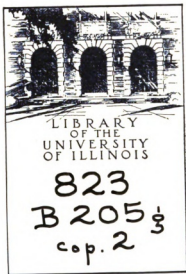


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THE
GORILLA HUNTERS

BY
R. M. BALLANTYNE

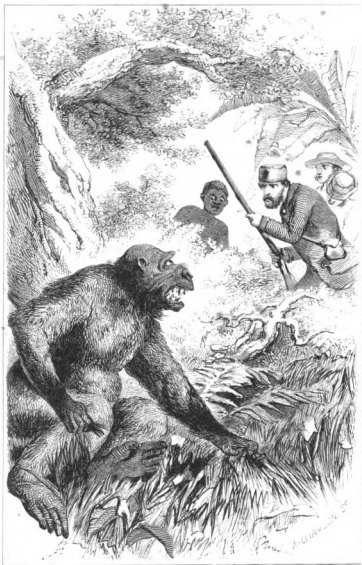


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OUR FIRST GORILLA.

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OUR FIRST GORILLA



THE GORILLA HUNTERS.

A Tale of the Wilds of Africa.

BY

R. M. BALLANTYNE,

Author of "Hudson's Bay; or, Every-day Life in the Wilds of North America;"—
"The Young Fur-Traders;"—"Ungava: A Tale of Esquimaux Land;"—
"The Coral Island;"—"Martin Rattler," &c.



LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

MDCCLXI.

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THE GORILLA HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE HUNTERS ARE INTRODUCED.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. There can be no doubt whatever as to that. Old Agnes may say what she pleases,—she has a habit of doing so; but I know for certain (because I looked at my watch not ten minutes before it happened) that it was exactly five o'clock in the afternoon, when I received a most singular and every way remarkable visit—a visit which has left an indelible impression on my memory, as well it might, for, independent of its singularity and unexpectedness, one of its results was the series of strange adventures which are faithfully detailed in this volume.

It happened thus :—

I was seated in an arm chair in my private study

in a small town on the west coast of England. It was a splendid afternoon, and it was exactly five o'clock. Mark that. Not that there is anything singular about the mere fact—neither is it in any way mixed up with the thread of this tale; but old Agnes is very obstinate—singularly positive—and I have a special desire that she should see it in print, that I have not given in on that point. Yes, it was five precisely, and a beautiful evening. I was ruminating, as I frequently do, on the pleasant memories of bygone days, especially the happy days that I spent long ago among the coral islands of the Pacific, when a tap at the door aroused me.

“Come in.”

“A veesiter, sir,” said old Agnes (my landlady), “an’ he’ll no gie his name.”

Old Agnes, I may remark, is a Scotchwoman.

“Show him in,” said I.

“Maybe he’s a pick-pocket,” suggested Agnes.

“I’ll take my chance of that.”

“Ay! that’s like ’ee. Cares for naethin’. Losh, man, what if he cuts yer throat?”

“I’ll take my chance of that too, only *do* show him in, my good woman,” said I, with a gesture of impatience that caused the excellent (though obstinate) old creature to depart, grumbling.

In another moment a quick step was heard on the

stair, and a stranger burst into the room, shut the door in my landlady's face as she followed him, and locked it.

I was naturally surprised, though not alarmed, by the abrupt and eccentric conduct of my visitor, who did not condescend to take off his hat, but stood with his arms folded on his breast, gazing at me and breathing hard.

"You are agitated, sir, pray be seated," said I, pointing to a chair.

The stranger, who was a little man, and evidently a gentleman, made no reply, but, seizing a chair, placed it exactly before me, sat down on it as he would have seated himself on a horse, rested his arms on the back, and stared me in the face.

"You are disposed to be facetious," said I, smiling, (for I never take offence without excessively good reason).

"Not at all, by no means," said he taking off his hat and throwing it recklessly on the floor. "You are Mr. Rover, I presume?"

"The same, sir, at your service."

"Are you? oh, that's yet to be seen! Pray, is your Christian name Ralph?"

"It is," said I, in some surprise at the coolness of my visitor.

"Ah! just so. Christian name Ralph—t'other

name Rover—Ralph Rover. Very good. Age twenty-two yesterday, eh?”

“My birthday *was* yesterday, and my age *is* twenty-two. You appear to know more of my private history than I have the pleasure of knowing of yours. Pray, sir, may I—but, bless me! are you unwell?”

I asked this in some alarm because the little man was rolling about in his seat, holding his sides, and growing very red in the face.

“Oh no! not at all, perfectly well; never was better in my life,” he said, becoming all at once preternaturally grave. “You were once in the Pacific—lived on a coral island—”

“I did.”

“Oh, don’t trouble yourself to answer. Just shut up for a minute or two. You were rather a soft green youth then, and you don’t seem to be much harder or less verdant now.”

“Sir!” I exclaimed, getting angry.

“Just so,” continued he, “and you knew a young rascal there—”

“I know a rascal *here*,” I exclaimed, starting up, “whom I’ll kick—”

“What!” cried the little stranger, also starting up and capsizing the chair; “Ralph Rover, has time and sunburning and war so changed my visage that you cannot recognise Peterkin?”

I almost gasped for breath.

"Peterkin ! Peterkin Gay !" I exclaimed.

I am not prone to indulge in effeminate demonstration, but I am not ashamed to confess that, when I gazed on the weather-beaten, though ruddy countenance of my old companion, and observed the eager glance of his bright blue eyes, I was quite overcome, and rushed violently into his arms. I may also add that, until that day, I had had no idea of Peterkin's physical strength, for during the next five minutes he twisted me about and spun me round and round my own room until my brain began to reel, and I was fain to cry him mercy.

"So, you're all right ; the same jolly, young, old wise-acre in whiskers and long coat," cried Peterkin, "come now, Ralph, sit down if you can. I mean to stay with you all evening, and all night, and all to-morrow, and all next day, so we'll have lots of time to fight our battles o'er again. Meanwhile compose yourself, and I'll tell you what I've come about. Of course, my first and chief reason was to see your face, old boy ; but I have another reason too—a very peculiar reason. I've a proposal to make and a plan to unfold, both of 'em stunners, they'll shut you up and screw you down, and altogether flabberghast you when you hear 'em, so sit down and keep quiet—do."

I sat down accordingly and tried to compose myself, but to say truth I was so much overjoyed and excited by the sight of my old friend and companion that I had some difficulty at first in fixing my attention on what he said, the more especially that he spoke with extreme volubility, and interrupted his discourse very frequently in order to ask questions, or to explain.

"Now, old fellow," he began, "here goes, and mind you don't interrupt me. Well, I mean to go, and I mean you to go with me, to—but, I forgot, perhaps you won't be able to go—what are you?"

"What am I?"

"Ay, your profession—your calling—lawyer,—M.D.—scrivener—which?"

"I am a naturalist."

"A what?"

"A naturalist."

"Ralph," said Peterkin slowly, "have you been long troubled with that complaint?"

"Yes," I replied laughing, "I have suffered from it from my earliest infancy, more or less."

"I thought so," rejoined my companion, shaking his head gravely. "I fancied that I observed the development of that disease when we lived together on the coral island. It don't bring you in many thousands a year, does it?"

“No,” said I, “it does not. I am only an amateur, having a sufficiency of this world’s goods to live on, without working for my bread. But, although my dear father at his death left me a small fortune, which yields me three hundred a year, I do not feel entitled to lead the life of an idler in this busy world, where so many are obliged to toil night and day for the bare necessaries of life. I have therefore taken to my favourite studies as a sort of business, and flatter myself that I have made one or two not unimportant discoveries and added a few mites to the sum of human knowledge. A good deal of my time is spent in scientific roving expeditions throughout the country, and in contributing papers to several magazines.”

While I was thus speaking I observed that Peterkin’s face was undergoing the most remarkable series of changes of expression, which, as I concluded, merged into a smile of beaming delight as he said,—

“Ralph, you’re a trump!”

“Possibly,” said I, “you are right; but, setting that question aside for the present, let me remind you that you have not yet told me where you mean to go to.”

“I mean,” said Peterkin, slowly, placing both hands on his knees and looking me steadily in the face, “I mean to go a-hunting in—but I forgot. You don’t know that I’m a hunter, a somewhat famous hunter?”

"Of course I don't. You are so full of your plans and proposals that you have not yet told me where you have been, or what doing these six years. And you've never written to me once all that time, shabby fellow. I thought you were dead."

"Did you go into mourning for me, Ralph?"

"No, of course not."

"A pretty fellow you are to find fault. You thought that I, your oldest and best friend, was dead, and you did not go into mourning. How could I write to you when you parted from me without giving me your address? It was a mere chance my finding you out even now. I was taking a quiet cup of coffee in the commercial room of a hotel not far distant when I overheard a stranger speaking of his friend 'Ralph Rover, the philosopher,' so I plunged at him promiscuously, and made him give me your address. But I've corresponded with Jack ever since we parted on the pier at Dover."

"What, Jack! Jack Martin?" I exclaimed as a warm gush of feeling filled my heart at the sound of his well-remembered name. "Is Jack alive?"

"Alive! I should think so. If possible he's more alive than ever, for I should suppose he must be full grown now, which he was not when we last met. He and I have corresponded regularly. He lives in the north of England, and by good luck happens to be

just now within thirty miles of this town. You don't mean to say, Ralph, that you have never met ! ”

“ Never. The very same mistake that happened with you, occurred between him and me. We parted vowing to correspond as long as we should live, and three hours after I remembered that we had neglected to exchange our addresses, so that we could not correspond. I have often, often made inquiries both for you and him, but have always failed. I never heard of Jack from the time we parted at Dover till to-day.”

“ Then, no doubt, you thought us both dead, and yet you did not go into mourning for either of us ! O Ralph, Ralph, I had entertained too good an opinion of you.”

“ But tell me about Jack,” said I, impatient to hear more concerning my dear old comrade.

“ Not just now, my boy, more of him in a few minutes. First let us return to the point. What was it ? oh ! a—about my being a celebrated hunter. A very Nimrod—at least a miniature copy. Well, Ralph, since we last met I have been all over the world, right round and round it. I'm a lieutenant in the navy now—at least I was a week ago. I've been fighting with the Caffirs, and the Chinamen, and been punishing the rascally sepoy's in India, and been hunting elephants in Ceylon and tiger shoot-

ing in the jungles, and harpooning whales in the polar seas, and shooting lions at the Cape ; oh, you've no notion where all I've been. It's a perfect marvel I've turned up here alive. But there's one beast I've not yet seen, and I'm resolved to see him and shoot him too—"

"But," said I, interrupting, "what mean you, by saying that you were a lieutenant in the navy a week ago?"

"I mean that I've given it up. I'm tired of the sea. I only value it as a means of getting from one country to another. The land, the land for me ! You must know that an old uncle, a rich old uncle of mine, whom I never saw, died lately and left me his whole fortune. Of course, he died in India. All old uncles who die suddenly and leave unexpected fortunes to unsuspecting nephews, are old Indian uncles, and mine was no exception to the general rule. So I'm independent like you, Ralph, only I've got three or four thousand a year instead of hundreds, I believe, but I'm not sure, and don't care—and I'm determined now to go on a long hunting expedition. What think ye of all that, my boy?"

"In truth," said I, "it would puzzle me to say what I think, I am so filled with surprise by all you tell me. But you forget that you have not yet told me to which part of the world you mean to go,

and what sort of beast it is you are so determined to see and shoot if you can."

"If I can!" echoed Peterkin with a contemptuous curl of the lip. "Did not I tell you that I was a *celebrated* hunter. Without meaning to boast I may tell you that there is no peradventure in my shooting. If I only get there and see the brute within long range I'll—hah! wont I!"

"Get *where*, and see *what*."

"Get to Africa and see the gorilla!" cried Peterkin, while a glow of enthusiasm lighted up his eyes. "You've heard of the gorilla, Ralph, of course—the great ape—the enormous puggy—the huge baboon—the man monkey, that we've been hearing so much of for some years back, and that the niggers on the African coast used to dilate about till they caused the very hair of my head to stand upon end. I'm determined to shoot a gorilla, or prove him to be a myth. And I mean you to come and help me, Ralph; he's quite in your way. A bit of natural history, I suppose, although he seems by all accounts to be a very unnatural monster. And Jack shall go too, I'm resolved on that—and we three shall roam the wild woods again, as we did in days of yore, and—"

"Hold Peterkin," said I, interrupting. "How do you know that Jack will go?"

