm sure it would be impossible for me to close my eyes while matters are in this condition."

"You can't think it reasonable that all the party were killed or taken prisoners?" Bob suggested, believing it might do his companion some good if the matter was discussed in all its bearings.

"I can't help fearing the worst. It seems as if father would have kept the encampment here if possible, even if he started in search of us, for what can he do with all the cattle and animals while running around the country?"

Bob had not thought of this phase of the case before, and now he was by no means as confident that nothing serious had happened. It surely did not seem reasonable that the entire baggage of the expedition would be taken away during a search for the boys, and he began to feel more depressed even than Dick.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SEARCH.

AFTER finding the stockade abandoned, Mapeetu appeared to be perfectly satisfied that the beseigers were no longer in the vicinity. He took no precautions to keep their presence there a secret, nor did he make any preparations for defense save by shutting the heavy gate.

Instead of troubling himself about what might be going on outside, he examined carefully every portion of the interior, and found sufficient to warrrant him in saying, confidently:

"White men here two days past. We find 'em quick."

"Are you certain we can follow the trail?" Dick asked.

"I find him," the boy replied, in a tone so positive that his companions could not fail to feel encouraged as to the final result.

"Of course he can follow a trail better than a white man," Bob said, certain now that he had a good argument, "and with so many loaded wagons the signs must be so plain that even you and I could not go astray. We have only to wait until morning, and then travel at our best gait. In three days we should overtake them."

Dick knew this was true, and the burden of sorrow was lightened very materially. That the stockade had been abandoned leisurely, and not because the beseigers had gained any decided advantage, was evident from an hundred indications; therefore, save for the danger of traveling unarmed, there was no reason why he should not be with his friends in a comparatively short space of time.

Owing to their long sleep during the day, the boys were not particularly in need of rest, but the Zulu insisted that they should lie down during the few remaining hours of darkness, and they finally yielded to his pantomimic entreaties.

It seemed as if their eyes had but just closed in slumber when Mapeetu awakened them. The sun had risen, the remainder of the venison was cooked, and there was no reason why the search should longer be delayed after breakfast had been eaten.

Dick and Bob made a hurried toilet at the bank of the stream, the venison steaks were disposed of quickly, and the three left the stockade, following a trail which was almost as plainly marked as a country road.

To the surprise of all three it led straight down to the water course, instead of up the valley as they had fancied, and Dick said, in a tone of disappointment:

"It will take us all day to get across, for we must build some kind of a raft."

"They surely had one for the wagons, and perhaps we can find it by following down the stream."

"The water isn't so deep but that the carts could be drawn over with no other inconvenience to the animals inside than a good bath, and the horses and oxen swam across, of course."

"Why can't we do the same thing?"

"Because there are likely plenty of crocodiles about, and it would be inconvenient to meet one in mid-stream. With a large party there is so much noise and confusion that the long-nosed fellows don't dare to come very near."

During this conversation Mapeetu had been walking to and fro on the bank of the stream evidently trying to decide upon the best method of reaching the other side.

With a couple of axes it would have been a trifling matter to hew two or three trees, and with them make such a craft as would carry the small party in safety. In the absence of these very useful tools there was but one course to be pursued, and Dick and the Zulu boy arrived at this conclusion at the same moment.

Some of the timbers must be taken from the stockade, and this was likely to prove a long job, for each one had been set firmly in the ground.

"We've got to tackle it," Dick said, as he went toward that portion of the barricade nearest the gate, "and the sooner we get through the quicker we'll overtake the crowd."

"I reckon it will be a case of staying on this side of the river one more night," Bob replied, after they had worked several moments at one of the timbers without so much as moving it.

Dick would not admit that this view of the case was correct until the forenoon passed and the raft was but half completed. Then he said with a sigh:

"You were right, Bob. It seems tough to be obliged to stay here so long simply because of this narrow strip of water; but I don't see any way out. It would be foolish to start at nightfall, and run the risk of finding a safe place in which to spend the hours of darkness."

After it was learned that the delay could not be avoided, the boys worked more leisurely, and the task was not accomplished until about half an hour before sunset, when the collection of timbers was moored to the bank with a cable made of twisted vines.

Then, while the white boys were trying to close temporarily the breach thus made in the wall, Mapeetu took up his rude weapon, and, pointing toward the thicket, said:

"Want meat. Me get it."

"But it isn't safe to go into the woods, with nothing but that knife lashed to a pole for protection," Dick replied, quickly.

"Want meat," the Zulu repeated, and then, as if afraid he might be forcibly detained, the boy started off at a swift pace.

"He's able to take care of himself," Bob said, carelessly, when his companion would have tried to prevent Mapeetu from leaving. "It's a fact that we shall need provisions by morning, and if he can get them now it'll save just so much time to-morrow."

"I had rather go hungry than run the risk of losing him, for with no one to help us there'd be little chance of our ever finding father again."

"He knows the country too well to get into much danger. What we want to look out for more than anything else, is this gap in the timbers, for it would be mighty awkward if a lion should take it into his head to pay us a visit to-night."

Dick realized this fact fully, and the two worked with a will, filling up the breach with such bushes as could be cut down by aid of their hunting-knives.

It was quite dark before this work had been finished, and yet they had heard nothing from the Zulu.

"Perhaps he has had trouble to find game," Bob suggested, when Dick showed signs of alarm, and the words were but just spoken when a terrible roar was heard from the thicket.

"That's a lion!" Dick cried, his face growing very pale. "Mapeetu started for that very place, and——"

The sound of a human voice in distress caused him to cease speaking suddenly, and after a second's hesitation he shouted:

"The lion has seized him! Come on!"

Bob did not delay. The knowledge that the boy who had rendered them such great service was in danger prevented either from thinking of the peril which would attend their efforts to aid him, and, unarmed, save for the knives, which could be of but little service in an encounter with the king of beasts,

they ran at full speed toward the point from which had come the cry for help.

At the moment when the agonized appeal was heard, Bob had in his hands some pieces of grease-wood he had gathered within the inclosure for the purpose of building a fire, and these he continued unconsciously to hold as they entered the thicket, where it was already so dark that objects could not be distinguished a dozen feet away.

"We never can find him in time," Dick cried, in a choking voice, as he darted here and there searching for the friend whom he feared was already dead. "If there was a chance to make a torch!"

"I've got one!" Bob replied, joyfully, realizing only at this moment what it was he had been carrying so carefully. "This grease-wood can be lighted with a match."

"Quick! quick!" and Dick pulled some matches from his pocket; but, owing to the nervous tremor which had seized him, several precious seconds were wasted before the friendly flame could be kindled.

The fat wood blazed up at once, and soon the boys were waving the torches around their heads while they pushed forward recklessly into the very midst of the thicket.

A deep growl suddenly warned them that they had found the object of the search. Hardly four yards away crouched an enormous lion, with both fore paws resting on a human figure. It was but one brief glance they had of the animal, yet, as he

lifted his head to roar in disapprobation of this interruption to his supper, the boys could see that old age had deprived him of nearly all his teeth.

Neither Dick nor Bob stopped to realize what a rash thing it was to rush, virtually unarmed, upon the lion; their only thought was that Mapeetu might yet be saved, and, at the same instant, they ran toward the growling brute, waving the fiery torches vigorously.

It is not probable the old fellow had ever, in the whole course of his long life, been treated with so little ceremony. The flames blinded and frightened him, and when the fire was actually scorching his mane he ran like a frightened dog, his tail curled tightly between his legs.

Neither of the boys realized that anything very brave had been done. Their only thought was for him who lay like one dead, and Dick said, hoarsely, as he raised the inanimate form:

"Help me, and move quick. We must get him back to the stockade at once; the lion may come if we stay here too long."

"Do you suppose he has been killed?" Bob asked, as he obeyed the hurriedly-spoken order.

"I can't tell. There's no blood to be seen, at all events."

Knowing fully the effectiveness of their fiery weapons, the boys managed to keep the torches alight even while carrying the burden, and fortunately, no animals molested them during the march to the stockade.

Here Bob hurriedly built a fire while Dick ran to the stream for water, and in a few moments they had the intense satisfaction of seeing the wounded lad open his eyes.

"Are you hurt much?" Dick asked, solicitously.

Mapeetu looked around apprehensively as if fancying the lion might yet be near at hand, and when the question was repeated, tried to rise.

The effort was too much, and with a cry of pain he sunk to the ground again, clasping his left ankle to show that it was injured.

Dick made a hurried examination, and the sharp splinters of bone which could be felt under the skin told plainly the boy's condition.

"His leg is broken," he cried, in a tone of mingled pity and fear. "I don't know anything about attending to such injuries, and even if it is possible to care for him we shall be forced to stay here many days!"

"How can we do that with neither food nor the means of getting any?"

"I don't know," was the gloomy reply. "The first duty is to fix his leg in some way, and then we'll try to find a way out of this terrible scrape."

"But what are you going to do for him?"

"The only thing I know is to tie it up tightly, and then use plenty of water to prevent inflammation. What can we use for bandages?"

"We've got nothing. It's a case of all hands starving to death here, or being eaten by wild beasts in the forest," and Bob threw himself hopelessly on the ground in front of the fire.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INVALID.

DICK'S despair was but little less than his companion's; but knowing how important it was to fight against such feelings, he made a brave effort to appear cheerful as he said:

"We shall never get out of our troubles if you give way like this, Bob. While there's life there's hope, and we're pretty poor kind of fellows if we can't get along somehow when we've got a good place in which to stay. If there was no stockade here, matters would be very different."

"If we only had one gun it might be possible to get something to eat; but without weapons all hands must starve."

"We can't get provisions by crying for them, that's certain, and that we are not hungry yet is good reason for thankfulness."

Dick spoke sharply, for it was necessary his companion should be aroused into activity, and his words had the desired effect. Bob leaped to his feet looking considerably ashamed because of having given way to grief at such a time, as he said, apologetically:

"A fellow can't help being a coward once in a while, and now that I've taken my turn at it there

shall be nothing more of the kind. What do you want me to do?"

"Pile some more wood on the fire, and then find something in which you can bring water."

While he spoke Dick was tearing his shirt into strips to be used as bandages, and, with a fire-brand in his hand, Bob hunted around that portion of the inclosure where Mr. Ellsworth's wagon had stood.

He succeeded in finding an old kettle which had been left behind as useless, and with this he brought from the stream a goodly supply of the precious liquid, arriving at the camp-fire just as Dick finished tying up the wounded limb.

"I have wrapped the ankle as tight as possible; but whether the bone will unite is more than I can say. These bandages must be kept wet all the time during the next two or three days, and then, when there is no chance of inflammation, we'll see if a casing of clay can't be made so that it will be out of the question for him to injure it further by moving."

While this rude surgery was being performed the Zulu boy had watched Dick's motions in silence, and when the latter rose to his feet the invalid said:

"To-morrow go find white men. Mapeetu stay here."

"Do you suppose we would leave you alone? Without food, and with the lions close at hand; you'd be dead in less than twenty-four hours."

"Go, leave Mapeetu."

"Now, see here," and again Dick spoke sharply. "We shan't think of such a thing, and it's no use to discuss the matter. You have saved our lives more than once, and we intend to stick by you. Besides, Bob and I never could find our way across the country."

Mapeetu closed his eyes, and, as he moved him in a more comfortable position, Bob said:

"I wish he could speak English enough to tell us how he felt when the lion had hold of him, for I don't believe any one beside him ever came out of such a scrape alive."

"I have read of a number of cases where men have escaped after being terribly mangled. Two, whose arms and shoulders had been literally chewed, wrote that they felt no pain whatever. If that lion hadn't been so old, I'm afraid Mapeetu wouldn't have come out in such good condition. He seems to be comfortable now; let's wet the bandages and then get more wood together. We shall need a good fire, for any large animal could make his way into the stockade through that hole."

There was yet quite an amount of fuel scattered around the inclosure, and the boys gathered as much as they thought would suffice to keep the fire going during the night, after which they sat near the invalid to eat such of the venison as had not been spoiled by the heat.

Mapeetu took his share, and to the delight of his companions, appeared to be reasonably sound for one who had so lately been invited by a lion to serve him as supper.

"How long do you think it will be before he can walk?" Bob asked, when the meal was finished.

"Certainly not less than a month."

"And in that time the hunters will be ready to go to the coast. Even now they must be so far away that there's no chance of our overtaking them."

"We can't leave him, no matter where they are," Dick replied, with a sigh.

"Have you thought what we can do, providing all hands are alive when he is able to travel?"

"The only plan is to have him guide us to the coast. We can surely find the brig."

"In case she doesn't sail for home before we get there."

"Father wouldn't leave while there was a chance of our being alive."

Bob did not continue this topic of conversation any longer. Their condition was so desperate that two men well armed might have been excused for feeling nervous regarding the future, therefore the boys, with no means of obtaining food, and one of their number an invalid, had good reason for anxiety.

It was late in the evening when Dick, arousing himself from his gloomy forebodings, applied more water to Mapeetu's injured limb, and said to Bob:

"You had better try to get some sleep. One of us must stay on guard, and you can relieve me toward morning."

"Waken me when you feel sleepy," was the reply, and ten minutes later both of Dick's companions were wrapped in slumber.

The feeling of loneliness and helplessness was intensified when he was thus left comparatively alone, and a most wretched hour did he spend trying to see a way out of their difficulties.

Then, hardly conscious of what he was doing, Dick allowed the sleep which weighed heavily on his eyelids to overcome him, and the camp was left unguarded.

The sick boy moved restlessly now and then; Bob's heavy breathing could have been heard the full distance of the inclosure, and the fire crackled cheerily until the fuel was nearly all consumed.