"How do I know? Intuitively, of course. I

shall write to him to-night; the post does not leave till ten. He'll get it to-morrow at breakfast, and will catch the forenoon coach, which will bring him down here by two o'clock, and then we'll begin our preparations at once, and talk the matter over at dinner. So you see it's all cut and dry. Give me a sheet of paper and I'll write at once—ah! here's a bit—now a pen. Bless me, Ralph, haven't you got a quill? Who ever heard of a philosophical naturalist writing with steel! Now, then, here goes,—'B'luv'd Jack,'—will that do to begin with? eh! I'm afraid it's too affectionate; he'll think it's from a lady friend. But it can't be altered,—'Here I am, and here's Ralph—Ralph Rover!!!!!! think of that' (I say Ralph I've put six marks of admiration there); 'I've found him out. *Do* come to see us. Excruciatingly important business. Ever thine—Peterkin Gay.' Will that bring him, d'ye think?"

"I think it will," said I, laughing.

"Then off with it, Ralph," cried my volatile friend, jumping up and looking hastily round for the bell-rope. Not being able to find it, my bell-pull being an unobtrusive knob and not a rope, he rushed to the door, unlocked it, darted out, and uttered a tremendous roar, which was followed by a clatter and a scream from old Agnes, whom he had upset and tumbled over.

It was curious to note the sudden change that took place in Peterkin's face, voice, and manner, as he lifted the poor old woman, who was very thin and light, in his arms, and carrying her into the room, placed her in my easy chair. Real anxiety was depicted in his countenance, and he set her down with a degree of care and tenderness that quite amazed me. I was myself very much alarmed at first.

"My poor dear old woman," said Peterkin, supporting my landlady's head, "my stupid haste! I fear you are hurt."

"Hech! it's nae hurt—it's deed I am, fair deed; killed be a whaumlskamerin' young blagyird. Oh, ma puir heed!"

The manner and tone in which this was said convinced me that old Agnes was more frightened than injured. In a few minutes the soothing tones and kind manner of my friend had such an effect upon her that she declared she was better, and believed after all that she was only a "wee bit frichtened." Nay, so completely was she conciliated, that she insisted on conveying the note to the post-office, despite Peterkin's assurance that he would not hear of it. Finally she hobbled out of the room with the letter in her hand.

It is interesting to note, how that, in most of the

affairs of humanity, things turn out very different, often totally different, from what we had expected or imagined. During the remainder of that evening Peterkin and I talked frequently and much of our old friend Jack Martin. We recalled his manly yet youthful countenance, his bold lion-like courage, his broad shoulders and winning gentle smile, and, although we knew that six years must have made an immense difference in his personal appearance—for he was not much more than eighteen when we last parted—we could not think of him except as a hearty, strapping, sailor boy. We planned, too, how we would meet him at the coach; how we would stand aside in the crowd until he began to look about for us in surprise, and then one of us would step forward and ask if he wished to be directed to any particular part of the town, and so lead him on and talk to him as a stranger for some time before revealing who we were. And much more to the same effect. But when next day came our plans and our conceptions were utterly upset.

A little before two we sauntered down to the coach-office, and waited impatiently for nearly twenty minutes. Of course the coach was late; it always is on such occasions!

“Suppose he does not come,” said I.

“What a fellow you are,” cried Peterkin, “to

make uncomfortable suppositions! Let us rather suppose that he does come."

"Oh, then, it would be all right; but if he does *not* come, what then?"

"Why, then, it would be all wrong, and we should have to return home and eat our dinner in the sulks, that's all."

As my companion spoke we observed the coach come sweeping round the turn of the road about half a mile distant. In a few seconds it dashed into the town at full gallop, and finally drew up abruptly opposite the door of the inn, where were assembled the usual group of hostlers and waiters and people who expected friends by the coach.

"He's not there," whispered Peterkin in deep disappointment; "at least he's not on the outside, and Jack would never travel inside of a coach even in bad weather, much less in fine. That's not him on the back-seat beside the fat old woman with the blue bundle, surely! It's very like him, but too young, much too young. There's a great giant of a man on the box-seat with a beard like a grenadier's shacko, and a stout old gentleman behind him with gold spectacles. That's all, except two boys further aft, and three ladies in the cabin. Oh, *what* a bore!"

Although deeply disappointed at the non-arrival

of Jack, I could with difficulty refrain from smiling at the rueful and woe-begone countenance of my poor companion. It was evident that he could not bear disappointment with equanimity, and I was on the point of offering some consolatory remarks when my attention was attracted by the little old woman with the blue bundle, who went up to the gigantic man with the black beard, and in the gentlest possible tone of voice asked if he could direct her to the white house.

"No, madam," replied the big man hastily, "I'm a stranger here."

The little old woman was startled by his abrupt answer,—“Deary me, sir, no offence I hope.”

She then turned to Peterkin, and put the same question, possibly under a vague sort of impression that if a gigantic frame betokened a gruff nature, diminutive stature must necessarily imply extreme amiability. If so, she must have been much surprised as well as disappointed, for Peterkin, rendered irascible by disappointment, turned short round and said sharply, “Why, madam, how can I tell you where the white house is, unless you say which white house you want. Half the houses of the town are white—at least they're *dirty* white,” he added, bitterly, as he turned away.

“I think I can direct you, ma'am,” said I, step-

ping quickly up with a bland smile, in order to counteract if possible my companion's rudeness.

"Thank you, sir, kindly," said the little old woman, "I'm glad to find *some* little civility in the town."

"Come with me, ma'am; I am going past the white house, and will show you the way."

"And pray, sir," said the big stranger, stepping up to me as I was about to move away, "can you recommend me to a good hotel?"

I replied that I could; that there was one in the immediate vicinity of the white house, and that if he would accompany me, I would show him the way. All this I did purposely in a very affable and obliging tone and manner; for I hold that example is infinitely better than precept, and always endeavour if possible to overcome evil with good. I offered my arm to the old woman, who thanked me, and took it.

"What!" whispered Peterkin, "you don't mean me to take this great ugly gorilla in tow?"

"Of course," replied I, laughing, as I led the way.

Immediately I entered into conversation with my companion, and I heard "the gorilla" attempt to do so with Peterkin; but from the few sharp cross replies that reached my ear, I became aware that he

was unsuccessful. In the course of a few minutes, however, he appeared to have overcome his companion's ill-humour, for I overheard their voices growing louder and more animated as they walked behind me.

Suddenly I heard a shout, and, turning hastily round, observed Peterkin struggling in the arms of the gorilla! Amazed beyond measure at the sight, and firmly persuaded that a cowardly assault had been made upon my friend, I seized the old woman's umbrella, as the only available weapon, and flew to the rescue.

"Jack, my boy! can it be possible!" gasped Peterkin.

"I believe it is," replied Jack, laughing. "Ralph, my dear old fellow, how are you?"

I stood petrified. I believed that I was in a dream. I know not what occurred during the next five minutes. All I could remember with anything like distinctness was a succession of violent screams from the little old woman, who fled shouting thieves and murder at the full pitch of her voice. We never saw that old woman again, but I made a point of returning her umbrella to the "white house."

Gradually we became collected and sane.

"Why, Jack, how did you find us out?" cried Peterkin, as we all hurried on to my lodgings, totally

forgetful of the little old woman whom as I have said, we never saw again, but who, I sincerely trust, arrived at the white house in safety.

“ Find you out! I knew you the moment I set eyes on you. Ralph puzzled me for a second, he has grown so much stouter, but I should know your nose, Peterkin, at a mile off.”

“ Well, Jack, I did not know you,” retorted Peterkin, “ but I’m safe never again to forget you. Such a great hairy cossack as you have become! Why, what do you mean by it?”

“ I couldn’t help it, please,” pleaded Jack, “ I grew in spite of myself, but I think I’ve stopped now.”

“ It’s time,” remarked Peterkin.

Jack had indeed grown to a size that men seldom attain to without losing in grace infinitely more than they gain in bulk, but he had retained all the elegance of form and sturdy vigour of action that had characterized him as a boy. He was fully six feet two inches in his stockings, but so perfect were his proportions that his great height did not become apparent until you came close up to him. Full half of his handsome manly face was hid by a bushy black beard and moustache, and his curly hair had been allowed to grow luxuriantly, so that his whole aspect was more like to the descriptions we have of one of the old Scandinavian Vi-Kings than a gentleman of

the present time. In whatever company he chanced to be he towered high above every one else, and I am satisfied that, had he walked down Whitechapel the horse guards would have appeared small beside him, for he possessed not only great length of limb but immense breadth of chest and shoulders.

During our walk to my lodgings Peterkin hurriedly stated his "plan and proposal" which caused Jack to laugh very much at first, but in a few minutes he became grave and said slowly, "That will just suit, it will do exactly."

"What will do exactly? Do be more explicit, man," said Peterkin with some impatience.

"I'll go with you, my boy."

"Will you?" cried Peterkin seizing his hand and shaking it violently, "I knew you would. I said it; didn't I, Ralph? And now we shall be sure of a gorilla if there's one in Africa, for I'll use you as a stalking-horse."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes, I'll put a bear-skin or some sort of fur on your shoulders, and tie a lady's boa to you for a tail, and send you into the woods. The gorillas will be sure to mistake you for a relative until you get quite close, then, you'll take one pace to the left with the left foot (as the volunteers say), I'll take one to the front with the right—at fifty yards, ready—present

—bang, and down goes the huge puggy with a bullet right between its two eyes! There. And Ralph's agreed to go too."

"O Peterkin, I've done nothing of the sort. You *proposed* it."

"Well, and isn't that the same thing. I wonder, Ralph, that you can give way to such mean-spirited prevarication. What? 'It's not prevarication!' Don't say that now, you know it is, ah! you may laugh, my boy, but you have promised to go with me and Jack to Africa, and go you shall."

And so, reader, it was ultimately settled, and in the course of two weeks more we three were on our way to the land of the slave, the black savage, and the gorilla.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN THE WILD WOODS.

ONE night, about five or six weeks after our resolution to go to Africa on a hunting expedition was formed, I put to myself the question, "Can it be possible that we are actually here, in the midst of it?"

"Certainly, my boy, in the very thick of it," answered Peterkin, in a tone of voice which made Jack laugh while I started and exclaimed,—

"Why, Peterkin, how did you come to guess my thoughts?"

"Because, Ralph, you have got into a habit of thinking aloud, which may do very well as long as you have no secrets to keep; but it may prove inconvenient some day, so I warn you in time."

Not feeling disposed at that time to enter into a bantering conversation with my volatile companion I made no reply, but abandoned myself again to the pleasing fancies and feelings which were called up by the singular scene in the midst of which I found myself.

It seemed as if it were but yesterday when we drove about the crowded streets of London making the necessary purchases for our intended journey, and

now as I gazed around, every object that met my eye seemed strange, and wild, and foreign, and romantic. We three were reclining round an enormous wood fire in the midst of a great forest, the trees and plants of which were quite new to me, and totally unlike those of my native land. Rich luxuriance of vegetation was the feature that filled my mind most. Tall palms surrounded us, throwing their broad leaves overhead and partially concealing the star-lit sky. Thick tough limbs of creeping plants and wild vines twisted and twined round everything and over everything, giving to the woods an appearance of tangled impenetrability; but the beautiful leaves of some, and the delicate tendrils of others, half concealed the sturdy limbs of the trees, and threw over the whole a certain air of wild grace, as might a semi-transparent and beautiful robe if thrown around the form of a savage.

The effect of a strong fire in the woods at night is to give to surrounding space an appearance of ebony blackness, against which dark ground the gnarled stems and branches and pendant foliage appear as if traced out in light and lovely colours, which are suffused with a rich warm tone from the blaze.

We were now in the wilds of Africa, although, as I have said, I found it difficult to believe the fact.

Jack and I wore loose brown shooting-coats and pantaloons, but we had made up our minds to give up waistcoats and neckcloths, so that our scarlet flannel shirts with turned down collars gave to us quite a picturesque and brigand-like appearance, as we encircled the blaze, Peterkin smoking vigorously, for he had acquired that bad and very absurd habit at sea. Jack smoked, too, but he was not so inveterate as Peterkin.

Jack was essentially moderate in his nature. He did nothing violently or in a hurry; but this does not imply that he was slow or lazy. He was leisurely in disposition, and circumstances seldom required him to be otherwise. When Peterkin or I had to lift heavy weights we were obliged to exert our utmost strength and agitate our whole frames; but Jack was so powerful that a comparatively slight effort was all that he was usually obliged to make. Again, when we two were in a hurry we walked quickly, but Jack's long limbs enabled him to keep up with us without effort. Nevertheless there were times when he was called upon to act quickly and with energy. On those occasions he was as active as Peterkin himself, but his movements were tremendous. It was, I may almost say, awful to behold Jack when acting under powerful excitement. He was indeed a splendid fellow, and not by any means deserving of the

name of gorilla, which Peterkin had bestowed on him.