Dick began to dream he was at home hunting with a pack of dogs, and so vivid was the vision that the noise of their barking awakened him.

The fire was low, a few glowing embers alone remaining, and on every hand the darkness seemed oppressive, because it was so intense.

Dick looked around as if hardly understanding where he was, and a second later the true position of affairs was presented to his mind with startling distinctness.

On the opposite side of the embers he saw numerous pairs of shining eyes glaring at him and coming nearer each instant. He raised his hand to throw on more fuel, when the silence was broken by a chorus of sharp barks and snarls which brought Bob to his feet in a twinkling.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he asked, excitedly.

"We are surrounded by a pack of hyenas. Have your knife ready while I make a blaze."

At this instant Mapeetu startled them by shouting vigorously, and as the animals ceased their advance Dick understood that they might be momentarily checked by noise.

He shouted at the full strength of his lungs, as did both the others; but since the wood which he threw on the embers had the effect of dulling them for the time being, the hyenas came forward again.

The Zulu grasped his improvised assegai, which, fortunately, the boys had brought into camp when they rescued him, and was about to make an attack despite his broken ankle.

"You mustn't move!" Dick shouted as he seized the weapon. "Lay where you are, and if those fellows come any nearer I'll stir them up with this."

It seemed as if the wood would never ignite. The hyenas were now moving toward their intended victims, and appeared to be already within a distance of two or three feet.

"See if you can't raise a flame by blowing the embers," Dick said, and as Bob stooped to obey he made a vigorous thrust at the nearest animal.

By chance rather than intention the blow was well aimed. The knife struck the hyena directly over the heart, and a second thrust only was necessary to kill him almost instantly.

The others paid no attention to the fall of their companion. The odor of blood made them more eager to get at the boys, and Dick found that he must battle for life. To falter now would give the

whole pack an opportunity to spring upon them, and he wielded the rude weapon with no slight degree of skill.

By the time Bob coaxed the flames to ascend he had killed another, and wounded two so severely that their fellows tore them to pieces instantly, and before Dick hardly had time to understand why they were quarreling among themselves, both the dead and wounded brutes had been devoured.

There was no danger the hyenas would make an attack now that the flames were rising so high, unless they circled around the fire; but Dick continued to charge upon them with the knife-pointed stick, and, after half an hour's battle, the boys had the great satisfaction of seeing them slink off toward the gap in the stockade.

"That is where we ought to have built our fire," Dick said, as he pointed in the direction taken by the cowardly creatures. "That is the only place where they can enter, and with a big blaze there we should be much safer."

"I'll start one now if you say the word," Bob cried, gathering up an armful of fuel.

"You musn't do anything of the kind. There may be a good many animals inside here, and it isn't safe to move from this spot."

"Stay here," Mapeetu added, so emphatically, that it was easy to understand how great he believed the danger to be, and Bob seated himself by his side.

Dick did not think it necessary to tell his com-

panions that he had been guilty of sleeping at his post; but made amends by keeping his eyes open very wide during the remainder of the night, and never once was the fire allowed to die away, no matter in how slight a degree.

Until sunrise the boys could hear lions roaring in the distance; but none came into the inclosure, and when the day dawned it brought to the despairing ones a grateful sense of relief.

There was no food for breakfast, and, because of this fact, the white boys felt more hungry than if they had known the larder to be well filled.

"Do you suppose I could kill anything with Mapeetu's spear?" Bob asked.

"No, and you mustn't try it. We can get along to-day with nothing, and, perhaps, both will go in the morning."

"There ought to be fish in the river."

"You're right!" Dick cried, excitedly. "Let's rig something that will serve as a hook and line."

"Why not attempt to spear some? I'll tie my knife to a stick, and then both can work."

"All right; it won't do any harm if we don't get anything, and while you are fixing a spear I'll put some more water on Mapeetu's leg."

The Zulu boy would have prevented Dick from wetting the bandages; but the latter insisted, and, after everything possible had been done for the invalid's comfort, the amateur fisherman went down to the river's bank.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS.

NEITHER of the boys really believed that they would be able to get anything in the shape of food from the river. Even in case there were fish in the water, it was doubtful if they could be captured with a spear on which was no barb or cord.

"It won't take long to try," Dick said, as they arrived at the stream and clambered on the raft. "We mustn't stay more than half an hour, for I want to fix the gap in the stockade, and build some sort of a shelter for Mapeetu, before dark."

The water was clear as crystal, and to the delight of both the boys a number of medium-sized fish could be seen lying on the bottom directly beneath the collection of logs.

Dick allowed the knife-spear to sink slowly into the water, giving a sudden thrust when it appeared to be within a few inches of a plump fellow's back.

The aim was good; the steel passed entirely through the fish, pinning him to the bottom; but how he could be raised to the surface was quite another matter, since immediately the spear was lifted the captive would slip off.

Dick stood trying to devise some means for bring-

ing the fish ashore, when a shout of triumph burst from Bob's lips as he in turn made a successful strike.

"Don't lose him!" the former shouted. "You can hold my spear as well as your own, while I go for something which will serve as a landing-net."

With his disengaged hand Bob held his friend's pole, and the latter went to the breach in the stockade, where he soon found among the bushes which had been hewn, a forked stick sufficiently long for his purpose.

With this it was possible to hook the helpless fish in the gills, and soon the two, each weighing nearly a pound and a half, were flapping on the bank.

"We've got enough for breakfast, and know where to get more when we're hungry," Dick said, gleefully. "Let's cook these fellows now, and then set about the work which it is important should be done at once."

A little salt would have made the meal more appetizing; but to boys who had made up their minds it would be necessary to fast for the next twenty-four hours, it was very palatable, and when the bones had been sucked clean the white boys felt in good condition for the labor before them.

"Now how are we to mend the stockade?" Bob asked. "It doesn't seem possible to do very much without even an ax."

"We will undo the work of yesterday."

"Do you mean to take the raft apart?"

"Why not?"

"Because we shall need her when we get ready to cross the river."

"That won't be for four or five weeks, and in the meantime it can do us no good to have her moored to the bank."

"I suppose you are right," Bob said, with a sigh; "but it does seem rough to have a whole day's work thrown away."

"It is nothing to be compared with the possibility of being visited by a lion, and it won't be our luck to run across two who have lost their teeth."

"Of course it must be done, so let's go at it before the sun gets too high."

Dick delayed only long enough to explain to Mapeetu where they were going, and then the laborious task was begun.

To lift the heavy timbers, more especially now that their weight was increased by submersion in the water, required all the boys' strength, and it was noon when they had been dragged from the water and one placed in position.

No attempt was made to sink them in the ground as firmly as before. It would be sufficient as a barricade against animals if they were lodged in such a manner as to prevent their being thrown down, and even this was quite as much as the boys could accomplish unaided.

Whenever it became necessary to take a short rest, either Dick or Bob went back to where the invalid was lying with a few bushes set up to shield

him from the fervent rays of the sun, and each time he indicated by signs that he was feeling very comfortable.

Once he asked for water, and did so in such an apologetic tone, as if to say they need not bring it if it would be too much trouble, that Dick felt quite reproved because he had not been more attentive.

"I believe he fancies we may think it is beneath us to serve him. He drank as if he had been waiting a long while before asking, and it made me feel mean. We must tend on him better."

Then Dick moved the bushes about to cut off a straggling ray of the sun, and after that the intervals between their visits were not as long.

The night had not yet come when the stockade was repaired to such an extent that any animal smaller than a rhinoceros could not have gained an entrance without considerable difficulty, and the remaining hours of daylight were spent in gathering fuel.

Bob ceased this work long enough to spear three small fish, and when the darkness rendered further labor very nearly impossible, supper was cooked and eaten.

"There's one thing certain," Bob said, as he brought the kettle filled with water from the stream. "The supply of wood which our people left behind will all have been burned in two or three days, and then what are we to do?"

"There's no need of worrying about it for forty-eight hours, and in that time something may happen to change the aspect of affairs."

"I wasn't trying to find trouble; but only thinking what could be done. With a food supply close at hand matters don't look nearly as bad as they did last night, therefore I'm not so ungrateful as to do any grumbling."

Although it was reasonable to suppose they would be secure from the visits of any animal, Dick thought it best a watch should be kept, more especially on account of the invalid, and he and Bob alternately performed the duty, each remaining on guard about an hour.

The night passed without anything especial to cause alarm. A pack of hyenas howled and barked around the gate, probably in the hope of indulging in another cannibalistic feast, and they were silent only when the king of the forest gave vent to roars which seemed actually to cause a tremor in the air.

At times it was as if a convention was in session to which each species of animals had sent one or more delegates, and all the night birds had been engaged as an orchestra.

Despite this horrible din, and the possibility that some of the brutes might succeed in gaining an entrance to the stockade, each boy slept soundly, immediately he was relieved from duty, and Mapeetu was free from pain during the entire night, or, at least, hid every evidence of it.

On this second morning the boys were almost cheerful. The thought that they had, and were taking steps to insure their own safety, and so far had succeeded very well, gave them courage, and

now their greatest cause of anxiety was concerning Dick's father. They knew he would do everything in his power to find them, and it was by no means certain the Zulus could not make him a prisoner.

"We won't talk about it," Dick replied, when Bob suggested such a possibility. "We've got a big contract to take care of ourselves and Mapeetu, therefore the less we worry the better. A good hut must be built to-day, and when that has been done we'll cover his leg thickly with clay, so it will be impossible for him to move it."

The first portion of the programme was carried out during the forenoon. A hut, which would shelter all three against the rain as well as the sun, was built nearly in the center of the inclosure; but it was of such light materials that the first heavy wind would probably carry it away.

"It is a good deal better than nothing," Dick said, when the work was finished, "and without some tools it's the best we could do. Let's move Mapeetu up here, and then bring clay enough to fix the leg."

The Zulu wanted to drag himself to the hut rather than let the white boys carry him; but they paid no attention to his protests, and Dick congratulated himself that the removal was effected without apparent injury to the broken limb.

Another visit was made to the river for fish, and this time Bob began to complain because there was no variety to the bill of fare.

"I could stand it first rate if we had a little salt,"

he said, in a semi-serious tone; "but fish that's too fresh, with no change whatever, makes a fellow feel as if he'd like to change boarding places."

"Where do you think of going?" Dick asked, laughingly.

"I'd like to join the rest of the party; but I suppose I ought to stay here as long as you do."

"If you'll agree to find them I'm perfectly willing to have you go."

"It might be done," Bob replied, now speaking very seriously. "It may be they haven't moved very far, and by starting at daybreak one of us could succeed in finding the camp."

"No, no, you mustn't get into that train of thought. Last night I was almost certain it would be a good idea for one of us to try it; but, on reflection, I can see how fool-hardy it would be. There is little chance they have built a permanent camp, and we can count pretty sure on their moving every day. Come on; we'll bring up that clay, and then get the wood together for the fire to-night."

The water-kettle was used as a means of carrying the clay, and, when a large quantity had been brought into the small hut, Dick packed it around Mapeetu's injured limb in such a manner that when it hardened he could not retard recovery by any incautious movement.

"It's going to be tough for him to lie in very nearly the same position all the time; but there's no way of helping it. We'll try to scrape up some dried grass to make a bed, and that will ease him up a little."

As he spoke Dick started in search of hay, and the other two heard nothing from him for fifteen or twenty minutes, when a loud shout caused Bob to run at full speed toward the point where his friend had last been seen.

"What is the matter?" he cried, approaching Dick, who was on his knees near the timbers of the stockade, digging furiously with a stick.

"I have found what looks something like sweet potatoes, and if Mapeetu says they are good to eat we'll be able to have a regular feast."

He already had unearthed a dozen huge bulbs, either one of which would have made a hearty dinner, and Bob ran back to the hut with a couple.

The look on the Zulu's face as he saw the vegetable, told before he spoke that it was palatable, and there was really no necessity for the words he uttered.

"Good. Cook."

"It's all right, Dick?" Bob shouted gleefully. "He says that we shall cook them. Bring up a lot, and we'll have a famous supper to-night."

There was no need of this last injunction, for Dick had already gathered as many as he could carry, and was lugging them to the hut.

The remainder of the day was spent gathering fuel, fishing, bringing water, or adding here and there to the light shelter, and the sun was yet an hour high in the heavens when Dick proposed that they cease labor for the day.

"We have earned a rest," he said cheerily, "and will spend the time getting supper."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WELCOME ARRIVAL.

AS THE boys afterward learned, it was a species of yam which Dick had discovered, and a most welcome addition were they to the limited bill of fare.

With a little salt they would have been a veritable luxury; but, as Bob said, "potatoes without salt were way ahead of no potatoes at all."

The prisoner, for such he virtually was now his leg was encased in the covering of clay, appeared to enjoy his supper hugely, and at the conclusion of the meal tried to make the others understand the plan he had formed for finding the remainder of the party.

"I'm sure I can't make out what he means," Dick said, after Mapeetu had talked in very broken English and pantomime for some time. "He's trying to tell us how we can find father; but according to my idea there is but one way."

"What is that?"

"We must make directly for the sea-coast. The trail will have been entirely wiped out by the time we get ready to move, and it would be like hunting for a needle in a hay-stack to run around the country with nothing to guide us in the search."

"If we could be sure of finding him finally I wouldn't complain," Bob replied, with a sigh, and Dick, seeing that the conversation was drifting into a dangerous channel, made haste to change it by questioning the possibility of killing some small game by an excursion into the thicket with the improvised assegai.

"I'd like to try it," Bob said, eagerly, and then he discussed how it might be done, until the question of finding the remainder of the party was temporarily forgotten.

Watch was kept as usual during the night, and after a second meal of fish and yams Bob insisted that they carry into execution the half-formed plan of the previous night.

Dick, partly by gestures and partly by words, asked the Zulu's opinion on the subject, and was rather surprised that he favored it.

"Come quick back," he said, and Bob added:

"We needn't stay half an hour unless we see something we can creep up on, so there can be no danger."

"All right," Dick replied. "We'll leave water where Mapeetu can get it in case he is thirsty; but I think our time would be spent to better advantage in fishing."

"I've eaten fish so long that I'm certain there are a couple of fins sprouting on my shoulders this very minute. Nothing less than a water-bok will satisfy me now."

There was really no reason why they should not

venture into the thicket at this hour in the day, and Dick started.

The heavy gate was closed behind them, and with every precaution they entered the forest, Bob feeling very confident he could throw the assegai nearly as well as Mapeetu.

Singularly enough they saw nothing in the way of game even after walking to and fro fully an hour, and Dick was on the point of suggesting that they return to the stockade when his companion called his attention to a small bird that hopped from branch to branch directly in front of them, without displaying the slightest alarm.

"He acts as if he wanted to show us something," Bob said, with a laugh. "Let's see what he would do if we should follow him."

"I'm willing, provided he don't lead us too far into the woods."

Immediately the boys approached, the bird flew in a wavy course, stopping now and then as if to see if they were following, and Dick, now growing decidedly interested, said, with a laugh:

"I really believe he's in some trouble, and wants us to help him out."

The little fellow continued on, keeping up an incessant twittering, as if to encourage those whom he was leading, until they arrived at the stump of a fallen tree, when he fluttered around in the greatest excitement.

"Perhaps his nest is here," Bob suggested; but before he could make any extended examination of

the surroundings a number of bees issued from the decaying wood.

"By gracious! that is a honey-bird, such as Paterson so often told about!" Dick cried, excitedly. "He has brought us to a bees' nest, and now we can have something sweet, even if we are to be deprived of salt."

There could be no question but that Dick was correct; the bird flew to and fro above the stump, chattering loudly, as if reproaching them for not beginning the task he had set before them.

"If there's any honey here I'd like to have some; but I don't care about getting into much of a fuss with the bees," Bob said, laughingly.

"We can smoke them out with but little trouble. Help me gather some dry wood and leaves."

This was not a difficult task, and in a few moments a dense smoke was pouring into the fragment of a trunk through an aperture at the roots.

Ten minutes later the bees were so stupefied that they fell to the ground as if dead, when Dick began cutting out the nest, and in a short time at least fifteen pounds of honey lay on some clean leaves until the boys could devise a means of carrying it away.

Bob cut off a large piece of the yellow wax, overflowing with the golden syrup, and placed it on a branch near by, when the bird flew down in greatest haste and began to eat it eagerly.

"I've heard of such things; but nothing except this pile of honey could ever have convinced me they

were true," and, having uttered this sage remark, Bob proposed that one of them go back to the stockade for the iron kettle.

"We can make a bag of leaves and vines, which will be better than spending so much time," and Dick set about packing up the prize ready for removal.

It was not a difficult task, after the honey had been divided in two portions, and, rejoicing at this addition to their larder, the boys started for the stockade.

The bird which had done them such good service remained behind enjoying the feast he had earned, and the hunters who went out for meat, and were returning with syrup, emerged from the thicket just as the form of a human being appeared on the brow of the hill about half a mile away.

"The Zulus have come!" Bob cried, in alarm. "That one has seen us already, and it won't be an hour before we'll be on our way back to Ongla's village."

Dick waited only long enough to assure himself that the new-comer really was a Zulu, and then he started at full speed toward the stockade as he shouted:

"Run the best you know how, Bob! We'll hold out as long as we can, for it is better to have them kill us in a fight than to be tortured to death."

At the same moment the stranger could be seen coming rapidly toward them, and this fact served to make the boys yet more confident that their late

captors were on the trail and knew perfectly well how feeble would be their defense.

It required nearly ten minutes for them to reach the stockade and bar the gate behind them. Mapeetu had heard the hasty arrival and loud clang as the timbers were swung to, and he was sitting in as nearly an erect position as the casing of clay would admit when the two arrived at the hut.

"Ongla's men have found us!" Dick cried, breathlessly. "We only had time enough to get into the stockade."

"Ongla?" Mapeetu repeated.

"Yes; I'm certain it was one of his men, for the fellow we saw was coming from the north."

"Give knife," the Zulu said, after a moment's pause, as he pointed to the weapon Dick wore in his belt, and when it was handed him he held the point toward his heart as he said: "Mapeetu die first! No go to Ongla."

The fact that he would prefer to commit suicide rather than be carried back to the village was not calculated to give the white boys any extra amount of courage, more especially since they knew that defense was useless, and all crouched in the hut, expecting each instant to see the enemy pouring over the top of the stockade.

The moments passed. All was still save for the murmur of the stream and the hum of insects. Every ear was strained in the effort to catch the first sound which should tell of the attack, when from the direction of the gate came the cry:

"Mapeetu! Mapeetu!"

"Kalida! Kalida!" the invalid shouted, in accents of most profound joy, and a second later Dick recovered from his stupefaction sufficiently to run at full speed down to the gate.

The Zulu boy probably never before received such a hearty welcome as when Dick and Bob seized him by both hands, and they surely were never so delighted to meet a comparative stranger.

"Mapeetu?" he repeated, after looking in vain for his brother, and when Bob pointed toward the hut he ran at full speed, the expression on his face showing that he feared some accident had befallen him.

"How did he get here?" Bob asked, as in the exuberance of his joy he shook hands again and again with Dick.

"I can't imagine unless father sent him to hunt us up, and if that is the case it won't be long before we are with all hands, where there'll be no reason to fear for the morrow."

When the white boys reached the hut Kalida was sitting gravely by his brother's side, looking as if he had never allowed himself to get excited, and Bob asked boisterously:

"How did he get here? Do try to remember all the English you've ever heard, and give us the whole story."

Mapeetu tried to accede to the request; but his joy was so great that he spoke more imperfectly than usual, and it was nearly an hour before the white boys understood the barest outlines.

Then they concluded, as was afterward found to

be the true version of the matter, that Kalida had followed them to Ongla's village with Mr. Ellsworth's sanction, and, learning there in some way of the escape, had returned to the stockade believing the whole party were yet in possession. By the same imperfect method of conversation they believed that Dick's father had also gone in search of them with the greater portion of Paterson's force, and that the camp had been moved in order that the property might be carried to a more safe locality.

"Can Kalida find my father?" Dick asked anxiously, and Mapeetu replied decidedly:

"Go to-morrow. Rest now."

"Then we're all right!" and in his joy Bob indulged in a series of such extravagant gestures that the Zulus gazed at him in undisguised astonishment.

"Now if he only had a gun with him we might get some game before he leaves," Bob said, when it was possible for him to settle down to commonplace matters.

Kalida had set out on his dangerous mission armed only with an assegai and a knife, therefore in point of weapons the little party were no better off than before; but in obedience to a few words from his brother he took from the folds of his waist-cloth a small package which he handed to Dick.

"It's salt as true as I live!" the latter cried, on examining the contents. "Now we'll give you a swell dinner, Kalida, even if we haven't got a gun, and the fish will taste like some new kind of food when they are properly seasoned."

CHAPTER XXV.

KALIDA'S DEPARTURE.

THE COMING of Kalida had made a very great change in the condition of affairs. The boys now felt reasonably certain they would soon be with the main party, for there was little doubt but that the Zulu could find Mr. Ellsworth in a comparatively short time.

"It is only a question of holding our own here a few days, and then father will come with one of the wagons to take Mapeetu away," Dick said, while they were enjoying the luxury of food seasoned with salt.

"But if any of Ongla's warriors should chance to come first it would be all up with us."

"Now don't hunt for things to worry about, Bob. We have mighty good reason to be thankful that we can send word to father, and we'll enjoy that fact. I would like to know if the Zulus raised the siege voluntarily, or if there was a battle."

"I reckon that is something we shan't find out until we see your father or Paterson. What are we to do during the remainder of the day?"

"I go in for loafing. Kalida must rest, and you and I may as well take things easy."

Bob was perfectly willing to follow this suggestion, and, with the exception of catching a few fish and bringing the necessary amount of water from the stream, no labor was performed.

Kalida slept like one who had been awake many nights. When dinner was concluded he laid down by the side of his brother, and hardly opened his eyes until nearly nightfall, when the boys were collecting wood for the camp-fire.

He joined them in this labor, and when it was concluded all three went to the stream for more fish, which were to be cooked at once in order that he could have a supply of food to take with him on what might prove to be a long journey.

"I suppose we've got to pull some of the stockade down again to build a raft, for, of course, he won't try to swim across the river because of the crocodiles," Dick said, as they returned to the hut, and, overhearing the words, Mapeetu replied:

"No; Kalida go this side."

"But the train is somewhere on the other bank."

"He find little water, then cross."

"I suppose these boys know what should be done, and there is no use for us to interfere. We'll stand watch, Bob, so he can get all the sleep possible before starting on his long tramp."

The Zulu boy knew perfectly well what was before him, and without any suggestions from his white companions, he continued to fit himself for the march. After the wood had been gathered he ate a quantity of the honey, tied in leaves the fish

Dick cooked, and lay down by the side of his brother again, sleeping peacefully during the entire night.

Dick and Bob alternately stood one-hour watches, and when the day began to break Kalida awakened.

He held a short conversation with Mapeetu, grasped each of the white boys by the hand, and, without further ceremony or leave-taking, walked swiftly away, following up the bank of the stream.

Dick and Bob had accompanied him to the gate, and when he was lost to view in the gray, misty light, the former said:

"He should be back in a week, no matter how far the train went. Knowing that he was in search of us father wouldn't camp a very great distance away, and we can count on being with the party in six or seven days."

"That's a good while for fellows in our condition to wait. I'll admit that there's no danger of starving; but nobody can tell what may happen between now and then, surrounded as we are by animals and perhaps natives."

Dick made no reply. He was tired of urging Bob not to search for trouble, and began to believe the only remedy would be to let him tire of hunting for the disagreeable.

It was necessary to do considerable work, and at once; the supply of wood was rapidly becoming exhausted, and the time had arrived when they should bring some from the thicket.

'We can't cut down any trees," Dick said, after a long pause, during which Bob had ample time to

imagine that all kinds of dreadful things might happen; but there are plenty of fallen ones which can be dragged into camp, and I think we'd better begin the job."

"Can we leave Mapeetu so long?"

"We did yesterday when we found the honey, and now that Kalida has gone to tell father where we are, he is a great deal better in mind, if not in body. Will you come?"

"Of course. We must keep the fire going during the night, and to do that until the Zulu can get back a big lot will be needed."

Dick returned to the hut to tell the invalid what they proposed to do, and then, closing the gate behind them, the boys went into the thicket.

Here was all the fallen timbers they could drag into the stockade if they worked industriously for a week, and the smaller trees were selected, each pulling one over the rough ground.

It was a laborious task, but one which it was necessary should be performed, and the boys worked with a will until nearly noon, when Dick said:

"We've surely got enough for to-night, and I propose that we rest awhile. Another load will make a good forenoon's work."

"I was ready to stop an hour ago, and am willing to rest now," replied Bob.

"We'll take one more load."

The boys started out again, but the additional wood was not brought in as quickly as had been expected.

Before the open ground between the thicket and the stockade had been traversed Dick stopped suddenly, as he cried, in a tone of alarm:

"Look there! The Zulus have found out where we are, and intend to carry us back to Ongla."

Bob turned in the direction toward which his companion pointed, and saw what appeared to be a large force of natives coming from the north, evidently, with the intention of visiting the stockade.

"Come back!" Bob shouted, in an agony of fear. "They've seen us, but we may keep them in check a little while," and he started at full speed for the fortification, followed by Dick.

When they began to run, so did the strangers, who were hardly more than half a mile away; but the boys succeeded in reaching the shelter well in advance, and the heavy gate was barred in the least possible space of time.

"We're caught here like rats in a hole," Bob said, bitterly, "and when they find that we've got no weapons of any account, it won't be many minutes before we'll be on our way to Ongla's village, there to learn what Zulu torture means."

Dick could say nothing encouraging. He also believed that a cruel death was very near to them, and an apathy of despair settled upon him.

As if prompted by a common impulse the two went directly to the hut, where Bob said, as the invalid partially arose on his elbow:

"Those heathen have found us at last. There's fifty or more coming over the brow of the hill."

It was necessary to speak more plainly before Mapeetu understood, but when the fact was made plain the boy grasped his improvised assegai with a look of stern determination.

"You don't think anything could be gained by fighting them?" Dick cried, in surprise.

"Ongla shall not kill the son of Mangaleesu," was the stern reply, and then the little party waited in painful silence the coming of their enemies.

During the next twenty minutes not an unusual sound was heard, and then Bob cried in terror, as he pointed to that portion of the stockade facing the north:

"They're coming over the fence!"

A black head could be seen above the timbers, as its owner peered curiously around, and a few seconds later it had as companions a dozen others, the entire number, as seen from below, presenting a most grotesque spectacle.

The white boys covered their faces with their hands to shut out the horrible sight; but looked up in surprise a moment later, as Mapeetu burst into a loud laugh.

"Zulu monkeys!" he cried, "prepare for death when monkeys come!"

Dick was angry with himself because he had not discovered before the true character of their supposed assailants. It seemed strange that those grinning faces could ever have been mistaken for human, and, in the relief caused by the discovery, he and Bob joined in Mapeetu's mirth until the echoes resounded with their laughter.