But to continue my description of our costume. We all wore home-spun grey trousers of strong material, Peterkin and Jack wore leggings in addition, so that they seemed to have on what are now termed knickerbockers. Peterkin, however, had no coat. He preferred a stout grey flannel shirt hanging down to his knees and belted round his waist in the form of a tunic. Our tastes in head-dress were varied. Jack wore a pork-pie cap. Peterkin and I had wide-awakes. My facetious little companion said that I had selected this species of hat because I was always more than half asleep! Being peculiar in everything Peterkin wore his wide-awake in an unusual manner, namely, turned up at the back, down at the front and curled very much up at the sides.

We were so filled with admiration of Jack's magnificent beard and moustache that Peterkin and I had resolved to cultivate ours while in Africa, but I must say that, as I looked at Peterkin's face, the additional hair was not at that time an improvement, and I believe that much more could not have been said for myself. The effect on my little comrade was to cause the lower part of his otherwise good-looking face to appear extremely dirty.

"I wonder," said Peterkin after a long silence, "if

we shall reach the Niggers' village in time for the hunt to-morrow. I fear that we have spent too much time in this wild-goose chase."

"Wild-goose chase, Peterkin!" I exclaimed. "Do you call hunting the gorilla by such a term?"

"*Hunting* the gorilla? no, certainly, but *looking* for the gorilla in a part of the woods where no such beast was ever heard of since Adam was a school-boy—"

"Nay, Peterkin," interrupted Jack, "we are getting very near to the gorilla country, and you must make allowance for the enthusiasm of a naturalist."

"Ah! we shall see where the naturalist's enthusiasm will fly to when we actually do come face to face with the big puggy."

"Well," said I, apologetically, "I won't press you to go hunting again; I'll be content to follow."

"Press me, my dear Ralph," exclaimed Peterkin hastily, fearing that he had hurt my feelings, "why, man, I do but jest with you, you are so horridly literal, I'm overjoyed to be pressed to go on the maddest wild-goose chase that ever was invented. My greatest delight would be to go gorilla-hunting down Fleet Street, if you were so disposed. But to be serious, Jack, do you think we shall be in time for the elephant-hunt to-morrow?"

"Ay, in capital time, if you don't knock up."

"What! *I* knock up! I've a good mind to knock you down for suggesting such an egregious impossibility."

"That's an impossibility anyhow, Peterkin, because I'm down already," said Jack, yawning lazily and stretching out his limbs in a more comfortable and degagé manner.

Peterkin seemed to ponder as he smoked his pipe for some time in silence

"Ralph," said he, looking up suddenly, "I don't feel a bit sleepy, and yet I'm tired enough."

"You are smoking too much, perhaps," I suggested.

"It's not that," cried Jack, "he has eaten too much supper."

"Base insinuation!" retorted Peterkin.

"Then it must be the monkey. That's it. Roast monkey does not agree with you."

"Do you know, I shouldn't wonder if you were right; and it's a pity, too, for we shall have to live a good deal on such fare, I believe. However, I suppose, we shall get used to it. But I say, boys, isn't it jolly to be out here living like savages. I declare it seems to me like a dream, or a romance. Just look, Ralph, at the strange wild creepers that are festooned overhead, and the great tropical leaves behind us, and the clear sky above, with the moon—ah! the moon, yes that's one comfort, the moon is unchanged. The same

moon that smiles down upon us through a tangled mesh-work of palm leaves and wild vines and monkey's tails, is peeping down the chimney-pots of London, and Edinburgh, and Dublin!"

"Why, Peterkin, you must have studied hard in early life to be so good a geographer."

"Rather," observed Peterkin.

"Yes, and look at the strange character of the tree-stems," said I, unwilling to allow the subject to drop. "See those huge palmettoes like—like—"

"Overgrown cabbages," suggested Peterkin; and, he continued, "Observe the quaint originality of form in the body and limbs of that bloated old spider that is crawling up your leg, Ralph!"

I started involuntarily, for there is no creature of which I have a greater abhorrence than a spider.

"Where is it? oh! I see," and the next moment I secured my prize and placed it with loathing, but interest, in my entomological box.

At that moment a hideous roar rang through the woods seemingly close behind us. We all started to our feet and seizing our rifles, which lay beside us ready loaded, cocked them and drew close together round the fire.

"This won't do, lads," said Jack, after a few minutes' breathless suspense, during which the only sound we could hear was the beating of our own hearts, "we

have allowed the fire to get too low, and we've forgotten to adopt our friend the trader's advice, and make two fires."

So saying, Jack laid down his rifle, and kicking the logs with his heavy boot, sent up such a cloud of bright sparks as must certainly have scared the wild animal, whatever it was, away; for we heard no more of it that night.

"You're right, Jack," remarked Peterkin, "so let us get up a blaze as fast as we can, and I'll take the first watch, not being sleepy. Come along."

In a few minutes we cut down with our axes a sufficient quantity of dry wood to keep two large fires going all night; we then kindled our second fire at a few yards distant from the first, and made our camp between them. This precaution we took in order to scare away the wild animals whose cries we heard occasionally during the night. Peterkin, having proposed to take the first watch—for we had to watch by turns all the night through—lighted his pipe and sat down before the cheerful fire with his back against the stem of a palm tree, and his rifle lying close to his hand to be ready in case of a surprise. There were many natives wandering about in that neighbourhood, some of whom might be ignorant of our having arrived at their village on a peaceful errand. If these should have chanced to

come upon us suddenly there was no saying what they might do in their surprise and alarm, so it behoved us to be on our guard.

Jack and I unrolled the light blankets that we carried strapped to our shoulders through the day, and, laying ourselves down side by side, with our feet to the fire and our heads pillowed on a soft pile of sweet-scented grass, we adressed ourselves to sleep. But sleep did not come so soon as we expected. I have often noted with some surprise and much interest the curious phases of the phenomenon of sleep. When I have gone to bed, excessively fatigued and expecting to fall asleep almost at once, I have been surprised and annoyed to find that the longer I wooed the drowsy god the longer he refused to come to me, and at last, when I have given up the attempt in despair, he has suddenly laid his gentle hand upon my eyes and carried me into the land of Nod. Again, when I have been exceedingly anxious to keep awake, I have been attacked by sleep with such irresistible energy that I have been utterly unable to keep my eyelids open or my head erect, and have sat with my eyes blinking like those of an owl in the sunshine, and my head nodding like that of a Chinese mandarin.

On this our first night in the African bush, at least our first night on a hunting expedition,—we had

been many nights in the woods on our journey to that spot—on this night, I say, Jack and I could by no means get to sleep for a very long time after we lay down, but continued to gaze up through the leafy screen overhead at the stars which seemed to wink at us, I almost fancied, jocosely. We did not speak to each other, but purposely kept silence. After a time, however, Jack groaned, and said softly,—

“Ralph, are you asleep?”

“No,” said I, yawning.

“I’m quite sure that Peterkin is,” added Jack, raising his head and looking across the fire at the half recumbent form of our companion.

“Is he?” said Peterkin in a low tone, “Just about as sound as a weasel!”

“Jack,” said I.

“Well?”

“I can’t sleep a wink—ye-a-ow! isn’t it odd?”

“No more can I. Do you know, Ralph, I’ve been counting the red berries in that tree above me for half an hour in the hope that the monotony of the thing would send me off; but I was interrupted by a small monkey who has been sitting up among the branches and making faces at me for full twenty minutes. There it is yet, I believe. Do you see it?”

“No; where?”

“Almost above your head.”

I gazed upward intently for a few minutes, until I thought I saw the monkey, but it was very indistinct. Gradually, however, it became more defined; then to my surprise it turned out to be the head of an elephant! I was not only amazed but startled at this.

"Get your rifle, Jack!" said I in a low whisper.

Jack made some sort of reply, but his voice sounded hollow and indistinct. Then I looked up again and saw that it was the head of a hippopotamus, not that of an elephant, which was looking down at me. Curiously enough I felt little or no surprise at this, and when, in the course of a few minutes, I observed a pair of horns growing out of the creature's eyes and a bushy tail standing erect on the apex of its head, I ceased to be astonished at the sight altogether, and regarded it as quite natural and commonplace. The object afterwards assumed the appearance of a lion with a crocodile's tail and a serpent with a monkey's head, and lastly of a gorilla, without producing in me any other feeling than that of profound indifference. Gradually the whole scene vanished, and I became totally oblivious.

This state of happy unconsciousness had scarcely lasted—it seemed to me—two minutes, when I was awakened by Peterkin laying his hand on my shoulder and saying,—

"Now then, Ralph, it's time to rouse up."

"O Peterkin," said I in a tone of remonstrance, "how could you be so unkind as to waken me when I had just got to sleep? Shabby fellow!"

"Just got to sleep, say you? You've been snoring like an apoplectic alderman for exactly two hours."

"You don't say so!" I exclaimed, getting into a sitting posture.

"Indeed you have. I'm sorry to rouse you, but time's up, and I'm sleepy; so rub your eyes, man, and try to look a little less like an astonished owl if you can. I have just replenished both the fires, so you can lean your back against that palm tree and take it easy for three-quarters of an hour or so. After that you'll have to heap on more wood."

I looked at Jack, who was now lying quite unconscious, breathing with the slow, deep regularity of profound slumber, and with his mouth wide open.

"What a chance for some waggish baboon to drop a nut or a berry in!" said Peterkin, winking at me with one eye as he lay down in the spot from which I had just risen.

He was very sleepy, poor fellow, and could hardly smile at his own absurd fancy. He was asleep almost instantly. In fact, I do not believe that he again opened the eye with which he had winked at me, but that he merely shut the other and began to slumber forthwith.

I now began to feel quite interested in my responsible position as guardian of the camp. I examined my rifle to see that it was in order and capped; then, leaning against the palm-tree, which was, as it were, my sentry-box, I stood erect and rubbed my hands and took off my cap so that the pleasant night air might play about my temples, and more effectually banish drowsiness.

In order to accomplish this more thoroughly, I walked round both fires and readjusted the logs, sending up showers of sparks as I did so. Then I went to the edge of the circle of light, in the centre of which our camp lay, and peered into the gloom of the dark forest.

There was something inexpressibly delightful, yet solemn in my feelings as I gazed into that profound obscurity where the great tree stems and the wild gigantic foliage nearest to me appeared ghost-like and indistinct, and the deep solitudes of which were peopled, not only with the strange fantastic forms of my excited fancy, but, as I knew full well, with real wild creatures, both huge and small, such as my imagination at that time had not fully conceived. I felt awed, almost oppressed with the deep silence around, and, I must confess, looked somewhat nervously over my shoulder as I returned to the fire and sat down to keep watch at my post.

CHAPTER III.

WHEREIN I MOUNT GUARD, AND HOW I DID IT, ETC.

Now, it so happened that the battle which I had to fight with myself after taking my post was precisely the converse of that which I fought during the earlier part of that night. Then, it was a battle with wakefulness; now, it was a struggle with sleep; and of the two fights the latter was the more severe by far.

I began by laying down my rifle close by my side, leaning back in a sitting posture against the palm-tree, and resigning myself to the contemplation of the fire, which burned merrily before me, while I pondered with myself how I should best employ my thoughts during the three long hours of my watch. But I had not dwelt on that subject more than three minutes when I was rudely startled by my own head falling suddenly and heavily forward on my chest. I immediately roused myself. "Ah! Ralph, Ralph," said I to myself in a whisper, "this won't do, lad; to sleep at your post! shame on you! Had you been a sentinel in time of war that nod would have cost you your life, supposing you to have been caught in the act."

Soliloquizing thus, I arose and shook myself. Then I slapped my chest several times and pulled my nose and sat down again. Only a few minutes elapsed before the same thing occurred to me again, so I leaped up, and mended the fires, and walked to and fro, until I felt thoroughly awake, but in order to make sure that it should not occur again I walked to the edge of the circle of light and gazed for some time into the dark forest, as I had done before. While standing thus I felt my knees give way, as if they had been suddenly paralyzed, and I awoke just in time to prevent myself falling to the ground. I must confess I was much amazed at this, for, although I had often read of soldiers falling asleep standing at their posts, I had never believed the thing possible.

I now became rather anxious, "for," thought I, "if I go to sleep, and the fires die down, who knows but wild beasts may come upon us and kill us before we can seize our arms." For a moment or two I meditated awaking Jack and begging him to keep me company, but when I reflected that his watch was to come immediately after mine, I had not the heart to do it. "No!" said I (and I said it aloud for the purpose of preventing drowsiness), "no, I will fight this battle alone! I will repeat some stanzas from my favourite authors. Yes, I will try to remember a portion of 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

It will be somewhat appropriate to my present circumstances."