The whole affair was very comical now that there was nothing to be feared; but a few moments later the visit promised to be annoying.

The leaders of the monkey troop began to scale the barricade, and when they gained the inclosure, without having been molested, their followers came over in a perfect swarm, until it seemed, to the white boys, as if there were not less than three hundred of the long-tailed visitors who approached the hut fearlessly.

"I've heard that roast monkey was good," Dick said, "and if that is the case we've got all the meat we can ask for."

As he spoke an old fellow came toward them with a stout club in his hands, evidently bent on mischief, and, never realizing what might be the result if he began hostilities, Dick rushed at him with the knife-pointed stick.

In an instant every one of the visitors advanced threateningly, and a few seconds later the white boys were confronted by a most determined and wicked looking army.

"It's to be a question of fighting after all," Dick said, from between his clenched teeth, "and I fancy we shall get as little mercy from these fellows as if the Zulus stood in their places."

There was no time to say anything more. The old monkey who led the party rushed upon Dick with open mouth and stick uplifted, while the others screamed and chattered until the din was almost deafening.

"He'll kill you unless you get in the first blow!" Bob cried, as he charged with the rude assegai, and an instant later the leader of the monkey army fell to the ground dead.

This was the signal for the remainder of the intruders to rush into the fray, and the white boys found themselves completely surrounded, able to strike a blow only now and then, while they received an unmerciful beating from the rear.

Nor was Mapeetu spared. Those of the long-tailed soldiers that could not break through the crowd to get at Bob and Dick, attacked the invalid, and he, unable to move, made but a feeble defense with the only weapon left him—the one knife which had not been converted into an assegai.

That the little party would soon be disabled if not killed, seemed certain, and Dick said, despairingly:

"It is all up with us, Bob; they'll soon have the best of it. Do you suppose it would be possible to beat a retreat and carry Mapeetu with us?"

"We couldn't get to the gate. We'll stand back to back as long as possible. Perhaps the cloud which is coming up means rain, and they'll be driven away."

A mass of fleecy whiteness which had been floating from the north, and hanging nearer the ground than Dick had ever seen a cloud hang before, soon literally shut out the light of the sun, and Bob had hardly ceased speaking when it enveloped them, while in another instant every monkey-soldier was scrambling with his neighbor for particles of that mist-like substance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LOCUSTS.

THE SURPRISE of the boys can well be imagined when the struggle was ended so quickly. They had had no hope of succor, and believed the fight would cease only with their death; but the monkeys seemed bent now on gathering what a few seconds previous, had appeared to be a mist or sand whirled by the wind.

Everywhere around the ground looked as if covered with snow, and when the first bewilderment of surprise passed away, Dick and Bob saw they had been rescued by what was nothing more nor less that a swarm of locusts.

The insects had settled in and around the stockade. while myriads more were flying over, the noise of their wings sounding like that produced by a gale of wind whistling through the rigging of a ship at anchor. Far as the eye could reach they appeared hovering in the air, and all nature seemed awed by the scourge which had come so suddenly.

The monkeys were in a state of pleasureable excitement. They gathered double handfuls of the winged pests, eating them with the greatest gusto, and paying not the slightest attention to their wounded com-

panions who were scaling the wall while giving vent to sharp cries of pain. To them it was a veritable feast, and every uninjured member of what, a few moments before, had been a band of enemies, was bent on the unexpected feast.

The insects covered everything in the inclosure, even crawling over the fire, which was extinguished by the press of numbers, and as they fell helplessly to the ground after burning their wings, Mapeetu gathered a huge pile, urging the white boys to do the same.

"Good for roast," he said, in a tone of satisfaction, and when his companions turned away in disgust he appeared greatly surprised because they did not appreciate the unexpected addition to the larder.

Following the locusts came numberless birds who gobbled up the insects without fear of the human beings; but despite all these enemies the winged pests were so numerous that the ground appeared to be covered to the depth of several inches, and Dick observed that every blade of grass disappeared as if by magic under the blighting touch of the quivering mass.

The monkeys were seated within half a dozen feet of the hut, and had the wagons yet been in the encampment all might have been filled with the long-tailed feasters, who soon gorged themselves almost to the verge of helplessness.

When the locusts, having devoured every plant and shrub in the immediate vicinity, moved slowly away from the hut, Mapeetu begged his companions

to rebuild the fire, and after they had done so he roasted his share of the queer game, Dick saying as the Zulu began the, to him, disgusting meal:

"Come down to the gate, Bob; it makes me sick to see him eating those grasshoppers."

"Would you dare to try one?"

"Indeed I wouldn't, no matter how hungry I might be."

"They are as clean as the birds who eat them."

"That may be; but I don't care for such a dinner; besides, I want a bath after the fight with those monkeys."

Bob was perfectly willing to accompany his friend, for he was not particularly anxious to see Mapeetu eat such a meal, and in a few moments the two were at the bank of the river looking around in surprise at the scene of devastation which met their gaze on every hand.

As far as the eye could reach, where a short time before the ground had been green and smiling, it now appeared brown and parched as if a fierce fire had passed over it.

"It is fortunate the cattle are not here, for unless a move was made at once they would starve to death. I can't see a single blade of grass, and don't believe there is any within a good many miles."

"This will drive the animals away, and if we had a dozen guns our only chance for game would be a lion or an hyena."

"I have heard that locusts could do a great deal of damage; but, until to-day, I never fancied that

they were able to destroy so much, and I hope we'll not have such a proof again. Why it fairly makes me cringe to walk over the crunching mass, and, for every one which is killed or eaten, it seems as if an hundred came to take its place."

While the boys were speaking the insects began to rise from the ground, and soon the air was white as with snow or a heavy cloud.

The army which conquered by gluttony was passing down the valley where they could find vegetation to be eaten, and in a few minutes the stockade was freed of its disagreeable occupants.

The monkeys, stupid with food, lay on the ground in a condition very nearly resembling helplessness; but the boys made no effort to capture or drive them away. The battle, which had resulted in so many heavy blows for the defenders of the encampment, was not an experience which either cared to participate in, and they continued on to the river bank, allowing their late antagonists to go or come as they pleased.

To bathe in the stream was not a safe pleasure owing to the long, black snouts which could be seen here and there; but by making a series of sudden dashes, screaming loudly all the while, it was possible to do so with some degree of security, and when this rather unsatisfactory bath had been taken Dick and Bob went back to where Mapeetu was composing himself for sleep after his hearty meal.

When night came the silence was so profound as to be alarming, and Bob asked, after the fire had

been built, and the white boys were eating their supper of fish and yams, Mapeetu being filled so nearly to repletion, as to refuse anything more in the way of food:

"What has become of all the animals? I can't hear even a night-bird."

"I suppose all of the deer tribe have left in search of grass, for it's positive there's none to be found within half a dozen miles, and the large game has gone with them. It seems strange not to hear so much as the roaring of a lion."

"I never thought I'd want to hear such a noise, but I begin to think it would be pleasanter than this silence."

"Do you think we need stand watch to-night?"

"Why not?"

"It doesn't seem probable that the natives would come this way, now that there's no chance of finding game, and although we haven't done much work, that fight with the monkeys has tired me."

Bob was not willing to leave the encampment unguarded, even though it would not be possible to do much toward their own defense in case of an attack, and the night-work was begun by Dick.

Nothing occurred to disturb the little party during the hours of darkness, and when the sun rose again there were no monkeys to be seen. They had slept off the effects of their locust feast and taken advantage of the early morning light to leave an encampment which no longer had within its walls anything to tempt the appetite.

This new day was spent in catching fish and bringing wood, as was the succeeding ones until five had passed, when the boys believed it time to expect the rescuing party.

During all this time Mapeetu had been reasonably comfortable, considering the fact that he was obliged to remain in one position. He complained now and then of pain, but Dick believed the bones were uniting, and his condition otherwise was all that could be desired. It would have been hard to find a more patient invalid than this Zulu boy. Unless the question was asked directly, he never spoke of his bodily troubles, and at no time did he evince the least impatience.

"Father come soon," he said to Dick on the morning of the fifth day after Kalida's departure. "No grass, ride quick."

"And we must be ready to go back with them the minute they arrive, for the teams can't stay here long when there is nothing for the animals to eat," Dick replied. "I believe it will be a good idea to watch for them from now on."

"We shan't have to spend much time at that job," Bob cried, excitedly, as he rose to his feet, "for here comes two men on horseback, and unless I'm mistaken, its your father and Paterson!"

With a loud shout of joy Dick ran to the gate, and a few moments later he was clasped in his father's arms, while the chief hunter was shaking Bob's hand as if he intended to dislocate the boy's wrist.

"When Kalida came into camp I had begun to believe we would never meet again," Mr. Ellsworth said, in a choking voice. "Are you both well?"

"Sound and hearty, thanks to Mapeetu, who is now laid up with a broken leg."

"So his brother told us. One of the wagons will be here by noon, and we will move him to the new camp at once. Tell me where you have been all this time."

Dick, interrupted now and then by Bob, told the story of their adventures and misadventures, and meanwhile the men and boys were walking toward the hut, where the greetings which the Zulu received were both hearty and prolonged.

"Tell us why you moved the camp immediately after we were taken prisoners?" Dick asked, when he concluded his account of their wanderings.

"The principal reason was that we thought the savages, believing we had left the country, would not kill you at once, and we should thus have a chance to effect a rescue. Then again, by following up the stream we might be nearer the village to which you were taken."

"But how did you get away? Did the Zulus raise the siege?"

"On the morning after you were taken prisoners the greater portion of the force marched toward the north, probably having received orders from Ongla. We then went boldly out, crossed the stream, and traveled up the valley without being molested. Before we left Kalida insisted that he be allowed to

go in search of you, and I was more than willing he should make the attempt, knowing he could accomplish very much more than a white man."

"Did you hunt for us?"

"Indeed we did, my boy. Paterson and I have been out nearly all the time; but it would have been the height of folly to have made any attempt to go into the Zulus' village."

"Haven't you been trying to catch any specimens?"

"The men have done a little something in that line. We have four zebras, another lion, three spring-boks, and two giraffes. If the locusts hadn't been here I would move back into this stockade; but, until the grass grows again we must move to and fro at the upper end of the valley. Do you feel able to start at once?" Mr. Ellsworth asked, as he turned toward Mapeetu.

"Go now. Leg well."

"I rather doubt the last part of that statement, my lad," and Paterson began to break away the covering of clay. "We'll see what it looks like, and then make something in the way of splints."

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of Dick and Bob, now that they were virtually safe. However many dangers may have threatened at that moment they would have felt safe because Mr. Ellsworth and the old hunter were with them, and, as Bob said, "it was like getting home again to see these two faces."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MOVING.

THE OLD hunter set about attending to the invalid with the air of a surgeon, and, in fact, he was nearly as skillful as the majority of the profession.

His life had been spent in those places where a gun-shot wound, cut, or fracture of one or several bones were hardly more than common-place incidents, therefore Mapeetu could not have had a better man to attend him.

Mr. Ellsworth set about making a set of splints by first splitting a thin layer of wood from one of the stockade posts, and when Paterson had reband-aged the ankle with the remaining portion of Dick's shirt, the necessary appliances were in readiness for him.

"We'll soon whittle you out a pair of crutches after we get back to camp," the old hunter said cheerily, in the boy's native tongue, "and if you are careful I don't see any reason why it won't be all right to let you move around a little."

"It is enough that I can sit up," Mapeetu replied, in the same language. "To be pinned down so long was terrible; but the white boys were so kind that

I did not want to suggest anything which would give them more work."

"That's where you made a mistake, my lad. You should have told them what it was necessary to do, and there'd have been no question about its being done."

"It is for the white boy to command, not the black one."

"Perhaps you're right ordinarily; but after what has been done by the black boy since we picked you up, I think Dick and Bob would have been glad to receive orders."

Mapeetu was now sitting upright, with his back against the side of the hut, and his bandaged leg stretched out at full length, looking as if he thoroughly enjoyed the change of position.

The other boys were yet conversing with Mr. Ellsworth when Paterson finished his task, and all hands begun once more to talk of the happenings to both parties since the night when they were separated, the horses, meanwhile, roaming around the stockade in a vain search for grass.

The afternoon was nearly half spent when the clumsy wagon, drawn by six oxen, came in view, and Kalida leaped out to greet his brother.

As Dick and Bob afterward learned from Paterson, the boy had searched for the hunting party three days, the camp having been moved that number of times since the departure from the stockade, and, on his arrival, he had been forty-eight hours without food; but yet, probably fearing that

Mapeetu was ill, he insisted on returning at once in order to assist at his brother's removal.

Because of the lack of grass no time was to be lost in leaving the tract of country made desolate by the locusts, and without delay a bed was arranged in the wagon for the invalid.

On to this he was lifted carefully, and, after a delay of only half an hour, the party set out again, Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson riding in advance, while all the boys made themselves as comfortable as possible in the rude vehicle.

Until a short time before sunset the march was continued, the Kaffir drivers urging their horned steeds on at their best pace, and then, when within a few miles of the point at which the stream was to be forded, they halted just beyond the blackened trail of the insects. Here the verdure was plentiful, and the change from the brown, dusty earth to the vivid green of nature's velvet carpet was most refreshing to the eyes of all.

Both oxen and horses were turned loose to crop the luxuriant grass at their pleasure, and the Kaffirs were about to build a camp-fire when a crashing sound from a small thicket near-by caused Mr. Ellsworth to whisper:

"Here comes our supper. Get into the wagon, boys, and keep quiet a few moments."

The command was obeyed instantly, and a second later, to the surprise and dismay of all, instead of a panting member of the deer family, from out of the underbrush came a huge buffalo with wide-spreading horns, followed by two young ones.

Mr. Ellsworth was near the forward part of the cart with his rifle raised; but Paterson, who had walked a short distance to the rear, had no weapon save the hunting-knife in his belt.

The animal had evidently come from cover to get water; but on seeing the strangers, wheeled suddenly, making a wild dash for the old hunter.

Knowing full well the dangerous enemy which confronted him, for when with her young an old buffalo is more to be feared than a lion, Mr. Ellsworth had attempted to slip a heavier cartridge in his rifle, and the short interval of time thus wasted was sufficient to give the animal an opportunity to turn, therefore to shoot at this moment would be to fire directly at Paterson.

"Make for the wagon!" Mr. Ellsworth shouted, as he stood ready to discharge his weapon at the first fair chance to take aim.

At this moment the buffalo was within half a dozen yards of the hunter, who awaited an opportunity to spring aside at the proper time, and knowing that to run meant death.

On charged the animal, snorting and roaring with rage, and when to the frightened boys in the cart it seemed as if the wicked-looking horns already were touching the old man's clothes, he leaped nimbly aside.

At this juncture Mr. Ellsworth fired; but the bullet, striking the animal in the flank, did no other execution than to still further excite its wrath.

Again the buffalo turned, coming with lowered

head and angry bellowing directly toward the vehicle into which the Kaffirs had leaped at the first alarm.

Once more Paterson escaped by a hair's breadth. He swung himself around one of the wheels just as the animal struck the rear end, sending the heavy wagon ahead as if an elephant had delivered the blow.

The shock threw all the occupants down, and Kalida fell across his brother's broken leg, causing him to give vent to a loud cry of pain.

Now several seconds were lost as Mr. Ellsworth was forced to change his position, and when Dick looked out from under the canvas covering, the old hunter lay prostrate on the ground, while it seemed as if the buffalo was trampling him to death.

Kalida saw this terrible scene at the same moment Dick did, and without the slightest hesitation he leaped from the wagon directly in front of the infuriated animal.

The sight of this new victim caused the buffalo to charge at him, which was exactly what the Zulu counted on. He darted across the open space in such a manner that Mr. Ellsworth could not fail to take good aim, and two reports rang out in rapid succession; but the charge was not checked.

With the speed of a deer and the quickness of a cat Kalida turned again, leading the enemy once more in the line of fire, and this time the heavy bullets did their work.

With a yet wilder bellow of rage the huge animal

plunged forward on its head, tried to stagger to her feet, and then rolled over dead.

Assured that the aim had been fatal, Mr. Ellsworth ran toward Paterson before the buffalo's dying struggles were ended, and to his great relief the hunter was able to rise without aid.

"I managed to keep clear of her feet," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone; "but I can thank the Zulu for my life. It was tough work there for a minute, and if he hadn't come out of the wagon just as he did, she'd have got a blow in that would have put a stop to my wind."

He had but just ceased speaking when Kalida came up, breathing hard, but otherwise showing no signs of his brave efforts, and Paterson said in the Zulu tongue, as he took the boy's hands in his:

"There's no need of my sayin' very much, lad. You know what would a' happened if you hadn't come as you did, and while I'm alive Kalida has got a friend who'll stand by him through thick an' thin."

"It was not much to do," the boy replied, modestly, and then he busied himself with building a fire, but from the expression on his face it could be readily seen how greatly he was pleased by the praise bestowed.

During the running fight the young buffaloes had darted off into the thicket, and it was so nearly dark that Mr. Ellsworth decided no attempt should be made to capture them.

"They would make a fine addition to our list of

specimens," he said, regretfully, "but the risk of going after them now is too great. We'll take enough of this meat to keep us in provisions to-morrow and leave the rest for the jackals."

Because of the blow Mapeetu had received when Kalida fell upon him, it was necessary his ankle should be examined, and this duty Paterson set about at once.

As nearly as could be understood, no injury had been inflicted save so far as the momentary pain was concerned, and the work of preparing supper was begun at once, for neither member of the party had tasted food since morning.

How delicious those buffalo steaks, with plenty of salt and pepper, were to Dick and Bob! Even if they had not been ravenously hungry the seasoning would have tempted them to eat, and the Kaffir gluttons were outdone in gastronomic feats on this evening.

When the very satisfactory meal came to an end it was dark. A large quantity of wood had been cut, however, and there was nothing to prevent the weary travelers from seeking repose.

Paterson decided that the boys should not be called upon to do guard duty until after they arrived in camp, and to the drivers, under command of the old hunter and Mr. Ellsworth, was left the work of sentinels.

There were to be but two watches, the one in charge of Paterson taking the first trick, which was to last until midnight, and those who were permitted to sleep first lost no time in wakefulness.

Mr. Ellsworth and the four boys occupied the wagon, Dick lying near the front by the side of his father, and these two could both hear and see all that was going on around them.

Although quite as tired as the others, Dick's eyes did not close in slumber immediately. He laid there thinking of the wonderful escape he and Bob had had from death at the hands of Ongla's executioners, and of the singularly good fortune which sent Kalida to the stockade at the time when he was most needed, until the heavy breathing of his bed-fellows told that they were oblivious to everything.

The stars gave sufficient light to bring out distinctly the forms of the sentinels as they moved to and fro, and, wakeful now almost to the verge of nervousness, Dick watched every moving object until, as if by a sort of fascination, his eyes became fixed upon a slight elevation of land a few yards to the right of the thicket.

Why he looked at this particular spot he could not have told; but while he gazed intently a huge form came into view as if rising from the earth, and he suddenly realized that he was peering into the blazing orbs of the largest lion he ever saw.

The king of beasts stood with his head high in the air, switching his tail to and fro angrily, and each second Dick expected to hear Paterson's rifle ring out the animal's signal of death. That neither the watchers or the old hunter knew of the lion's proximity never entered his mind, and he wondered

why the beast was allowed to remain in that defiant attitude so long.

The first thought was to awaken his father; but he checked himself, fearing lest by making the slightest movement he might prevent those on the ground from getting a shot.

For nearly a minute the animal remained motionless, and then he slowly crouched to the earth until nothing save his head could be seen.

"Now Paterson will be obliged to wait until he rises again," Dick thought, and the idea had hardly been formed in his mind before the position of the dark mass suddenly moved, and it seemed as if a cloud obscured the light of the stars in that direction.

Dick lifted his head to ascertain the cause of this change, and as he did so there came a sound as of a heavy body striking the ground in the immediate vicinity, while mingled with it was the piercing, agonized shriek of a man.

That apparent cloud was the lion's body, and while Dick was watching he had leaped upon one of the Kaffir guards in the very midst of the encampment.

Dick was in the act of springing to his feet when he saw the huge beast, with the form of a human being in his mouth, as a cat would carry a mouse, spring directly over one of the natives, and disappear in the thicket.

Mr. Ellsworth was on the ground almost before the lion fled, and then ensued a scene of confusion which it would be hard to describe.

The blacks, nearly beside themselves with terror, ran to and fro frantically, despite Paterson's loudly uttered commands; the cattle, scenting their enemy, dashed wildly about, snorting with fear, and the occupants of the wagon added to the general din by literally tumbling out of the cart.

Two or three precious minutes were wasted before the Kaffirs could be made to accompany the hunters into the thicket with torches, and as they advanced, an angry roar, accompanied by a loud crashing of the underbrush, told that the lion had fled with his prey.

Not until the old hunter had ascertained beyond a doubt that the beast had carried the man off, did he relinquish the search, and then the little party returned to the encampment where Kalida and the white boys had built a second fire to prevent another visit.

There was yet plenty to be done before the men could rest. It was necessary to quiet the cattle, despite the danger of venturing beyond the rays of light, and the greater portion of this work fell upon Mr. Ellsworth and Paterson, since the blacks, with the single exception of Kalida, flatly refused to move from the fires.

Dick was in an unenviable frame of mind. He fancied himself partially responsible for what had happened.

"If I had only awakened you," he said, after telling privately to his father what he had seen, "it might have been possible to have saved the poor fellow's life."

"That is not probable," Mr. Ellsworth replied. "Had I made any movement it would most likely have quickened his actions: but yet it is your duty to give the alarm if you see any signs of danger, no matter who may be on guard."

"Do you suppose the man is alive now?"

"No; he was undoubtedly killed when the lion fled after we penetrated the thicket."

"If I had only made sure Paterson knew what was going on," Dick repeated, in tones of deepest sorrow.

"There is no reason why you should blame yourself, my son. Under all the circumstances the catastrophe could not have been avoided, and the Kaffir has but met with the same fate which may be ours before this work is finished." At this moment Paterson came up, and Mr. Ellsworth asked: "How was it that an old hunter like yourself didn't see the lion before he sprung?"

"I was on the opposite side of the fire binding up a cut on my arm which I got from the buffalo, and a moment before the beast sprung I had looked across to make sure all hands were on the alert. The man who has been carried away was undoubtedly asleep on his post, since the lion came from the point he should have watched."

All regrets were useless now, however, and the only thing that could be done was to keep a sharper watch lest more of the party be killed.

It can well be fancied that Dick and Bob did not feel very much like sleeping after this tragedy. The

former told his companion of the innocent part he had played in the matter, and concluded by saying:

"I don't believe I shall ever lie down again, certainly not while we are in this country, without seeing that lion, and hearing the terrible scream the poor fellow gave when he was seized."

Bob assured him, as Mr. Ellsworth had done, that he could not be blamed in any way; but Dick had his own opinion on the subject, and heartily wished he had never had any desire to go with a hunting party to such a country.

As for the Kaffirs, after the first alarm had passed away they laid down in front of the fire to sleep with as little concern as if their comrade was still with them, and before Dick and Bob were through discussing the sad affair the camp wore the usual appearance of repose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRAPPING A GORILLA.

IT WAS but little sleep Dick got during this night, which had begun with so much that was horrible. When Bob was so tired that he could hold his eyes open no longer, and sunk into unconsciousness while sitting in front of the fire, his companion paced to and fro thinking of the Kaffir's terrible fate until the rising of the sun warned the sleepers that it was time to begin the work of the day.

It is more than probable that the boys were not the only ones who were glad to leave this particular camping-place. All of the company seemed to be in a hurry to start, and the morning had but just begun when the small train was in motion.

Having slept none during the hours of darkness, Dick was forced to answer to the demands of nature sooner or later, and before the party had been on the road an hour he was glad to crawl in by the side of Mapeetu, where he slumbered until the not very patient oxen were brought to a stand-still in front of the temporary encampment.

The boys received more than a warm welcome from every member of the party, and for fully half an hour they were busily engaged answering the many questions asked concerning their adventures.

After the curiosity of all had been satisfied, those who had been absent so long, excepting, of course, Mapeetu, went to look at the many additions to the number of specimens, and both the white boys were surprised at the very decided increase. There were now so many that the collection appeared really large, and Dick felt quite positive the expedition was already a success, although his father would have expressed a very different opinion.

Immediately after arriving Paterson set about fashioning a pair of crutches for the Zulu boy, and before sunset he was making his way slowly around the inclosure formed by the wagons, apparently in the highest state of excitement and delight at being able to move about at will.

As if by common consent nothing was done during the remainder of the day after the boys arrived. It was as if they were holding a regular reception, and when night finally came Dick had almost succeeded in effacing from his memory the events of the previous encampment.

On the following morning, however, work was resumed; the hunters started out in search of game; the trappers explored the nearest thicket for signs of animals, and the cooks hustled to and fro as if believing the chief duty of man was to eat.

Dick and Bob would have joined the hunters but that Mr. Ellsworth insisted they should spend a longer time in rest, and they were prepared for a very quiet day, when one of the white men rode into camp and reported, in a tone of mild excitement:

"We've found a skeleton lashed to a tree within half a mile of this place. Do you want to see it, sir?"

"Do you mean the bones of a human being?" Mr. Ellsworth asked.

"Yes, sir. Paterson says they belong to some poor wretch who has been left to be killed by ants."

"Very well. We will go out there before you disturb the skeleton."

Dick's father invited the white boys and Kalida to accompany him, and during the short walk he explained what was the meaning of the spectacle they would probably see.

"It is a well-known mode of Zulu punishment," he said. "When a person is sentenced to be killed in some particularly horrible manner, he or she is stripped and lashed to a tree near an ant's nest. You have already seen how severely the white species can bite, consequently it is hardly necessary to say that the unfortunate culprit lives only a few hours."

It was not a pleasant thing to think of, this exposing of a human being to the fury of the tiny insects, and when they arrived at the spot where the bleached bones were hanging by thongs to a huge tree nearby one of the conical mounds such as they had seen, the thoughts of what the poor wretch must have suffered caused the boys to feel sick both in body and mind.

"Don't stay here," Dick said to his father, in a low tone. "It is too terrible to think of."

Mr. Ellsworth may have been of the same opinion, for he waited only to give orders that the bones should be buried at once, and then went back to the camp, arriving there just as one of the hunters came in with an important communication from Paterson.

"We have found a family of gorillas, sir," the man said, "and if we use one of the heavy traps it may be possible to make a capture."

"Very well. Take what you need, and I will go back with you."

As a matter of course, both Dick and Bob were eager to see the work, and it required but few words to gain the necessary permission.

The preparations were quite elaborate. Among other things the hunter took from the store-wagon a heavy steel trap, the jaws of which were toothless and covered with thick felt, and to this he attached a chain which could not have been broken by a horse.