Big with this resolve I sat down with my face to the fire and my back to the palm-tree, and—fell sound asleep instantly!

How long I lay in this condition I know not, but I was suddenly awakened by a yell so appalling that my heart leaped as if into my throat, and my nerves thrilled with horror. For one instant I was paralyzed; then my blood seemed to rebound on its course. I sprang up and attempted to seize my rifle.

The reader may judge of my state of mind when I observed that it was gone! I leaped towards the fire, and grasping a lighted brand turned round and glared into the woods in the direction whence the yell came.

It was grey dawn, and I could see things pretty distinctly; but the only living object that met my gaze was Peterkin, who stood with my rifle in his hand laughing heartily!

I immediately turned to look at Jack who was sitting up in the spot where he had passed the night, with a sleepy smile on his countenance.

"Why, what's the meaning of this?" I inquired.

"The meaning of it?" cried Peterkin as he advanced and restored the rifle to its place. "A pretty fellow you are to mount guard; we might have been

all murdered in our sleep by niggers or eaten alive by gorillas, for all that you would have done to save us."

"But, Peterkin," said I gravely, "you ought not to have startled me so; you gave me a terrible fright. People have been driven mad before now, I assure you, by such practical jokes."

"My dear fellow," cried Peterkin with much earnestness, "I know that as well as you. But, in the first place, you were guilty of so heinous a crime that I determined to punish you, and at the same time to do it in a way that would impress it forcibly on your memory; and, in the second place, I would not have done it at all had I not known that your nerves are as strong as those of a dray horse. You ought to be taking shame to yourself on account of your fault rather than objecting to your punishment."

"Peterkin is right, my boy," said Jack, laughing, "though I must say he had need be sure of the nerves of any one to whom he intends to administer such a ferocious yell as that. Anyhow, I have no reason to complain, for you have given me a good long sleep; although I can't say exactly that you have taken my watch. It will be broad-daylight in half an hour, so we must be stirring, comrades."

On considering the subject I admitted the force of these remarks, and felt somewhat crest-fallen. No

doubt, my companions had treated the thing jocularly, and to say truth there was much that was comical in the whole affair, but the more I thought of it, the more I came to perceive how terrible might have been the consequences of my unfaithfulness as a sentinel. I laid the lesson to heart, and I can truly say that from that day to this I have never again been guilty of the crime of sleeping at my post.

We now busied ourselves in collecting together the dying embers of our fire and in preparing breakfast, which consisted of tea, hard biscuit, and cold monkey. None of us liked the monkey,—not that its flesh was bad; quite the contrary; but it looked so like a small roasted baby that we could not relish it at all. However, it was all we had, for we had set off on this hunting excursion intending to live by our rifles, but had been unfortunate, having seen nothing except a monkey or two.

The kettle was soon boiled, and we sat down to our meagre fare with hearty appetites. While we are thus engaged, I shall turn aside for a little and tell the reader, in one or two brief sentences, how we got to this place.

We shipped in a merchant ship at Liverpool, and sailed for the west coast of Africa. Arrived there we found a party, under the command of a Portuguese trader, about to set off to the interior. He

could speak a little English; so we arranged to go with him as far as he intended to proceed, learn as much of the native language as possible while in his company, and then obtain a native guide to conduct us to the country in which the gorillas are found. To this native guide, we arranged, should be explained by the trader our object in visiting the country, so that he might tell the tribes whom we intended to visit. This, we found, was an absolutely needful precaution on the following ground.

The natives of Africa have a singular and very bad style of carrying on trade with the white men who visit their shores. The traffic consists chiefly of ivory; bar-wood, a wood much used in dyeing; and india-rubber. The natives of the far interior are not allowed to convey these commodities directly to the coast, but by the law of the land (which means the law of the strongest,—for they are absolute savages), are obliged to deliver their goods to the care of the tribe next to them; these pass them on to the next tribe; and so on they go from tribe to tribe till they reach the coast, where they are sold by the tribe there. The price obtained, which usually consists of guns, powder and shot, looking-glasses, cloth, and sundry other articles and trinkets useful to men in a savage state, is returned to the owners in the far interior through the same channel; but as each

tribe deducts a percentage for its trouble, the price dwindles down as it goes, until a mere trifle, sometimes nothing at all, remains to be handed over to the unfortunate people of the tribe who originally sent off the goods for sale. Of course, such a system almost paralyzes trade. But the intermediate tribes between the coast and the interior, being the gainers by this system, are exceedingly jealous of anything like an attempt to carry on direct trade. They are ready to go to war with the tribes of the interior should they attempt it, and they throw all the opposition they can in the way of the few white men who ever penetrate the interior for such a purpose.

It will thus be seen that our travels would be hindered very much, if not stopped altogether, and ourselves be regarded with jealousy, or perhaps murdered, if our motives in going inland were not fully and satisfactorily explained to the different tribes as we passed through their lands. And we therefore proposed to overcome the difficulty by taking a native guide with us from the tribe with which we should chance to be residing when obliged to separate from the Portuguese trader.

We had now reached this point. The day before that on which we encamped in the woods, as above related, we arrived at a native village, and had been received kindly by the king. Almost immediately

after our arrival we heard so many stories about gorillas that I felt persuaded we should fall in with one if we went a-hunting, and, being exceedingly anxious to add one to my collection of animals,—for I had a small museum at home,—I prevailed on Jack and Peterkin to go one day's journey into the bush to look for them. They laughed very much at me indeed, and said that we were still very far away from the gorilla country ; but I had read in some work on Africa a remark to the effect that there is no cordillera, or mountain range, extending across the whole continent to limit the *habitat* of certain classes of animals, and I thought that if any animal in Africa would not consent to remain in one region when it wished to go to another, that animal must be the ferocious gorilla. The trader also laughed at me, and said that he had never seen any himself in that region, and that we would have to cross the desert before seeing them. Still, I felt a disposition to try; besides, I felt certain that we should at least fall in with some sort of animals, or plants, or minerals that would be worth collecting; so it was agreed that we should go out for a single day, and be back in time for a great elephant hunt which was about to take place.

But, to return from this digression, having finished breakfast, we made three bundles or packages of our

blankets, provisions, and camp equipage; strapped them on our backs; and then, shouldering our rifles, set out on our return to the negro village.

Of course we gave Jack the largest and heaviest bundle to carry. Peterkin's and mine were about equal, for, although I was taller than Peterkin, I was not by any means so powerful or active. I often wondered at the great strength that lay in the little frame of my friend. To look at him, no one would believe that he was such a tough, wiry, hardy little fellow. He was the same hearty jovial creature that I had lived with so pleasantly when he and Jack and I were cast away on the coral island. With the exception of a small scrap of whisker on each cheek, a scar over the right eye, and a certain air of manliness, there was little change in my old comrade.

"Ralph," said Jack as we strode along through the forest, "do you remember how we three used to wander about together in the woods of our coral island?"

"Remember!" I cried with enthusiasm, for at that moment the thought occurred to my own mind. "How can I ever forget it, Jack? It seems to me just like yesterday. I can hardly believe that six long years have passed since we drank that delicious natural lemonade out of the green cocoa-nuts, and

wandered on the coral beach, and visited Penguin Island, and dived into the cave to escape the pirates. The whole scene rises up before me so vividly that I could fancy we were still there. Ah! these were happy times."

"So they were," cried Peterkin, "but don't you go and become sentimentally sad, Ralph, when you talk of those happy days. If we were happy there, are we not happy *here*? There's no change in us except, indeed, that Jack has become a gorilla."

"Ay, and you a monkey," retorted Jack.

"True; and Ralph a naturalist, which is the strangest beast of all," added Peterkin. "Can you tell me, Ralph, by the way, what tree that is?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell. Never saw or heard of one like it before," I replied, looking at the tree referred to with some interest. It was a fine tree, but the great beauty about it was the gorgeous fruit with which it was laden. It hung in the form of bunches of large grapes, and was of the brightest scarlet colour. The glowing bunches seemed like precious gems glittering amongst the green foliage, and I observed that a few monkeys and several parrots were peeping at us through the branches.

"It seems good for food," said Jack. "You'd

better climb up, Peterkin, and pull a few bunches. The puggies won't mind you, of course, being one of themselves."

"Ralph," said Peterkin, turning to me, and deigning no reply to Jack, "you call yourself a naturalist, so I suppose you are acquainted with the habits of monkeys, and can turn your knowledge to practical account."

"Well," I replied, "I know something about the monkey tribes, but I cannot say that at this moment I remember any particular habit of which we might avail ourselves."

"Do you not? Well, now, that's odd. I'm a student of nature myself, and I have picked up a little useful knowledge in the course of my travels. Did you ever travel so far as the Zoological Gardens in London?"

"Of course I have done so, often."

"And did you ever observe a peculiar species of monkey, which, when you made a face at it, instantly flew into a towering passion, and shook the bars of its cage until you expected to see them broken?"

"Yes," said I, laughing, "what then?"

"Look here, you naturalist, and I'll put a wrinkle on your horn. Yonder hangs a magnificent bunch of fruit that I very much desire to possess."

"But it's too high to reach," said I.

"But there's a monkey sitting beside it," said Peterkin.

"I see. You don't expect him to pull it and throw it down, do you?"

"Oh no, certainly not; but—." Here Peterkin stepped up to the tree, and looking up at the monkey, said, "O-o-o-oo-o!" angrily.

"O-o-o-oo-oo!" replied the monkey, stretching out its neck and looking down with an expression of surprise and indignation, as if to say, "What on earth do you mean by that?"

"Oo-o-o-oo-o!" roared Peterkin.

Hereupon the monkey uttered a terrific shriek of passion, exposed all its teeth and gums, glared at its adversary like a little fiend, and seizing the branch with both hands, shook it with all its might. The result was, that not only did the coveted bunch of fruit fall to the ground, but a perfect shower of bunches came down, one of which hit Jack on the forehead, and, bursting there, sent its fragrant juice down his face and into his beard, while the parrots and all the other monkeys took to flight, shrieking with mingled terror and rage.

"You see I'm a practical man," observed Peterkin quietly, as he picked up the fruit and began to eat it. "Knowledge is power, my boy. A man with a philosophical turn of mind like yourself ought to have

been up to a dodge of this sort. How capital this fruit is, to be sure! Does it make good pomade, Jack?"

"Excellent; but as I'm not in the habit of using pomade, I shall wash this out of my beard as quickly as possible."

While Jack went to a brook that ran close to where we stood, I tasted the fruit and found it most excellent, the pulp being juicy, with a very pleasant flavour.

While we were thus engaged a wild pig ran grunting past us.

"Doesn't that remind you of some of our doings on the coral island, Ralph?" said Peterkin.

Before I could reply a herd of lovely small gazelles flew past. Our rifles were lying on the ground, and before either of us could take aim the swift creatures were lost sight of in the thick underwood. Peterkin fired one shot at a venture, but without any result.

We were still deploring our stupidity in not having our rifles handy when a strange sound was heard in the distance. By this time Jack had come up, so we all three sized our rifles and listened intently. The sound was evidently approaching. It was a low dull booming roar which at one moment seemed to be distant thunder, at another, the cry of some huge animal in rage or pain. Presently the beating of heavy hoofs on the turf and the crash of branches

was heard. Each of us sprang instinctively towards a tree, feeling that, if danger were near, its trunk would afford us some protection.

Being ignorant, as yet, of the cries of the various wild beasts inhabiting those woods, we were greatly at a loss to determine what creature it could be that approached at such headlong speed. That its mad career was caused by fear soon became apparent, for the tones of terror either in man or beast, when distinctly heard, cannot be mistaken.

Immediately in front of the spot where we stood was an open space or glade of considerable extent. Towards this the animal approached, as was evident from the increasing loudness of its wild roar which was almost continuous. In another moment the thick wall of underwood at its further extremity was burst asunder with a crash, and a wild buffalo bull bounded into the plain and dashed madly across. On its neck was crouched a leopard which had fixed its claws and teeth deep in the flesh of the agonized animal. In vain did the bull bound and rear, toss and plunge. At one moment it ran like the wind—the next it stopped with such violence as to tear up the turf and scatter it around. Then it reared, almost falling back; anon it plunged and rushed on again, with the foam flying from its mouth, and its blood-shot eyes glaring with the fire of rage and terror,

while the woods seemed to tremble with its loud and deep-toned bellowing. Twice in its passage across the open glade it ran, in its blind fury, straight against a tree, almost beating in its skull, and, for a moment, arresting its progress; but it instantly recovered the shock and burst away again as madly as ever. But no effort that it was capable of making could relieve the poor creature from its deadly burden, or cause the leopard in the slightest degree to relax its fatal gripe.