This, with a quantity of rope sufficient to fetter either of the elephants, was packed on one of the horses, and half a dozen natives were ordered to join the party.

It was but a short distance, comparatively, which the trappers were obliged to traverse before arriving at the spot where Paterson had decided the attempt at capture should be made.

Here, on a trail to the bank of the stream which had been marked so plainly that there could be no question but that it had been made by the gorilla

family as they went to drink, the trap was set, and so stout was the spring that it required the united strength of two men to pull the heavy jaws apart.

Every possible precaution was taken to prevent any suspicions on the part of the animals which it was hoped would be captured, and when all had been made ready the hunters set out toward the camp, believing the gorillas would not venture from their rocky fastness before the next day.

As subsequent events showed, however, the head of the family must have seen a portion of the work, and came out to learn what had been done, for the men were not more than a quarter of a mile away when there was good reason to believe the "old man" had "put his foot in it."

A series of yells, roars and screams were heard in such volume that a number of small animals rushed out of the thicket in affright, and the hunting party made all haste to return; but taking good care to guard against a surprise.

The powwow grew louder as the men neared the spot, and the cries and wails of the mother mingled with the snarls, growls and barks of the father.

When the hunters finally crept forward to a spot from which they could obtain a view, the male was seen fast in the trap, held by the right hind leg.

He had probably been surprised and frightened for a few moments; but when the spectators could see him his anger was fully aroused. His mate and offspring stood close by wailing and growling, and, just as the party came into view the female lifted

the trap, tugging and wrenching at it with all her strength.

Then both seized the chain, straining in such a manner that the trees to which it was attached were literally bent by their efforts.

For one long hour the old fellow refused to give in. He bit the steel, leaped and tugged, presenting such a picture of ferocity as it would be hard to find elsewhere. He frothed at the mouth, and exhibited his great fangs, while his eyes glittered like diamonds.

It was necessary that something should be done at once, otherwise he might have gnawed off his leg, as do beavers, muskrats or raccoons, and Paterson fired one shot which dropped the female dead in her tracks.

The young one immediately sprung to the father's shoulder, and was sitting there when the hunters advanced.

The resemblance of the big gorilla to a native was so striking that Dick and Bob paused to wonder if some mistake had not been made. When he saw the strangers he stood upright, arms hanging down by his side, and looked far more like a human being than some of the Kaffirs who were closing in around him.

He was so angry as not to know what move to make first, and while he stood there clots of foam fell upon his breast and down to the earth. Presently he seized the young one and flung it away. Half a dozen of the men rushed to catch it, and as it scrambled back one of the natives pursued it too far.

The gorilla uttered a terrible roar, made a savage spring, and the Kaffir was caught by the hair.

Dick and Bob were hardly thirty feet away, and saw all that happened.

The man was were thrown down, and the gorilla stooped and gave him such a blow on the chest that it was crushed like an egg-shell. The beast then hit him right and left on the sides of the head, and in an instant the man was dead; but this did not satisfy the monster. He lifted the body and literally tore it to pieces, pulling off the limbs as you would pull a stick of kindling from a bundle. He then seized the young one by a hind leg, slammed it on the earth, flung the body away, and beat his breast and roared defiance at the human beings.

Some of the party had already brought stout nets, and the work of securing the ferocious captive was begun before he could do himself serious injury.

It was nearly night-fall when he was finally so tangled up with ropes, chains and nets as to render it possible to approach him with safety.

Then, by the united strength of three men, the trap was opened, his hind feet were shackled together, his fore feet or arms secured with a chain, two ropes were passed around his body, and a muzzle placed over his jaws.

After this the old fellow was bound to a litter, and carried to the camp, where, during the entire night he did not cease to roar and rage, making it almost impossible for any member of the party to close his eyes.

When the boys had attended the funeral of the native whose body had been mangled until there was in it hardly any resemblance to a human figure, Dick said, with a sigh such as one would not expect from an ardent hunter who was in the heart of a country filled with game:

"I've had enough of this kind of sport, Bob, and when we see a zoological collection at home again, I shall always think how much suffering it has cost to get it together."

"You don't mean to say a gorilla can feel badly, do you?"

"It comes mighty near it, according to what we saw this afternoon, and now until this fellow dies he must be a prisoner in a strange country."

"I think that is carrying the matter a little too far. I'd like to be back again; but it isn't because the lions or gorillas feel sorry at having to leave their homes."

"Never mind how you put it, I've had enough. When it comes to pythons I don't say anything; but I can't think it's a fair show for an animal that looks so much like a human being."

Bob did not care to continue the discussion. He, too, had a certain sympathy for the gorilla, and during the night, when the monster's roars caused a decided vibration of the air, he could not refrain from thinking how he felt while in Ongla's power, and the memories were by no means calculated to make him particularly cheerful.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FORDING.

THE COMMOTION caused by the capture of the gorilla was sufficient to render a change of camp necessary, for, as a rule, animals refuse to remain in a place after one has been taken prisoner, and trails known to have been used many years are at once deserted by all species after such an event.

Mr. Ellsworth intended to return to the old stockade after a certain time; but Paterson believed it was too soon to do so now, and arrangements were made to move across the valley a dozen miles, even though it would be necessary to ford a turbulent river which, forty of fifty miles below, united with the Tugela.

The hunters who had been sent out as spies reported game to be plenty in that section of the country, and there was little or no chance the party would be disturbed by the natives.

Therefore, on the day after the gorilla had been captured, the work of breaking camp was begun, and at night-fall everything was ready for the journey.

By early daylight next morning each person was on foot or in the saddle to begin the long trek which was to take them into a section where all be-

lieved the required number of specimens could be obtained.

The first portion of the march was accomplished without incident, and about noon the bank of the broad, swiftly running river was reached.

Dick and Bob looked at it in dismay as the former asked helplessly:

"How are we to get across a stream like that, more especially with so much baggage?"

"That's just what I don't know; but we shall soon find out, I suppose. Let's go back and see how Mapeetu is getting along. He must have been shaken up pretty badly over this rough country."

The Zulu was in remarkably good spirits. Paterson had provided him with some pieces of cloth with which to make cushions on the top of his crutches, and he appeared to think walking would now be a comparatively easy matter. Kalida was just helping him from the cart when Dick and Bob arrived, and the white boys waited to see if he would be dismayed by a sight of the water over which they must pass; but he seemed to think it nothing more than an ordinary event.

Then the four boys seated themselves on the bank of the stream, and watched the work of the natives, who first cut a quantity of poles of soft, buoyant wood that grew like rushes near the water's edge.

These they immediately began to form into light rafts while other members of the party were taking the wheels from the wagons. Roughly-fashioned paddles were made, and, with a wagon-body on each

net-work of poles, the clumsy crafts were pushed one by one into the current, the Kaffirs yelling at the full pitch of their voices meanwhile.

"What are they making so much noise about?" Dick asked, as Paterson passed him.

"To frighten away the crocodiles, who otherwise would be lying in wait for the cattle."

The first raft reached the opposite bank in safety, and returned for another load, the others pushing off as fast as they could be made ready.

All this time the drivers remained with the oxen and horses, which were to be swam across when the work with the rafts had been finished, and but little attention was paid to this portion of the train by the boys, until three of the horses, who had not been hobbled, took it into their heads to gallop off

When the Kaffirs ran after them the cattle began to scatter in a way which threatened a general stampede, and their keepers were forced to return in order to avert the possible catastrophe.

Kalida started in pursuit at once, and Dick shouted to Bob as he followed:

"Come on! The rest of the crowd have as much as they can do just now, and we ought to be able to catch those fellows."

The white boys tried to circle around the runaways from one side, while Kalida went in the opposite direction, but the chase proved to be quite a long one. When two miles had been traversed the horses fortunately stopped to graze at a tempting patch of grass, and this enabled the boys to complete the circle.

They crept up slowly until Kalida succeeded in catching one which had a long halter trailing from its neck, but instead of bringing the animal to a standstill he allowed him to continue feeding with the rest until Dick and Bob secured the other two.

Mounting, they rode back at full speed, only to find the remaining horses and oxen swimming over, with the drivers holding on to their tails, shouting, shrieking and splashing the water to keep the crocodiles at a proper distance.

"I had rather have taken my own pony over," Dick said as he gazed at the little steed which was being urged forward by a particularly loud-voiced Kaffir; "but so long as that's impossible, let's cross on these horses."

"Why not wait for the rafts?" Bob asked.

"Because it will be half an hour before another one can get back. It's an easy job if we do as the natives do."

"I don't care about towing on behind, but will get on his back," and Bob remounted without delay, wishing to have the perilous task over as quickly as possible.

"All right; but give him his head, for he understands this kind of work better than either you or I."

"But we're bound to get wet," Bob cried, as if he had just realized that a plunge in the river would very likely be attended with such results.

"Of course, but you see I'm undressing."

"What will you do with your clothes?"

"Fasten them to the horse's head."

This was clearly the wisest thing which could be done under the circumstances, and Bob followed his companion's example, the Zulu boy not being forced to do anything of the kind, since his sole garment was a very small cloth around his loins.

When these preparations had been completed all three plunged into the river together, the horses taking to the water willingly.

Dick led the way, keeping on the right side, urging his steed diagonally against the current. Bob followed closely a little further down, and Kalida rode at his right nearer the opposite bank.

For some distance the river was sufficiently shallow for the horses to wade, with the water only half-way to their backs; but when the channel deepened so that it was necessary for the animals to swim, Dick cried:

"I'm going to try the Kaffir fashion, and advise you to do the same."

As he spoke he slipped off, and grasping his horse's tail, was towed across, while he laughed and shouted to Bob to follow his example; but the latter did not feel equal to the attempt.

"Just try it," Dick cried. "You'll find that the animal swims twice as fast, and he can't kick, no matter how hard he struggles."

They were already more than half-way over when Bob, gaining courage, slipped off, and just got hold of the "tow-line" as Kalida uttered a cry of alarm.

Turning his head quickly, Bob was horrified to see

the Zulu's horse beating the water frantically with his fore legs, and making no progress.

Although he had never witnessed such a sight, he did not need to be told that a crocodile had seized the animal's legs, and that the boy was either injured or terribly frightened, as he might well have been excused for being.

Bob had never shown any very remarkable courage; but in this case he was positively a hero. Another crocodile might seize him at any moment; but he did not heed the danger.

"Let go, and swim toward me," he shouted, as, loosening his own hold, he started to meet the bewildered Zulu.

Fortunately Kalida understood the words, and obeyed at once, narrowly escaping being struck by the horse's hoofs as he did so, and an instant later the white boy was by the former's side, directing him to place both hands on his shoulders.

"It'll be a tight squeeze if you take a notion to catch me by the throat," he muttered; "but we've got to run the risk."

Bob swam vigorously, Kalida recovering his self-composure sufficiently to be of some slight assistance, and the unfortunate horse was slowly being dragged deeper and deeper in the water.

Owing to the fact that the horses and oxen were just landing, the catastrophe had not been witnessed from the shore by any one save Dick, and it was several moments before he could make the Kaffirs understand that they must push out with one of the rafts to aid the struggling boys.

Fortunately Paterson heard him, and, rushing down to the water's edge, leaped on one of the frail collection of poles, taking with him as crew no person save Dick, time being too precious to admit of the necessary delay in making the natives understand what was to be done.

"Keep up your courage," the hunter shouted, as he allowed the raft to drift with the current down upon the swimmers. "Kick, and yell as loud as you can. Those brutes won't be likely to trouble you while they have the horse to eat."

Now that help was near Kalida appeared to be recovering his self-possession, and it was no longer necessary for him to be supported by Bob.

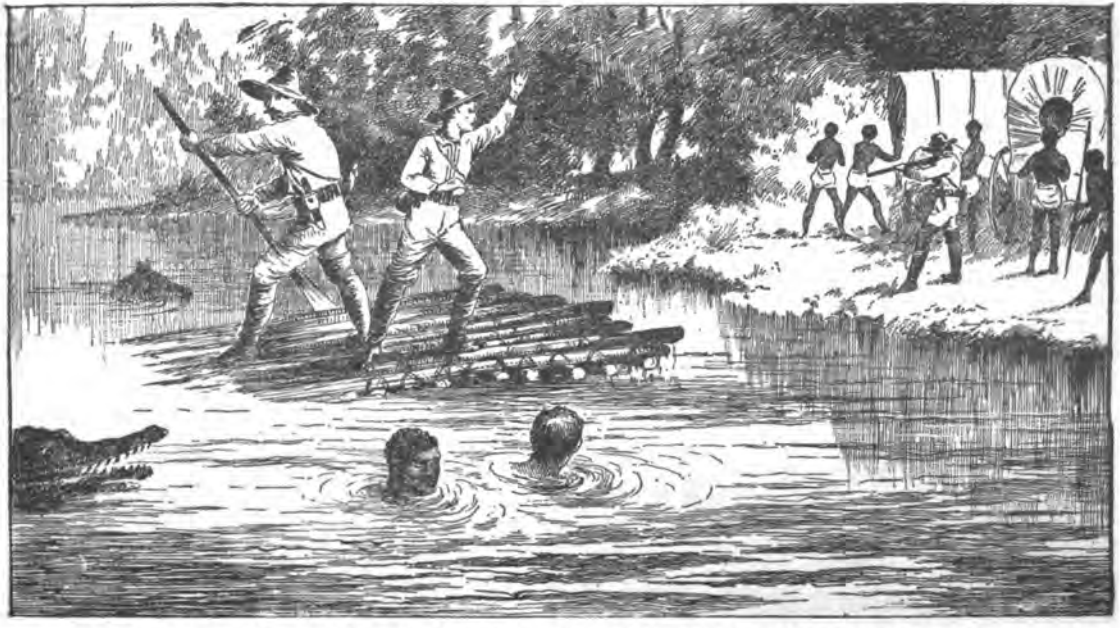
Neither attempted to swim, since it would have been impossible to make much of any headway against the strong current; but they were "treading water" as a means of keeping the crocodiles at a distance.