It chanced that the wild bull's mad gallop was in a direction that brought it within a few yards of the spot where we stood, so we prepared to put an end to its misery. As it drew near, Jack, who was in advance, raised his rifle. I, being only a short distance from him, also made ready to fire, although I confess that in the agitation of the moment I could not make up my mind whether I should fire at the buffalo or the leopard. As far as I can recall my rapid and disjointed thoughts on that exciting occasion, I reasoned thus, "If I shoot the leopard, the bull will escape, and if I shoot the bull the leopard will escape." It did not occur to me at that trying moment, when self-possession and decision were so necessary, that I might shoot the bull with one barrel, and the leopard with the other. Still less did it occur to me that I might miss bull and leopard altogether.

While I was engaged in this hurried train of troubled thought, Jack fired both barrels of his rifle one after the other as quickly as possible. The bull stumbled forward upon its knees. In order to make assurance doubly sure I aimed at its head and fired both barrels at once. Instantly the bull rose, with a hideous bellow, and stood for one moment irresolute glaring at its new enemies. The leopard, I observed, was no longer on its back. At this moment I heard an exclamation of anger, and looking round I observed Peterkin struggling violently in the grasp of one of the wild vines or thorny plants, which abound in some parts of the African forests and render them almost impassable. It seems that as the bull drew near, Peterkin, who like Jack and me was preparing to shoot, found that a dense thicket came between him and the game, so as to prevent his firing. He leaped nimbly over a bush intending to run to another spot whence he could more conveniently take aim, but found himself, as I have related, suddenly entangled among the thorns in such a way that the more he struggled the more firmly he became ensared. Being of an impatient disposition he did struggle violently, and it was this probably that attracted the attention of the bull and decided its future course and its ultimate fate, for, after remaining one moment, as I have stated, in an irresolute attitude it turned

suddenly to the left and rushed with its head down and its tail up straight at Peterkin.

I cannot describe the sensations that overwhelmed me on observing the imminent danger of my friend. Horror almost overwhelmed me as I gazed with a stare of fascination at the frightful brute, which with flashing eyes and bloody foam dripping from its mouth charged into the thicket, and crashed through the tough boughs and bushes as if they were grass. A film came over my eyes. I tried to reload my rifle, but my trembling hand refused to act, and I groaned with mingled shame and despair on finding myself thus incapable of action in the hour of extreme peril. At that moment I felt I would joyfully have given my own life to have saved that of Peterkin. It takes me long to describe it, but the whole scene passed with the rapidity almost of a flash of light.

Jack did not even attempt to load, but uttering a fearful cry, he sprang towards our friend with a bound like that of an enraged tiger. A gleam of hope flashed through my soul as I beheld his gigantic form dash through the underwood. It seemed to me as if no living creature could withstand such a furious onset. Alas! for Peterkin, had his life depended on Jack, strong and lion-like though he was. His aid could not have been in time. A higher Power nerved his arm and steeled his heart at that terrible moment.

As I gazed helplessly at Peterkin, I observed that he suddenly ceased his struggles to get free, and, throwing forward the muzzle of his piece, stood boldly up and awaited the onset with calm self-possession. The bull was on him almost in an instant. One stride more and he would have been lost, but that stride was never taken. His rifle poured its deadly charge into the skull of the wild bull, which fell, a mass of dead flesh, literally at his feet.

It were vain to attempt to describe the state of our feelings on this memorable occasion,—the fervour with which we thanked our heavenly Father for our friend's deliverance,—the delight with which we shook his hands, again and again, and embraced him. It was with considerable difficulty that we extricated Peterkin from his entanglement. When this was accomplished we proceeded to examine our prize.

We were not a little puzzled on discovering that only three bullets had struck the bull. For my part I fired straight at its forehead, and had felt certain at the time that my shots had taken effect; yet there was but one ball in the animal's head, and that was undoubtedly Peterkin's, for the hair all round the hole was singed off—so near had it been to him when he fired. The other two shots were rather wide apart—one in the shoulder, the other in the neck. Both would have proved mortal in the long run, but

neither were sufficiently near to a vital spot to kill speedily.

"Now Ralph, my boy," said Jack, after our excitement was in some degree abated, "you and I must divide the honour of these two shots, for I fear we can't tell which of us fired them. Peterkin only fired once, and that was pretty effectual."

"Yes," I replied, "it is rather perplexing, for although I have no objection whatever to your having all the honour of those two shots, still one likes to know with certainty who actually made them."

"You'd better toss for them," suggested Peterkin, who was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, examining, with a somewhat rueful countenance, the tattered condition of his garments.

"There would not be much satisfaction in that," replied Jack, laughing.

"It is probable," said I, "that each of us hit with one barrel, and missed with the other."

"And it is possible," added Jack, "that one of us hit with both, and the other missed with both. All that I can positively affirm is that I fired both barrels at his shoulder—one after the other."

"And all that I am certain of," said I, "is, that I fired both barrels at his forehead, and that I discharged them both at once."

"Did you?" said Peterkin looking up quickly,

"then, Ralph, I'm afraid that you must give all the honour to Jack, for you have missed altogether."

"How do you know that?" I asked in a somewhat piqued tone.

"Simply enough. If you fired both shots together at so short a distance they would have been found close together wherever they had struck, whereas the two shots in the neck and shoulder are more than two feet apart."

I was compelled to admit that there was much truth in the observation, but still felt unwilling to give up all claim to having assisted in slaying our first buffalo. I pondered the subject a good deal during the remainder of the time we spent in cutting up and packing part of the buffalo-meat, and in preparing to continue our journey, but could come at no satisfactory conclusion in my own mind, and to say truth I felt not a little crestfallen at my conduct in the whole affair

While wandering in this mood near the spot where the buffalo had been first wounded I received a sudden and severe start on observing the leopard crouching within a couple of yards of me. I saw it through the bushes quite distinctly, but could not make quite sure of its attitude. With a mingled cry of alarm and astonishment I sprang back to the place where I had left my rifle.

Jack and Peterkin instantly ran up with their pieces cocked.

"Where is it?" they cried in a breath.

"There, crouching just behind that bush."

Jack darted forward.

"Crouching!" he cried with a loud laugh seizing the animal by the tail and dragging it forth, "why it's dead—stone dead."

"Dead as mutton," said Peterkin, "Hallo! what's this?" he added in surprise. "Two holes close together in its forehead. I do declare! Hooray! Ralph, my boy, give us your paw! You've missed the bull and hit the leopard! If you haven't been and put two bullets right between its two eyes I'm a Dutchman!"

And so, in truth, it turned out. I had aimed at the bull and hit the leopard. So I left that spot not a little pleased with my bad aim and my good fortune.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEREIN WILL BE FOUND MUCH THAT IS PHILOSOPHICAL.

HAVING skinned the leopard and cut off as much of the buffalo meat as we could carry, we started for the Negro village at a round pace, for we had already lost much time in our last adventure. As we walked along I could not help meditating on the uncertainty of this life, and the terrible suddenness with which we might at any unexpected moment be cut off. These thoughts led me naturally to reflect how important a matter it is that every one, no matter how young, should be in a state of preparedness to quit this world.

I also reflected, and not without a feeling of shame, on my want of nerve, and was deeply impressed with the importance of boys being inured from childhood to trifling risks and slight dangers of every possible description, such as tumbling into ponds and off trees, &c., in order to strengthen their nervous system. I do not, of course, mean to say that boys ought deliberately to tumble into ponds or climb trees until they fall off; but they ought not to avoid the risk of such mishaps; they ought to encounter such risks, and many others, perpetually.

They ought to practise leaping off heights into deep water. They ought never to hesitate to cross a stream on a narrow unsafe plank *for fear of a ducking*. They ought never to decline to climb up a tree to pull fruit, merely because there is a *possibility* of their falling off and breaking their necks. I firmly believe that boys were intended to encounter all kinds of risks in order to prepare them to meet and grapple with the risks and dangers incident to man's career with cool cautious self-possession, a self-possession founded on experimental knowledge of the character and powers of their own spirits and muscles. I also concluded that this reasoning applies to some extent to girls as well as boys, for they too are liable through life to occasional encounters with danger—such as meeting with mad bulls; being run away with on horseback; being upset in boats; being set on fire by means of crinoline—in all of which cases those who have been trained to risk slight mishaps during early life will find their nerves equal to the shock and their minds cool and collected enough to look around and take hasty advantage of any opportunity of escape that may exist; while those who have been unhappily nurtured in excessive delicacy, and advised from the earliest childhood to “take care of themselves and carefully avoid all risks,” will probably fall victims to their nervous

alarms, and the kind but injudicious training of parents or guardians.

The more I pondered this subject the more deeply impressed did I become with its great importance to the well-being of mankind, and I was so profoundly engrossed with it that my companions utterly failed to engage me in general conversation as we walked briskly along through the forest. Jack again and again attempted to draw my attention to the splendour of the curious specimens of tropical foliage and vegetation through which we passed; but I could not rouse myself to take interest therein. In vain did Peterkin jest and rally me, and point out the monkeys that grinned at us ever and anon as we passed beneath them, or the serpents that glided more than once from our path. I was fascinated with my train of meditation, and as I could not then give it up until I had thought it out, so now I cannot pass from the subject until I have at least endeavoured to guard myself from misconception.

I beg, then, that it will be understood that I do not by any means inculcate hair-brained recklessness, or a course of training that will foster that state of mind. On the contrary, the course of training which I should like to see universally practised would naturally tend to counteract recklessness, for it would enable a boy to judge correctly as to what he could,

and could not do. Take an illustration. A naturally bold boy has been unwisely trained to be exceedingly careful of himself. He does not know the extent of his own courage or the power and agility of his own muscles—he knows these things to some extent indeed, but, owing to restraint, he does not know them fully. Hence he is liable both to over and under-estimate them.

This bold boy,—we shall call him Tom—takes a walk into the country with a friend whom we shall name Pat. Pat is a bad boy, but he has been permitted to train his muscles as he pleased, and his natural disposition has led him to do difficult and sometimes slightly dangerous things.

“You can’t jump over that river, Tom,” says Pat.

“Perhaps not,” replies Tom, “I never tried such a jump, because my mother tells me never to go where I am likely to tumble into the water.”

“Oh, your mother’s a muff!” cries Pat.

“Pat,” says Tom, flushing with indignation and confronting his friend, “Don’t you ever say that again, else the friendship between you and me will come to an end. I know you don’t really mean what you say; but I won’t allow you to speak disrespectfully of my mother.”

“Well, I won’t,” says Pat, “but *you’re* a muff anyhow.”

"Perhaps I am," replies Tom.

"Of course you are, because you're afraid to jump over that river, and I'm not. So, here goes."

Pat thereupon jumps the river (he is a splendid leaper), and Tom hesitates.

"Come along, Tom. Don't be a hen."

"Tom gives way, alas! to a disobedient impulse and dashing at the leap comes to the edge when he finds, somehow, that he has not got the proper foot first for the spring—almost every boy knows the feeling I allude to—his heart fails and he baulks."

"O Tom, what a miminipimini muff you are, to be sure."

Tom, as I have said, is a bold boy. His blood boils at this; he rushes wildly at the bank, hurls himself recklessly into the air; barely reaches the opposite side with a scramble and falls souse into the river, from which he issues, as Pat says, amid peals of laughter, "like a half-drowned rat."

Now, had Tom been permitted to follow the bent of his own bold impulses, he would have found out, years ago, how far and how high he could leap, and how far exactly he could depend on his own courage in certain circumstances, and he would either, on the one hand, have measured the leap with an accustomed eye, and declined to take it with a good-humoured admission that it was beyond his powers, or, on the

other hand, he would calmly have collected his well and oft-tried energies for the spring. The proper foot, from long experience, would have come to the ground at the right time. His mind, freed from all anxiety as to what he could accomplish, would have received a beneficial impulse from his friend's taunt. No nervous dread of a ducking would have checked the completeness of his bound, because he would have often been ducked before, and would have discovered that in most cases, if the clothes be changed at once, a ducking is not worth mentioning—in a hydropathic point of view is, in fact, beneficial,—and he would have cleared the river with comfort to himself and confusion to his friend, and without a ducking, or the uneasiness of conscience caused by the knowledge that he had disobeyed his mother. Had Peterkin not been trained to encounter danger, his natural boldness alone would never have enabled him to stand the charge of that buffalo bull.

There are muffs in this world. I do not refer to those hairy articles of female apparel in which ladies are wont to place their hands, handkerchiefs, and scent-bottles. Although not given to the use of slang, I avail myself of it on this occasion, the word "muff" being eminently expressive of a certain class of boys, big as well as little, old as well as young. There are three distinct classes of boys,

namely, muffs, sensible fellows, and boasters. I say there are three distinct classes, but I do not say that every boy belongs to one or other of those classes. Those who have studied chemistry know that nature's elements are few. Nearly all kinds of matter, and certainly all varieties of mind, are composite. There are no pure and simple muffs. Most boasters have a good deal of the muff in them, and many muffs are boasters; while sensible fellows are occasionally tinged with a dash of both the bad qualities—they are, if I may be allowed to coin a word, *sensible-boasto-muffers!* Still, for the sake of lucidity, I will maintain that there are three distinct phases of character in boys.

The muff is a boy who from natural disposition, or early training, or both, is mild, diffident, and gentle. So far he is an estimable character. Were this all, he were not a muff. In order to deserve that title he must be timid and unenthusiastic. He must refuse to venture anything that will subject him to danger, however slight. He must be afraid of a shower of rain; afraid of dogs in general, good and bad alike; disinclined to try bold things; indifferent about learning to swim. He must object to the game called "dumps," because the blows from the ball are sometimes severe, and be a sworn enemy to single-stick, because the whacks are uncommonly

painful. So feeling and acting, he will, when he becomes a man, find himself unable to act in the common emergencies of life ; to protect a lady from insolence ; to guard his house from robbery ; or to save his own child should it chance to fall into the water. The muff is addicted to boasting sometimes, especially when in the company of girls, but when on the play-ground he hangs on the skirts of society, and sings very small. There are many boys, alas ! who are made muffs by injudicious training, who would have grown up to be bold manly fellows, had they been otherwise treated. There are also many kinds of muffs. Some are good-hearted amiable muffs, others are petty sneaking muffs.

With many of the varieties I have a strong sympathy, and, for their comfort, I would say that muffs may cure themselves if they choose to try energetically.

Courage and cowardice are not two distinct and entirely antagonistic qualities. To a great extent those qualities are the result of training. Every courageous man has a slight amount of cowardice in his composition, and all cowards have a certain infusion of courage. The Matador stands before the infuriated bull and awaits its charge with unflinching firmness, not because he has more courage than his comrades in the ring who run away, but because long

training has enabled him to make almost certain of killing the bull. He knows what he has done before, he feels that he can do it again, therefore he stands like a hero. Were a doubt of his capacity to cross his mind for an instant, his cheek would blanch, his hand would tremble, and, ten to one, he would turn and flee like the rest.

Let muffs, therefore, learn to swim, to leap, and to run. Let them wrestle with boys bigger than themselves, regardless of being thrown. Let them practise "jinking" with their companions, so that if even they be chased by a mad bull, they will, if unable to get out of his way by running, escape perhaps by jinking. Let them learn to leap off considerable heights into deep water, so that, if ever called on to leap off the end of a pier or the side of a ship to save a fellow creature, they may do so with confidence and promptitude. Let them even put on "the gloves," and become regardless of a swelled nose, in order that they may be able to defend themselves or others from sudden assault. So doing they will become sensible fellows, whose character I have thus, to some extent, described. Of course I speak of sensible fellows only with reference to this one subject of training the nerves and muscles. Let it never be forgotten that there are men who, although sensible in this respect, are uncommonly

senseless in regard to other things of far higher moment.

As to boasters, I will dismiss them with a few words. They are too easily known to merit particular description. They are usually loud and bold in the drawing-room, but rather mild in the field. They are desperately egotistical, fond of exaggeration, and prone to depreciate the deeds of their comrades. They make bad soldiers and sailors, and are usually held in contempt by others, whatever they may think of themselves. I may wind up this digression—into which I have been tempted by an earnest desire to warn my fellow-men against the errors of nervous and muscular education, which, in my case, led to the weak conduct of which I had been guilty that day—I may wind up this digression, I say, by remarking that the boys who are most loved in this world are those who are lambs, *almost* muffs, in the drawing-room, but lions in the field.

How long I should have gone on pondering this subject I know not, but Peterkin somewhat rudely interrupted me by uttering a wild scream, and beginning to caper as if he were a madman. I was much alarmed as well as surprised at this course of conduct, for although my friend was an inveterate joker, he was the very reverse of what is termed a buffoon, and never indulged in personally grotesque

actions with a view to make people laugh; such as making faces, a practice which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, causes the face-makers to look idiotical rather than funny, and induces beholders to pity them, and to feel very uncomfortable sensations.

Peterkin's yells, instead of ceasing, continued and increased.

"Why, what's wrong?" I cried in much alarm.

Instead of answering, Peterkin darted away through the wood like a maniac tearing off his clothes as he went. At the same moment Jack began to roar like a bull, and became similarly distracted. It now flashed across me that they must have been attacked by an army of the Bashikouay ant, a species of ant which is so ferocious as to prove a perfect scourge to the parts of the country over which it travels. The thought had scarcely occurred to me when I was painfully convinced of its accuracy. The ants suddenly came to me, and in an instant I was covered from head to foot by the passionate creatures which bit me so severely that I also began to scream and to tear off my garments, for I had been told by the trader who accompanied us to this part of the country, that this was the quickest method of getting rid of them.

We all three fled and soon left the army of Bashikouay ants behind us, undressing, as we ran, in the

best way we could, and when we at length came to a halt, we found ourselves almost in a state of nudity. Hastily divesting ourselves of the remainder of our apparel, we assisted each other to clear away the ants, though we could not rid ourselves of the painful effects of the bites with which we were covered.

"What dreadful villains!" gasped Peterkin, as he busied himself in hastily picking off the furious creatures from his person.

"It would be curious to observe the effect of an army of soldiers stepping into an army of Bashikouays," said Jack. "They would be routed instantly. No discipline or courage could hold them together for two minutes after they were attacked."

I was about to make some reply, when our attention was attracted by a shout at no great distance, and in a few seconds we observed, to our confusion, the trader and a band of negroes approaching us. We hurried on our clothes as rapidly as possible, and were a little more presentible when they arrived. They had a good laugh at us, of course, and the naked blacks seemed to be much tickled with the idea that we had been compelled to divest ourselves, even for a short time, of what they considered our unnecessary covering.

"We thought you were lost," said the trader, "and I began to blame myself for letting you away

into the woods, where so many dangers may be encountered, without a guide. But what have you got there? meat of some kind? Your guns seem to have done service on this your first expedition."

"Ay, that they have," answered Jack, "we've killed a buffalo bull, and if you send your black fellows back on our track for some hours they'll come to the carcass, of which we could not, of course, bring very much away on our shoulders which are not accustomed yet to heavy loads."

"Besides," added Peterkin, "we were anxious to get back in time for your elephant hunt, else we should have brought more meat with us. But Jack has not mentioned what I consider our chief prize, the honour of shooting which belongs to my friend Ralph Rover. Come, Ralph, unfasten your pack and let them see it."

Although unwilling to put off more time, I threw down my pack, and, untying it, displayed my leopard skin. The shout of delight and surprise which the sight of it drew from the negroes was so enthusiastic that I at once perceived I was considered to have secured a great prize.

"Why, Mr. Rover, you're in luck," said the trader, examining the skin, "it's not every day that one falls in with such a fine leopard as that. And you have already made a reputation as a daring hunter, for the

niggers consider it a bold and dangerous thing to attack these critters. They're so uncommon fierce."

"Indeed, I do not by any means deserve such a reputation," said I, refastening my pack, "for the shot was entirely accidental, so I pray you, good sir, to let the negroes know that as I have no desire to go under a false flag, as my friend Peterkin would say—"

"Go under a false flag!" exclaimed Peterkin in contempt. "Sail under false colours, man! That's what you should have said. Whatever you do, Ralph, never misquote a man. Go under a false flag! ha! ha! why you might just as well have said, 'progress beneath assumed bunting!'"

"Well, accidental or otherwise," said the trader, "you've got credit for the deed, and your fame will be spread among the tribe whether you will or not, for these fellows are such incorrigible liars themselves that they will never believe you if you tell them the shot was accidental. They will only give you credit for some strange though unknown motive in telling such a falsehood."

While the trader was speaking I observed that the negroes were talking with the eager looks and gesticulations that are peculiar to the Africans when excited, and presently two or three of them came forward and asked several questions, while their eyes

sparkled eagerly and their black faces shone with animation as they pointed into the woods in the direction whence we had come.

“They want to know where you have left the carcass of the leopard, and if you have taken away the brains,” said the trader turning to me. “I dare say you know—if not you’ll soon come to find out—that all the nigger tribes in Africa are sunk in gross and cruel superstitions. They have more fetishes, and greegrees, and amulets, and wooden gods, and charms, than they know what to do with, and have surrounded themselves with spiritual mysteries that neither themselves nor anybody else can understand. Among other things they attach a very high value to the brains of the leopard, because they imagine that he who possesses them will be rendered extraordinarily bold and successful in hunting. These fellows are in hopes that, being ignorant of the value of leopard brains, you have left them in the carcass, and are burning with anxiety to be off after them.”

“Poor creatures,” said I, “they are heartily welcome to the brains, and the carcass lies not more than four hours march from this spot, I should think. Is it not so, Jack?”

My friend nodded assent, and the trader, turning to the expectant crowd of natives gave them the information they desired. No sooner had he finished,

than, with loud cries, they turned and darted away, tossing their arms wildly in the air and looking more like to a band of scared monkeys than to human beings.

“They’re queer fellows,” remarked Peterkin.

“So they are,” replied the trader, “and they’re kindly fellows, too,—jovial and good-humoured, except when under the influence of their abominable superstitions. Then they become incarnate fiends and commit deeds of cruelty that make one’s blood run cold to think of.”

I felt much saddened by these remarks, and asked the trader if the missionaries accomplished any good among them.

“Oh yes,” he replied, “they do much good, such of them at least as really are missionaries, for it does not follow that every one who wears a black coat and white neck-cloth, and goes abroad, is a missionary. But what can a few men scattered along the coast here and there, however earnest they be, do among the thousands upon thousands of savages that wander about in the interior of Africa? No good will ever be done in this land to any great extent, until traders and missionaries go hand in hand into the interior, and the system of trade is entirely remodelled.”

“From what you remark,” said I, feeling much interested, “I should suppose that you have given this subject a good deal of attention.”

“I have. But there are people in this world, who, supposing that because I am a trader, I am therefore prone to exalt trade to an equality with religion, do not give me credit for disinterestedness when I speak. Perhaps you are one of these.”

“Not I, in truth,” said I, earnestly. “My chief desire in conversing with mankind is to acquire knowledge, I therefore listen with attention and respect to the opinions of others instead of endeavouring to assert my own. In the present instance, being ignorant, I have no opinions to assert.”

“I wish there were more people in your country,” replied the trader, “who felt as you do. I would tell them that, although a trader, I regard the salvation of men’s souls as the most important work in this world. I would argue that until you get men to listen, you cannot preach the gospel to them ; that the present system of trade in Africa is in itself antagonistic to religion, being based upon dishonesty, and that, therefore, the natives will not listen to missionaries—of course, in some cases they will, for I believe that the gospel, when truly preached, is never preached in vain—but they will throw every possible impediment in their way. I would tell them that in order to make the path of the missionary practicable, the system of trade must be inverted, the trader and the missionary must go hand in hand, and com-

merce and religion—although incomparably different in their nature and ends—must act the part of brother and sister if anything *great* is to be done for the poor natives of Africa.”

Conversing thus we beguiled the time pleasantly, while we proceeded rapidly on our way, for the day was drawing to a close, and we were still at a considerable distance from the native village.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATIONS FOR A GRAND HUNT.

ALL was bustle, noise, and activity in the village, or, more correctly speaking, in the native town of His Majesty King Jambai, early in the morning after our arrival. A great elephant hunt had been resolved on. The hunters were brushing up their spears and old guns—all of which latter were flint locks that had been procured from traders, and were not worth more than a few shillings. The women were busy preparing breakfast, and the children were playing around their huts.

These huts were of the simplest construction—made of bamboo, roofed with large palm-leaves, and open in front. The wants of savages are generally few; their household furniture is very plain, and there is little of it. A large hut near to that of his sable majesty had been set apart for the trader and his party during our residence at the town. In this we had spent the night as pleasantly as we could, but the mosquitoes kept up an unceasing warfare upon us, so that daylight was welcomed gladly when it came.

On going to the hut of King Jambai, who had invited us to breakfast with him, we found the Prin-

cess Oninga alone seated in the king's arm chair and smoking her pipe with uncommon gusto. She had spent the early part of the morning in preparing breakfast for her father and ourselves, and was now resting from her labours.