The raft was yet fifty yards from the boys when Dick spoke excitedly to Paterson:

"There is a big crocodile making directly toward them! Can you see it to the left, about in the center of the stream?"

"Yes, yes," was the low reply; "but it won't do to let them know of the danger. Shout to your father."

This last command was not necessary, for by this time all on the shore had heard the outcry, and were following down the bank to protect the boys from just such a danger.



The raft was yet fifty yards from the boys when Dick saw a big crocodile making directly toward them. 255

"Make a noise!" Paterson cried, as he urged the clumsy craft on, straining every muscle in the effort.

Foot by foot the distance between the raft and the boys was lessened; but, at the same time, the crocodile had approached dangerously near.

Dick saw that they would not be able to effect a rescue, and, at that instant, he would have sacrificed anything in his power to have a rifle, for only a bullet could check the monster.

"What can be done?" he cried, in a tone of agony, and before it was possible for Paterson to answer the question the sharp report of fire-arms rung out, and Dick could hear the whistle of the leaden messengers as they passed within a few inches of his head.

In an instant the crocodile sunk out of sight, and two minutes later the nearly exhausted boys were hauled on the raft gasping for breath.

"Bob, you've come pretty nigh squarin' matters with the Zulu," the old hunter said, as he worked with a will at the rude paddles to urge the raft toward the shore. "If it hadn't been for you he would have been made into a dinner for them brutes by this time."

CHAPTER XXX.

FEATHERED ENEMIES.

NEITHER Bob nor Kalida rode in the saddle when the train finally left the bank of the river to find a new site for a camp. Both were so nearly exhausted that it was absolutely necessary they should go in the same conveyance with Mapeetu, and Dick went ahead, as was his duty as a hunter, to aid the others in making preparations for the halt.

Not until late in the afternoon was a location found which answered all of Paterson's requirements, and then he said as he reined in his horse:

"It doesn't make very much difference where we stop for a week, so long as there is plenty of water, and this will do very well. Dick, you stake out the positions of the wagons, while half a dozen go for game."

This was the first time Dick had done such important work as laying out the camp; but he succeeded in a manner that was perfectly satisfactory to the old hunter, and when the train of dusty wagons drew up his father was informed of the service he had rendered.

"You are doing well, my boy. The formation of

a camp is of the first importance, therefore it should be learned at the beginning."

"But I no longer care to be a hunter."

"Have you had enough of trapping in Africa?" Mr. Ellsworth asked, with a quizzical smile.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I am more pleased than if you had learned all the requirements of the business. Now get supper and turn in. After a few weeks we shall be homeward bound, if nothing happens to prevent, and you will be able to attend to your studies once more."

"I don't object to the sea voyage; but it'll be mighty pleasant to see mother again."

"That's right, my boy. She's the best friend you will ever have, and you can never be with her too much."

Then Mr. Ellsworth went to attend to his duties of superintending the formation of the camp, and Dick helped Mapeetu out of the cart which had just been hauled into position.

The distance which it was proposed to make had not been traversed; but the journey was sufficiently long and exciting to tire the boys, and they were very well pleased to go to bed in the wagon immediately after a hurriedly cooked supper was eaten.

On the following morning Dick and Bob were notified by Paterson that they were to go with the hunters after the general details of the trapping should be decided upon.

The ponies were groomed very carefully, the

weapons examined with an intentness which showed that the boys intended to give a good account of themselves in case any game was found, and then the two sat down by the side of Mapeetu, who was watching the preparations as if sad because it was not possible for him to accompany the party.

While they remained just outside the circle of wagons, where the oxen could be seen as they eat greedily of the luxuriant grass, the animals suddenly started off in every direction, leaping, twisting, turning and cutting the most ridiculous capers.

"There's going to be a stampede!" Dick cried as he ran into camp to give the alarm, and when Paterson came out with him the old hunter burst into a loud laugh.

"So that's your stampede, eh? Well, come with me an' see what it means."

Following him, Dick saw to his great surprise that on the back of each animal were half a dozen birds, who scratched, pecked and chippered exactly as a flock of hens would have done on a piece of newly-plowed land.

"What are they?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Scholars call 'em Buphaga Africana, but ox-birds is good enough for me."

"But what are they doing there?"

"Getting the ticks with which the cattle are covered. By the aid of their claws an' tail they can cling to the oxens' backs, no matter how much runnin' an' jumpin' is done. These cattle haven't been introduced to the birds yet, but they'll soon come to know 'em an' be glad to have a visit from them."

It was not more than five minutes before the animals quieted down and resumed their feeding, while the feathered callers continued their feast.

Half an hour later the hunters were ready, and Dick and Bob rode away with them, waving an adieu to the disappointed Mapeetu.

The question of whether game could be found in the vicinity was soon settled, for before two miles had been traversed, and a slight elevation crossed, the plain seemed actually alive with various species.

"Each one is to ride down as many as he can in the next hour," Paterson said, before the word to start was given. "We ought to capture some of those elands, but we need meat quite as badly as specimens. Dick, you and Bob may try to shoot a couple, and then halt here until we are ready to go back. Now forward!"

Dick was in the highest state of excitement, and instantly the command had been given he dashed ahead, thinking only of the promised sport. Even Bob was forgotten for the time being, and he singled out a fat eland from among a small herd near the edge of the plain, spurring his horse on until his companions were lost to view in other directions.

For five or six miles the pony was unable to gain upon the prey, and fearing the little steed would soon be forced to give up the chase because of exhaustion, Dick resolved to try a shot from the saddle, something he had never before attempted.

Perhaps there were as many elements of chance as skill in the shot; but the object was attained, for

the eland rolled over on the turf with a bullet through his heart, and Dick leaped to the ground with a feeling of exultation.

After the first sense of triumph had passed away Dick looked around for his companions; but none were in sight, and he was forced to dismember the eland that it might be carried on the saddle to the rendezvous.

He was by no means a skillful butcher, and what should have been a trifling task occupied him nearly half an hour. When he rose to his feet with a sigh of relief, a flock of kites were settling down close at hand, having evidently been attracted by the scent of blood, and had come for a feast.

Dick paid no particular attention to them at first; but the pony showed every sign of alarm, as well he might, for with their powerful beaks and claws many stronger animals have lost their eyes, and even lives, through these savage birds.

Dick shouted and clapped his hands, after having passed the pony's bridle around his arm to prevent him from running away; but the kites hopped off a few paces, only to come on again with renewed fierceness, seizing pieces of meat and flying away with them.

It was now absolutely necessary to defend himself, for those who had secured no portion of the proposed feast dashed boldly at him, and only by slashing right and left with his knife could he keep them at a distance.

None of the feathered crew made any effort to fly

away, and some actually fell back on the ground, spreading out their wings and talons, and pecking savagely with their beaks.

Dick's determined attack compelled the first lot to beat a retreat; but more took their places, pouncing, as the others had done, upon the carcass. Two of these were wounded with the knife before they retreated, and then, strange as it may seem, a third party advanced to the attack.

Now Dick became seriously alarmed, for he knew what would be the effect if the birds should succeed in striking him in the face, and in his desperation he raised his rifle.

Two of the feathered enemy were killed outright at the discharge of both barrels, and this caused the others to remain at a short distance sufficiently long to permit of his reloading the weapon.

Again he fired, killing one and wounding two; but yet they were not dismayed.

At the third discharge, however, the whole army flew away uttering harsh, discordant cries, and, as Dick wiped the perspiration from his face, there was a hymn of thankfulness in his heart that the strange danger had passed.

Loading the remnants of the eland on his pony—the kites had carried fully a third away—Dick started for the rendezvous, traveling slowly since it was necessary now to walk, and it was considerably past noon when a shout from Bob apprised him of that young gentleman's whereabouts.

Dick found his friend sitting in the hollow trunk

of a gigantic baobab tree, with a fire burning in front of this very snug retreat which he fed with pieces of the soft wood hewn from the inside of the tree itself. Two slices of meat, cut from the carcass of a young eland, Bob had secured as his portion of the day's sport, were being broiled over the coals, and the odor from these, together with the general surroundings, caused Dick to think the halting place a very desirable one.

The latter at once set about cooking a dinner for himself, after the pony had been hobbled near by, and then he told the story of his feathered enemies.

It was a very satisfactory meal which the boys made in this natural apartment, and they had quite a long rest before the remainder of the party came up.

Four young elands were being half driven, half led between the hunters' horses, and each saddle was piled high with game as the result of the day's work.

"We can't stop here, so load up your ponies." Paterson said, peremptorily. "It will be a long journey to the camp, and I don't care about being out after dark until we know more of the country."

The boys obeyed promptly, and the tramp was begun, Paterson beguiling at least a portion of the time by speaking of the peculiarities of the tree under which they had halted.

Without attempting to give his exact language it may be said that the baobab is believed to be the patriarch of trees. The natives cut off and pound

the bark, from which they obtain fibers for making a strong, fine cord. Strange to say, this mutilation which would destroy any other tree does not injure the aged fellow, who throws out a new bark as often as the old is removed, and it still flourishes when the middle of the trunk has decayed, since the sap arises through every shred of wood.

The short lesson in natural history was not sufficient to make the boys forget their fatigue, and before the camp was reached it seemed to both as if they must fall from sheer exhaustion.

It was dark when the welcome fires were seen, and then the news which awaited the party did, in a great measure, banish all sense of bodily discomfort.

While the hunters were absent Kalida wandered off by himself, simply from curiosity, or a desire to take exercise, and on his return reported a body of Zulus in the immediate vicinity. The full particulars of the matter could not be had until Paterson acted as interpreter, and then it seemed in the highest degree alarming.

According to the boy's story at least an hundred armed men were but a few miles away, evidently watching for an opportunity to make an attack, and there was every reason to believe they were a portion of Ongla's army.

"The fact that they have crossed the Tugela shows that their king has grown bold, and it is not safe to remain here, where there is nothing with which to make a stockade, even if we had the time," the old hunter said, seriously.

"What is your proposition?" Mr. Ellsworth asked.

"That we start at once, or at least by break of day, for the old camp, where we can defend ourselves with some hope of success."

"Very well, give the necessary orders, and we will begin the retreat."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONGLA'S DEMAND.

THE WORK necessary to be done in order that what Mr. Ellsworth had termed a retreat should be begun at the first break of day, was so great that but few in the camp got any sleep on this night.

With due regard to the fact that enemies were lurking in the vicinity, the wagons were drawn out ready for the start; fires built in a wide circle which inclosed even the cattle; horses groomed; meat cooked, and weapons overhauled. Upon the condition of a cartridge it was more than possible that a human life might depend, and those who had charge of affairs were even more careful than they would have been in the stockade, for the situation was doubly dangerous.

As to the correctness of the news there could be no reasonable doubt. Kalida knew his countrymen too well to make any mistake as to their purpose in the vicinity, and the fact that the boys had escaped from Ongla was reason enough why he should send troops after the hunters.

Dick and Bob were allowed a two-hour nap in the wagon with Mapeetu; but Kalida was forced to do

skirmish duty from the time when the hunters arrived until the long train had been made ready for departure.

When the first gray light of approaching dawn appeared in the sky the Zulu came in from his weary vigil and reported that the enemy had remained quietly in camp, with the exception of what scouts were sent out, until he left. That an attack would be made in the day time seemed improbable, and before it was possible to see the way clearly, Mr. Ellsworth gave the word for the foremost team to start.

As a matter of course Mapeetu rode in one of the wagons; but contrary to the line of march when they crossed the Tugela before, Kalida remained far in advance with Paterson, to spy out the country. Orders were given that there should be no straggling, and even the hunters, who usually rode as they pleased, were forced to remain near the train.

In this close order the journey was continued to the river, and the crossing conducted in a strict manner, a certain number of men being detailed to each team, while the horses and cattle were taken over immediately in the rear of the first raft.

Now every man worked with a will, and the passage was made in less than half the time which had been consumed in the same work two days previous. The two boys had no further experience with crocodiles for the very good reason that they crossed in the wagon occupied by Mapeetu, and the elephants were ferried over, greatly to their displeasure.

After this obstable was passed every team went forward at the best possible rate of speed, and when the day ended the leaders of the party believed at least one-half the distance to the old stockade had been traversed.

It is not difficult to fancy how keen a watch was kept during this night when the only protection which could be had in case of an attack was the circle of wagons, and Kalida made no unfavorable report next morning. As if there was on his part no necessity for sleep, he did skirmish duty during all the hours of darkness, and the only enemies he saw were the scouts in advance of the main body.

On the following day there was no river of any size to cross. The stream which ran past the old encampment was hardly more than a brook, six miles from the stockade, and when this had been forded it was reasonably good traveling to the fortification.

Paterson, with a force of five men and Kalida as scout, went on ahead to make sure that the enemy had not occupied the stockade, and when, after being notified that there was no danger, the drivers guided the teams between the entrance to the fence of logs, an hour before sunset, every member of the party felt relieved because of the protection offered by the carefully made defences.

On this night, after so much wakefulness, the boys were allowed a full eight hours' rest, including Kalida, who had been on duty so long that it was almost impossible for him to keep his eyes open, and

when morning came it is safe to say that all hands felt relieved because the party had arrived at what seemed very much like a home.