"You are early astir, Princess Oninga," said the trader as we entered and took our seats round the fire, for at that hour the air felt chilly.

The princess took her pipe from her lips and admitted that she was, blowing a long thin cloud of smoke into the air with a sigh of satisfaction.

"We are ready for breakfast," added the trader. "Is the king at home?"

"He is in the woods, but will be back quickly." With this remark the princess rose, and knocking the ashes out of her pipe, left the tent.

"Upon my word, she's a cool beauty," said Peterkin.

"I should rather say a black one," remarked Jack.

"Perhaps an odd one would be the most appropriate term," said I. "Did you ever see such a head-dress?"

The manner in which the Princess Oninga had seen fit to dress her head was indeed peculiar, I may say ludicrous. Her woolly hair had been arranged in the form of a cocked hat, with a horn projecting in front, and at a short distance off it might easily have been

mistaken for the head piece of a general officer minus the feathers. There was little in the way of artificial ornament about it, but the princess wore a number of heavy brass rings on her arms and ankles. Those on the latter reached half way up to her knees, and they were so heavy that her walk was little better than a clumsy waddle. Before we could pass further comment on her appearance, King Jambai entered and saluted us by taking us each separately and rubbing noses with us. This done he ordered in breakfast, which consisted of roast and boiled plantains, ground nuts, roast fowl, and roast pig, so we fell to at once, and, being exceedingly hungry after our long walk of the day before, made a hearty meal.

“Now, sir,” said Jack, when our repast was about concluded, “as you are going to leave us soon, you had better arrange with the king about getting us an interpreter and supplying us with a few men to carry our goods. I think you said there was once a man in the tribe who spoke a little English. Have you found out whether he is alive?”

“Yes, I have heard that he is alive and well, and is expected in every day from a hunting expedition. He is a splendid hunter and a capital fellow. His name is Makarooroo, and if you get him you will be fortunate.”

“Then ask his black majesty,” said Peterkin, “as

quick as you please, for, to say truth, I'm rather anxious on this point. I feel that we should never get on without a good interpreter."

To our satisfaction we found that the king was quite willing to do all that we wished and a great deal more. In fact we soon perceived that he felt highly honoured by our visit, and had boasted not a little of "*his white men*," to the chiefs of neighbouring tribes, some of whom had come a considerable distance to see us.

"You have made quite a conquest, gentlemen, of worthy Jambai," said the trader, after translating the king's favourable reply. "The fact is he is pleased with the liberality you have shown towards him in the way of gifts, and is proud of the confidence you have placed in him. Had you been bent on a trading expedition he would have opposed your further progress, but knowing that you are simply hunters he is anxious to assist you by all the means at his command. He is surprised, indeed, at your taking so much trouble and coming so far merely to kill wild animals, for he cannot understand the idea of sporting. He himself hunts for the sake of procuring meat."

"Can he not understand," said Peterkin, that *we* hunt for fun?"

"No, he don't quite see through that. He said to

me a few minutes ago, 'Have these men no meat at home that they come all this long way to get it?' I told him that you had plenty, and then endeavoured to explain your idea of hunting 'for fun.' But he shook his head, and I think he does not believe you."

At this point in our conversation the king rose and gave the signal to set out on the hunting expedition. Instantly the whole population of the town turned out and rushed to the banks of the river, near which it stood, where canoes were prepared for us. Suddenly there arose a great shout, and the name, "Makarooroo, Makarooroo," passed from mouth to mouth. Presently a fine tall deep-chested and broad-shouldered negro stepped up to the king and laid a leopard skin at his feet, while the people shouted and danced with delight at the success of their companion; for, as I have already stated, it is deemed a bold feat to attack and slay a leopard single-handed.

While the commotion caused by this event was going on, I said to the trader,—

"How comes it that Makarooroo can speak English?"

"He spent a couple of years on the coast, in the service of a missionary, and during that time attended the missionary school, where he picked up a smattering of English and a trifle of geography and arithmetic; but although a stout, sturdy hunter,

and an intelligent man, he was a lazy student, and gave the good missionary much trouble to hammer the little he knows into his thick skull. At last he grew tired of it, and returned to his tribe; but he brought his Bible with him, and I am told is very diligent in the study of it. His education has gained for him a great reputation as a fetish-man, or doctor of mysteries, among his people. I used often to see him at school hammering away at m-a, ma—b-a, ba, and so on, amid a group of children. He used to sit beside the king—”

“The king!” said I, in surprise.

“Ay; the king of that district became a Christian, and he and the queen, with one or two others of the royal household, used to attend school with the children every day, and their diligence in studying the A B C was beyond all praise, but they were terribly stupid. The children beat them easily, showing how true is the saying that ‘youth is the time to learn.’ The king was always booby, and Makarooroo was always beside him.”

As the trader spoke, Makarooroo came forward and shook hands with him in the English fashion. He was then introduced to us, and expressed his willingness to become our interpreter in somewhat curious but quite comprehensible English. As I looked at his intelligent, good-natured countenance, I could not

help thinking that the trader had under-rated his intellectual powers.

"He's a funny dog that Makarooroo," said Peterkin, as our interpreter hastened away to fetch his rusty old gun and spears, for he meant to join our hunting expedition, although he had only that moment arrived from a long and fatiguing chase.

"Do you think so?" said Jack.

"I don't agree with you," said I; "to me he seems rather of a grave and quiet disposition."

"O Ralph! what a bat you are. He was grave enough just now, truly; but did you not observe the twinkle in his eye when he spoke to us in English? Depend on it he's a funny dog."

"There must be free-masonry, then, among funny dogs," I retorted, "for Jack and I don't perceive it."

"Is this our canoe?" inquired Jack of the trader.

"It is."

"Then let's jump in."

In a few seconds the river was crowded with a fleet of small canoes, and we all paddled quickly up the stream, which was sluggish at that part. We did not intend to proceed more than a few miles by water, as the place where game was expected was at some distance from the river. I felt some regret at this, for the trip up the river was to me most enchanting.

Every yard we advanced, new beauties of scenery were revealed to view. The richness of the tropical vegetation seemed in this place to culminate, it was so rank and gorgeous. The day was fine, too, and all the strange-looking creatures—ugly and beautiful, large and small—peculiar to those regions, seemed to have resolved on a general peace in order to bask in the sunshine, and enjoy the glorious weather. Man alone was bent on war, and our track, alas! was marked with blood wherever we passed along. I pondered much on this subject, and wondered at the blood-thirsty spirit which seems to be natural to man in all conditions and climes. Then I thought of the difficulty these poor Africans have at times in procuring food, the frequency with which they are reduced almost to a state of starvation, and I ceased to wonder that they shot and speared everything that came in their way.

We proceeded up the left bank of the river, keeping close in to the shore in order to obtain the protection of the overhanging boughs and foliage, for the sun soon began to grow hot, and in the middle of the day became so intense that I sometimes feared that I or my companions would receive a sun-stroke. I confess that the subject of health often caused me much anxiety, for although I knew that we were all old experienced travellers—though young in years

—and had become in a great degree inured to hardships, I feared that the deadly climate of Central Africa might prove too much for our European constitutions. By the free use of quinine, however, and careful attention to the rules of health as far as circumstances would permit, we were fortunate enough to keep in excellent health and spirits during the whole course of our sojourn there ; for which—when I thought of the hundreds of Europeans who had perished on that deadly coast without even venturing into the interior—I felt very thankful. One of our chief delights, to which I in a great degree attribute our uninterrupted health, was bathing daily in the streams and ponds with which we fell in, or on which we paddled during our travels. On these occasions we were fain, however, to be exceeding careful in the selection of our bathing pool, as crocodiles and alligators, and I know not what other hideous animals were constantly on the look out for prey, and, I make no doubt, would have been very ready to try the flavour of a morsel of English food had we given them the chance.

On these occasions, when we had made sure of our pool, we were wont to paddle about in the cool refreshing stream, and recall to mind the splendid dips we had had together six years before in the clear waters of the coral island. Since that time

Peterkin had learned to swim well, which was not only a source of much satisfaction and gratification to himself now, but, he told me, had been the means of preserving not only his own life on more than one occasion, but the life of a little child which he had the good fortune to rescue from drowning when cruising off the Island of Madagascar.

Peterkin used to speak very strongly when talking on this subject, and I observed from the unusual seriousness of his manner that he felt deeply too.

“Ralph,” he said to me one day, “half the world is mad—I am not sure that I might not say three quarters of the world is mad—and I’m quite certain that all the *ladies* in the world are mad, with the exception of the brown ladies of the South Seas, and a few rare specimens elsewhere—they’re all mad together in reference to the matter of swimming. Now that I have learned it nothing is so easy, and any one who is not as blind as a rheumatic owl must see that nothing is more important, for every one almost is subject to being pitched now and then into deep water, and if he can’t swim it’s all up with him. Why, every time an angler goes out to fish he runs the chance of slipping and being swept into a deep hole, where, if he cannot swim, he is

certain to be drowned. And yet five strokes would save his life. *Good* swimming is by no means what is wanted; swimming of any kind, however poor, is all that is desiderated. Every time a lady goes to have a row on a lake she is liable to be upset by the clumsiness of those who accompany her, and although it may be close to shore, if she cannot swim down she goes to the bottom. And *floating* won't do. Some ladies delude themselves with the idea that floating is of great value. In nine cases out of ten it is of no value at all, for unless water be perfectly smooth and still, a person cannot float so as to keep the waves from washing over the face, in which case choking is the certain result. There is no excuse for not learning to swim. In most large cities there are swimming baths; if the sea is not available a river is, everywhere. I tell you what it is, Ralph, people who don't learn to swim are—are—I was going to say asses, but that would be an insult to the much maligned long-eared animal—and parents who don't teach their offspring to swim, deserve to be drowned in butter-milk, and I wish I saw—no, I *don't* quite wish I saw them all drowned in that way, but I do wish that I could impress upon mankind over the length and breadth of this rotund world the great, the immense, the intense importance of boys *and girls* being taught to swim."

"You make use of strong language," said I.

"Quite a powerful orator," added Jack, laughing.

"Bah!" exclaimed Peterkin, "your reception of this grand truth is but a type of the manner in which it will be received by the pig-headed world. What's the use of preaching common sense? I'm a perfect donkey!"

"Nay, Peterkin," said Jack, "I appreciate what you say, and have no doubt whatever that your remarks, if made public, would create quite a revolution in the juvenile world, and convert them speedily into aquatic animals. Did you ever think of sending your views on that subject to the *Times*?"

"The *Times*!" cried Peterkin.

"Yes, the *Times*; why not?"

"Because," said Peterkin slowly, "I once sent a letter to that great, but insolent periodical, and what do you think it did?"

"Can't tell, I'm sure."

"*Took no notice of it whatever!*" said Peterkin, with a look of ineffable disgust.

But to return from this digression. I was much struck with the splendid contrast of colours that met my eye everywhere here. The rich variety of greens in the different trees harmonized with the bright pink plums and scarlet berries, and these

latter were almost dimmed in their lustre by the bright plumage of the birds which I felt intense longing to procure, many of them being quite new to me, and, I am certain, totally unknown to naturalists, while others I recognised with delight as belonging to several of the species of which I had read in ornithological works. I tried hard to shoot several of these lovely creatures, intending to stuff them, but, to my regret, was utterly unable to hit them. Seeing this, Peterkin took pity on me, and sitting down in the bow of our canoe, picked off all the birds I pointed out to him as we passed, with unerring precision. Most of them fell into the water and were easily secured, while one or two toppled off the branches into the canoe. Several of them he shot on the wing, a feat which even filled Jack with surprise, and so astounded the natives that they surrounded our canoe at last, and gazed open-mouthed at my friend, whom they evidently regarded as the greatest fetish-man that had ever come amongst them.

He was obliged to stop at last and lay down his gun in order to make the natives cease from crowding round us and delaying our voyage. A number of iguanos were observed on the branches of the trees that overhung the stream. They dropped into the water as we approached, but the natives succeeded

in spearing a good many, and I afterwards found that they considered them excellent food.

If I was charmed with the birds, Peterkin was no less delighted with the monkeys that chattered at us as we passed along. I never saw a man laugh as he did that day. He almost became hysterical, so much was he tickled with their antics, and the natives, who have a keen sense of the ludicrous, seemed quite to sympathize with his spirit, although, of course, what amused him, could not have similarly affected them, seeing that they were used to monkeys from infancy.

"There's something new!" exclaimed Jack as we rounded a bend in the river and came in view of an open flat where it assumed somewhat the aspect of a pond or small lake. He pointed to a flock of birds standing on a low rock, which I instantly recognised to be pelicans.

"Surely," said I, "pelicans are not new to you!"