The stockade remained as when Dick and Bob had last seen it, and, judging from appearances, no one had entered; certainly it had not been visited by any considerable body of men.

When the cages had been ranged in position, and the welfare of the specimens seen to with a care which might have been expected by a party who had journeyed so far simply to capture them, attention was paid to the walls. The barricade where the boys were forced to disturb it, was repaired, and then the hunters were sent out for food, with instructions not to leave the immediate vicinity.

If any one grumbled at this last order, the wisdom of it must have been apparent to his mind when, shortly before noon, a small party of Zulus appeared with green branches in their hands, to signify that they had come on a peaceful errand.

The approach of this body was no surprise to Mr. Ellsworth, who had been apprised of their coming by his Kaffir scouts, and, the chief hunter having remained in camp pursuant to orders from the leader of the party, he was instructed to receive the message which they intimated as having brought.

When Paterson, standing upon one of the small platforms, demanded to know the reason for the visit, the Zulu who acted as spokesman advanced very near the wall, and Kalida whispered in his native tongue:

"It is the same chief I saw near the other camp. Do not trust him."

"It's little harm he can do just now," was the reply, and then the parley was opened as he asked, in the Zulu language:

"Why have you come here as if prepared for war?"

"Ongla has sent us."

"Why does the king send warriors to us."

"Because in your kraal are those whom Ongla claims as his prisoners."

"We have no one here on whom your king has any claim."

"There is one Zulu boy and two white ones, who escaped from his village. The king does not war with the white men, but he demands his own."

By this time the insolent bearing of the messenger had caused the old hunter to lose his temper, and he replied:

"If they asked us for protection we should grant it. The one you call king has no authority over us, and if an hundred of his enemies had come for shelter they should not be refused."

"Do the white men know the power of Ongla?"

"It doesn't make any difference whether we know it or not. We don't propose to give up anybody to you or him."

"The wrath of the king will be great when we give him your message."

"We ain't takin' that into consideration," Paterson replied, angrily. "Those who are here will

stay, an' it'll take more soldiers than Ongla or any other king of Africa has got to get 'em away. My advice is that you leave here mighty sudden. We had word that you were coming, an' made ready for the proper kind of a reception."

The messenger went through a series of pantomimic gestures to show that he was horrified at being given such an answer in response to his king's demand, and Paterson added, in a yet more angry tone:

"We don't want any talk with you, and if there is a Zulu within ten miles of here by to-morrow mornin' we'll give him such a salute that his own king won't know him two hours later, after the kites have had a chance to finish what we'll begin."

At this very decided reply the bearers of what was intended should be a flag of truce lost no time in seeking such seclusion as the thicket granted, and the hunter said to Mr. Ellsworth as he descended from his lofty perch:

"There's no question now but that we'll have trouble, and plenty of it. Of course you have no idea of giving up Dick and Bob for that black wretch to do with as he chooses, which was all those fellows came for, an' we can make up our minds to have hot work."

Quite naturally Mr. Ellsworth wanted to learn the subject matter of the parley, and after it had been repeated to him he said, thoughtfully:

"I question if we are warranted even in remaining here. A battle would not be such a very serious

matter, but a siege might be most dangerous, now that we are so short of provisions."

"There's no way out of it unless you are willing to give up your own son to the mercies of that black wretch, which would be worse than killing him this moment."

"Of course I don't think of such a thing; but we can do better than stay here until they get ready to starve us out."

"The only chance is to take our risk of a running fight, which we shall most surely have if we leave this place."

"But each mile that is traveled will take us just so much nearer the coast."

"That is true, sir, and if you give the word we can be on the road before sunset."

"I would like your opinion first."

"As to what, sir?"

"The desirability of remaining for the purpose of procuring more specimens."

"Accordin' to my way of thinkin' our time of huntin' has come to an end. There's no doubt but that Ongla's army will be here in full force in less than two days, an' whether we're to stay 'till the fight is ended, or take our chances on the road, must be settled mighty quick."

"If we can do no more hunting then there is no reason for remaining, and to retreat when nothing is to be gained by standing our ground is surely better than exposing the men to death."

"Shall I give the word, sir?"

Although the list of specimens was sufficiently large to repay the party for coming, it was not such as Mr. Ellsworth could have desired in order to make the journey a perfect success, and to leave at a time when they were filling the cages so rapidly caused him to hesitate.

Perhaps Paterson believed it was wise to make the retreat; but did not wish to give it his approval, for when Mr. Ellsworth remained silent he added:

"There's no question but that a regular war is imminent, and we might find ourselves in a scrape if it should break out before we left."

This had the effect of causing the leader to arrive at a conclusion very suddenly, and just as a Zulu assegai was thrown over the stockade by way of defiance, he replied:

"We will start to-morrow. Here is the challenge to a battle, and I only hope we shall be able to get away with all our property. Deal out an extra supply of ammunition, for we will, most likely, make it a running fight."

Every one in the stockade knew that serious danger threatened. The Zulus, small in numbers though they were as compared with the army which had begun a siege, appeared particularly aggressive, and there could be no doubt but that a much larger body of men were in the immediate vicinity.

CHAPTER XXXII

A RUNNING FIGHT.

IT CAN readily be understood that but little sleep was indulged in by those behind the walls of the stockade during this night, when there was reason to expect an attack at any moment. Now and then one or the other would close his eyes a few moments at a time; but only for "forty winks," since there was work enough to keep all hands busy.

The horses and cattle had been brought inside the inclosure, and at two o'clock in the morning orders were given to "inspan."

The oxen were yoked to the heavy carts, and drawn up in such a position as it was proposed they should occupy during the march; the horses were saddled, and every member of the party instructed as to what would be expected of him while the train was moving.

As a matter of course Mapeetu was forced to ride in the wagon; but his brother and the two white boys were ordered to remain near the head of the column with Mr. Ellsworth, who would lead the party, while Paterson and his men brought up the rear, which was the post of honor since all the fighting must necessarily be done there, unless, as was

not probable, the Zulus attempted to cut the train off from the direct road to the coast.

With the exception of so many drivers as were necessary to keep the oxen in position, every man and boy was acting as sentinel when the sun rose. Even Mapeetu stood on one of the platforms, he having urged Dick and Bob to help him up because, although disabled, it was possible for him to do guard duty with the others.

Toward the north and east could be seen large numbers of the enemy, all on the alert; but beyond range of any save the heaviest guns, and Mr. Ellsworth said to Paterson:

"There can no longer be any doubt as to whether we should make an immediate move. In twenty-four hours the Zulus will be here in such force that a running fight would result in little less than a massacre."

"That is my opinion, an' the sooner we are under way the better."

"Have your men ready, and the teams shall start at once."

The orders were given hurriedly. Each person took his position; the hunters near the gate to keep the natives in check while the wagons were being drawn out.

Much against his will Mapeetu was assisted into the cart which led the advance; but he was supplied with a rifle and plenty of ammunition.

Next came the elephants and giraffes, and then in regular order were the cages of animals, the baggage wagons being last in the train.

Standing in a regular line of battle were the hunters, together with Mr. Ellsworth and the boys, and only for a few moments were they idle. The Zulus remained passive until four or five teams had passed out, and then they advanced threateningly.

The drivers plied their long whips to hurry the oxen on; the assistants ran to and fro excitedly shouting to the horned beasts, and when it seemed to Dick and Bob that the confusion was as great as it well could be, the battle began.

The men fired with precision as the assegais began to fall in their midst, and the Zulus continued to advance with shouts and yells, which were intended should intimidate.

"Ride forward and lead the train," Mr. Ellsworth said to Dick and Bob. "It is necessary there should be some white people near, otherwise the Kaffirs may become panic-stricken."

Dick fancied that the reason why this order had been given at this time was that he and Bob might be at a safe distance from the combatants; but at such a moment instant obedience was absolutely necessary, and he and his companion rode forward, aiding in the retreat by helping to urge the oxen on.

With so long a train it was impossible for those at the head to have any very clear idea regarding the battle, which was raging furiously, as could be told by the rapid discharge of fire-arms. It could be seen, however, that the white party had been able not only to hold their position; but also to prevent the natives from getting past to attack the wagons.

"We ought to be there doing our share," Dick said, bitterly, as he urged the nearest oxen to greater speed by means of a long whip. "At such a time every rifle counts, and it isn't right for father to make us stay here."

"He knows best," Bob replied, apparently not at all sorry because they were so far from the scene of action. "All of our party are mounted, and if we can get the train two or three miles in advance, we gain a rest while they overtake us."

Mapeetu had caused his white friends no slight amount of trouble already by trying to get out of the wagon to do his share of the fighting. Partly by words and partly by pantomime he had insisted that he could do a man's work, even though he was on crutches; but the boys had threatened all sorts of dire punishment if he so much as showed his head.

"Kalida is there, and one of the family is enough, without sending a cripple to be slaughtered," Dick said, with a nervous laugh.

It seemed as if the knowledge that his brother was taking an active part caused the disabled boy yet more annoyance, but the young leaders kept a strict watch, and he could do no less than obey.

In half an hour the train was so far away that the combatants could no longer be seen, nor the reports of their weapons heard, and Dick and Bob were in a most painful state of anxiety until, twenty minutes later, the party rode up at full speed, making another stand in the rear of the hindermost wagon.

"There are no empty saddles," Dick said, in a tone of relief, and the chances for escape seemed suddenly to have grown very much brighter.

Until late in the afternoon the white men alternately advanced and held their ground, the number of assailants growing smaller each moment, and then came a time when the enemy failed to appear.

"I believe we have succeeded in beating them back," Mr. Ellsworth said as he rode up to join the boys. "By pushing on until the cattle can travel no longer we shall be so far from Ongla's army that there will be little danger of pursuit."

"Are any of our people killed?" Dick asked.

"No. One or two have slight wounds, but we could fight at such long range that it is not to be wondered at we came out so well."

"Where is Kalida?"

"With Paterson. He will remain in the rear until it is positive we have given them the slip."

On this night camp was not made until the foremost team of oxen refused to move another step, lying down in the yokes to show that it would be of no use to make any attempt at forcing them, and then, for the first time since leaving the stockade, Mapeetu saw his brother.

It can well be imagined what a strict watch was kept that night, but to the great relief of all—and more particularly the two white boys—nothing occurred to cause alarm.

When the journey was resumed at sunrise next

morning, a few Zulus could be seen far in the distance, but they remained beyond range, and the second day's march was concluded without mishap.

When the third twenty-four hours of the retreat was ended there could be no question but that the Zulus had given up the chase, and Mr. Ellsworth was on the point of striking across the country to reach some other hunting grounds, despite the advice of Paterson and his men, when a train, with wagons and cages similar to those of our party, came in sight.

When the two companies met the question of how the elephants chanced to be in the vicinity where they had been found was quickly settled.

As Paterson had surmised, this second train belonged to a firm who carry on the business of trapping wild animals, and they told of a series of battles with the natives which had cost them the loss of the greater portion of their specimens. This party had about twenty animals. Not enough to warrant their journeying to the coast in order to ship them, and yet they had started, since it would have been foolish to carry them to the interior until more were obtained.

Mr. Ellsworth succeeded in buying at a very low price this collection, which made his up to the required number, and when the two companies separated there was no longer any question of returning to the hunting-grounds.

The list of specimens which would be shipped on board the Swallow was now of generous proportions,

as is proven by the one Dick copied from his father's statement to show to the boys at home, and is as follows:

Black rhinoceroses	2
Wildebeeste, or gnus	4
Lions	4
Water-boks	6
Elephants	3
Gorillas	3
Pythons	9
Spring-boks	9
Zebras	5
Giraffes	4
Elands	7
Total	56

The journey from the stockade to the port of departure occupied eight days, and then the boys were once more where it was possible to lie in a bed without fear of being disturbed by wild beasts or yet wilder natives.

During the long trip Dick and Bob were considerably troubled concerning the fact that it would be necessary to leave behind the ponies to whom they had become greatly attached. The brig would have all she could carry in the way of a cargo, therefore Mr. Ellsworth had said that they must be sold at the port.

Dick's father had also decided that Mapeetu and Kalida should go home with the white boys if they felt so disposed; but on the day after the arrival at the coast both questions were settled without chance for discussion.

The Zulus absolutely refused to leave their native country. They worked more than willingly until all the specimens had been put on board the little brig, and then Mapeetu said, in passably good English, which he learned to speak very rapidly after arriving at the sea-shore:

"Kalida and I are Zulus, even though our own people have driven us from our homes. It would break our hearts to go to the cold land across the water, and we will stay here."

"Then you shall have our guns and outfit. We'll leave the ponies, too, if you promise to take good care of them," Dick said, quickly.

"They shall never receive a blow, and we will treat them as we would treat any animals which we liked."

The two Zulus were now rich compared to the majority of their people, and, as Bob afterward said, "it was much better for them to remain behind than go where the pangs of homesickness would make them wretched."

When the Swallow left port Mapeetu and Kalida, each with his arm around a pony's neck stood near the water's edge as long as the boy's could distinguish their forms through the spy-glass, and when the faithful fellows faded from view in the distance, Dick said, with a sigh:

"That really ends our trip among the Zulus, and now we can look forward to seeing our mothers and the friends at home."

It also ends this story, since the return voyage,

when all hands were forced to do very much work in caring for the animals, would be of little interest after the many exciting events.

It is only necessary to say that the Swallow arrived safely in port after an exceptionally quick trip, and that even at this late day, if you should meet Dick or Bob, one or the other would be almost certain to insist on telling you some story regarding the time spent among the Zulus.

THE END.

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