"Certainly not; but if you look a little more attentively I think you will find material for your note-book."

Jack was right. I observed a very fine fish-hawk circling over the head of one of the pelicans. Its head and neck were white, and its body was of a reddish chocolate colour. Just as we came in sight, the pelican caught a fine fish which it stowed away safe in the pouch under its chin. The sly hawk

which had been watching for this, immediately made a descent towards its victim, making a considerable noise with its wings as it came down. Hearing this, the pelican looked hastily up, and, supposing that a terrible and deadly assault was about to be made, opened its mouth and screamed in terror. This was just what the hawk wanted. The open bill revealed the fish in the pouch. Down he swooped, snatched it out, and then soared away with his ill-gotten gains in his talons!

“Oh, what a thief!” exclaimed Peterkin.

“And the pelican seems to take his loss in a remarkably philosophical manner,” observed Jack.

To my surprise the great stupid bird, instead of flying away, as I had expected, quietly resumed his fishing as if nothing had happened. No doubt he was well pleased to find himself still alive, and it is not improbable that the hawk made several more meals at the expense of his long-beaked friend after we had passed by.

We soon put him to flight, however, by landing near the spot where he stood, this being the place where we were to quit our canoes and pass through the jungle on foot. The hunters now prepared themselves for action, for the recent tracks of elephants were seen on the bank of the stream, and the natives said they could not be far off. Jack and Peterkin

were armed with immensely heavy rifles, which carried balls of the weight of six ounces. I carried my trusty double-barrelled fowling piece, which is of the largest size, and which I preferred to a rifle, because, not being a good shot, I resolved, on all occasions, to reserve my fire until we should come to close quarters with game, leaving my more expert comrades to take the longer shots. We had also two natives,—one being our guide, Makarooroo, who carried Jack and Peterkin's double-barrelled guns as a reserve. These were loaded, of course, with ball.

"This looks something like business," said Jack, as he leaned on his heavy rifle and looked at the natives who were selecting their spears, and otherwise making preparations.

"It does," replied Peterkin, "are you loaded?"

"Ay, and I have just examined the caps to see that they are dry, for it's not like grouse shooting on the Scottish hills this African hunting, depend upon it. A snapping cap might cost us our lives. Ralph, my boy, you must keep well in rear. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but it won't do to go in front when you cannot depend on your nerves."

I experienced a feeling of sadness not unmingled with shame as my friend said this, but I could not question the justness of his remark, and I knew well that he would not have made it at all, but for his

anxiety lest I should run recklessly into danger, which I might find myself, when too late, unable to cope with. I was careful, however, to conceal my feelings, as I replied with a smile,—

“You are right, Jack, I shall act the part of a support, while you and Peterkin skirmish in advance.”

“And be careful,” said Peterkin, solemnly, “that you don’t fire into us by mistake.”

Somewhat of Peterkin’s own spirit came over me, as I replied, “Indeed, I have been thinking of that, and I’m not sure that I can restrain myself when I see a chimpanzee monkey and a gorilla walking through the woods before me.”

“I think we’d better take his gun from him,” suggested Jack.

At this moment the king gave the signal to advance, so we shouldered our weapons and joined him. As we walked rapidly along, Jack suggested that we should allow the natives to kill any elephants we might fall in with in their own way, so as to observe how they managed it, rather than try to push ourselves forward on this our first expedition. We all agreed to this, and, shortly after, we came to the place which elephants were known to frequent.

Here great preparations had evidently been made for them. A space of more than a mile was par-

tially enclosed by what might be termed a vine wall. The huge, thorny, creeping vines had been torn down from the trees and woven into a rude sort of net work, through which it was almost impossible for any animal except an elephant to break. This was intended; not to stop the elephant altogether, but, to entangle and retard him in his flight, until the hunters could kill him with their spears. The work, we were given to understand, was attended with considerable danger, for some of the natives were occasionally caught by the thorny vines when flying from the charge of the infuriated animal, and were instantly stamped to death by his ponderous feet.

I felt a new and powerful excitement creep over me as I saw the natives extend themselves in a wide semicircle of nearly two miles in extent, and begin to advance with loud shouts and cries in order to drive the game towards the vines, and the flashing eyes and compressed lips of my two companions showed that they were similarly affected. We determined to keep together and follow close on that part of the line where the king was.

"You no be 'fraid," said Makarooroo looking down at Peterkin, who, he evidently supposed, was neither mentally nor physically adapted for an African hunter.

Peterkin was so tickled with the question that he suddenly began to tremble like an aspen leaf, and

to chatter with his teeth and display all the symptoms of abject terror. Pointing over Makarooroo's shoulder into the bush behind him, he gasped, "The leopard!"

The negro uttered a hideous yell, and, springing nearly his own height into the air, darted behind a tree with the agility of a wild-cat.

Instantly Peterkin resumed his composure, and, turning round with a look of cool surprise, said,—

"What! you're not afraid, Makarooroo?"

The good-humoured fellow burst into a loud laugh on perceiving the practical joke that had been passed on him, and it was evident that the incident, trifling though it was, had suddenly raised his estimation of Peterkin to a very exalted pitch.

We now began to draw near to the enclosure, and I was beginning to fear that our hunt was to prove unsuccessful that day. A considerable quantity of small game had passed us, alarmed by the cries of the natives, but we purposely withheld our fire, although I saw that Jack was sorely tempted once or twice, when several beautiful gazelles, and one or two wild pigs ran past within shot. Presently we heard a shrill trumpeting sound, which Peterkin, who had hunted in the forests of Ceylon, told us, in an excited voice, was the cry of the elephant. We hastened forward with our utmost speed, when suddenly we were brought to a stand, by hearing a

tremendous roar close in front of us. Immediately after, a large male lion bounded from among the bushes, and, with one stroke of his enormous paw, struck down a negro, who stood not twenty yards from us. The terrible brute stood for an instant or two, lashing his sides with his tail and glaring defiance. It chanced that I happened to be nearest to him, and that the position of the tangled underwood prevented my companions from taking good aim, so without waiting for them, being anxious to save, if possible, the life of the prostrate negro, I fired both barrels into the lion's side. Giving utterance to another terrible roar, he bounded away into the bush, scattering the negroes who came in his way, and made his escape, to our great disappointment.

We found, to our horror, on going up to the fallen hunter, that he was quite dead. His skull had been literally smashed in, as if it had received a blow from a sledge hammer.

I cannot describe my feelings on beholding, thus, for the first time, the king of beasts in all the savage majesty of strength and freedom, coupled with the terrible death of a human being. My brain was in a whirl of excitement, I scarce knew what I was doing. But I had no time to think, for, almost immediately after firing the shots at the lion, two elephants came crashing through the bushes. One was

between ten and eleven feet high, the other could not have been less than twelve feet. I had never seen anything like this in the menageries of England, and their appearance, as they burst thus suddenly on my vision, was something absolutely appalling.

Those who have only seen the comparatively small and sluggish animals that are wont to ring their bells to attract attention, and to feed on gingerbread nuts from the hands of little boys, can form no idea of the terrible appearance of the gigantic monsters of Africa as they go tearing in mad fury through the forests with their enormous ears, and tails, and trunks erect, their ponderous tusks glistening in the sunshine, and their wicked little eyes flashing like balls of fire as they knock down, rend asunder, and overturn all that comes in their way.

The two that now approached us in full career were flying before a crowd of negroes who had already fixed a number of spears in their sides, from which the blood was flowing copiously. To say that the bushes went down before them like grass, would not give a correct idea of the ponderous rush of these creatures. Trees of three and four inches diameter were run against and snapped off like twigs, without proving in any degree obstructive.

By this time the negroes had crowded in from all sides, and, as the elephants approached the place

where we stood, a perfect cloud of spears and javelins descended on their devoted sides. I observed that many of the active natives had leaped up into the trees and discharged their spears from above, while others, crouching behind fallen trees or bushes, threw them from below, so that, in a few seconds, dozens of spears entered their bodies at every conceivable angle, and they appeared as if suddenly transformed into monstrous porcupines or hedge-hogs. There was something almost ludicrous in this, but the magnitude and aspect of the animals were too terrible, and our danger was too imminent, to permit anything like comic ideas to enter our brains. I observed, too, that the natives were perfectly wild with excitement. Their black faces worked convulsively, and their white eyes and teeth glittered as they leaped and darted about in a state of almost perfect nudity, so that their aspect was quite demoniacal.

The suddenness and violence of the attack made near to us had the effect of turning the elephants aside, and the next instant they were tearing and wrenching themselves through the meshes of the tough and thorny vines. The natives closed in with wild cries and with redoubled energy. Nothing surprised me so much as to observe the incredible number of spears that were sticking all over these creatures, and the amount of blood that they lost,

without any apparent diminution of strength resulting. It seemed as if no human power could kill them, and, at that moment, I almost doubted Peterkin's assertion that he had, while in Ceylon, actually killed elephants with a single ball.

While Jack, and Peterkin, and I were gazing in deep interest and surprise at the curious struggle going on before us, and holding ourselves in readiness to act should there be any chance of our game escaping, the larger of the two elephants succeeded in disentangling himself by backing out of the snare. He then wheeled round and charged straight at King Jambai, who stood close to us, with incredible fury. The beast, as it came on with the bristling spears all over it, the blood spirting from its innumerable wounds, and trumpeting shrill with rage, seemed to me like some huge unearthly phantom. It was with difficulty I could believe the whole scene other than a hideous dream. Jambai launched his javelin into the animal's chest and then turned and fled. The other natives also darted and scattered hither and thither, so that the elephant could not make up its mind on which of its enemies to wreak its vengeance. We, too, turned and took to our heels at once with right good will. All at once I heard Jack utter a wild shout or yell, very unlike to anything I ever heard from him before. I looked back and saw that

his foot had got entangled in a thorny shrub, and that the elephant was making at him.

To this day I have never been able to account for the remarkable condition of mind and body that ensued on this occasion. Instead of being paralyzed as I had been when Peterkin was in imminent danger, all sensation of fear or hesitancy seemed to vanish on the instant. I felt my nerves and muscles strung, as it were, and rendered firm as a rock, and with calm deliberation, yet with the utmost rapidity of which I was capable, I turned round, sprang between Jack and the enraged beast, and presented my piece at his head.

"Right in the centre of his forehead," gasped Jack, as he endeavoured to wrench his foot from the entanglement.

At that moment I observed Peterkin leap to my side, the next instant the report of both our guns rang through the woods, the elephant bounded completely over Jack, as Peterkin and I leaped to either side to let it pass, and fell to the ground with such violence that a tree, about six inches thick against which it struck, went down before it like a willow wand.

We immediately assisted Jack to extricate himself, but we had no time to congratulate ourselves on our narrow escape, for mingled shouts and yells from

the men in the bushes ahead, apprized us that some new danger menaced them in that direction.

Re-loading as fast as we could, we hastened forward and soon gained the new scene of battle. Here stood the other elephant trying to break down a small tree up which King Jambai had climbed, partly for safety and partly in order to dart a javelin down on the brute as it passed.

This was a common custom of the natives, but the king, who was a bold reckless man, had neglected to take the very necessary precaution of selecting a strong tree. The elephant seemed actually to have observed this, for, instead of passing on, it suddenly rushed headlong against the tree and began to break it down. When we came up the beast was heaving and straining with all its might, the stout tree was cracking and rending fearfully, so that the king could scarcely retain his position on it. The natives were plying their spears with the utmost vigour, but, although mortally wounded, it was evident that, in a few more seconds, the elephant would succeed in throwing down the tree and trample the king to death.

Peterkin instantly sprang forward, but Jack laid his hand on his shoulder.

"It's my turn this time, lad," he cried, and, leaping towards the monster, he placed the muzzle of his



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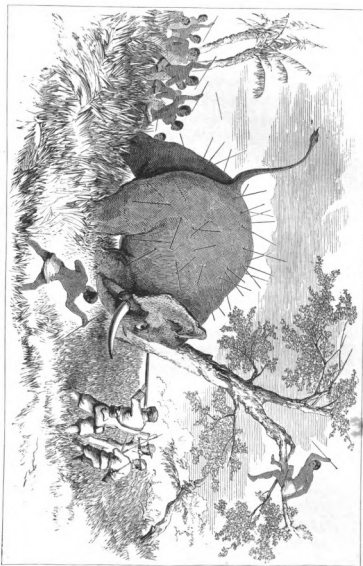
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rifle close to its shoulder and sent a six ounce ball right through its heart.

The effect was instantaneous. The elephant fell to the ground, a mountain of dead flesh.

The delight of the negroes at this happy termination of the battle was excessive. They leaped, and laughed, and danced like insane men, and we had much ado to prevent them seizing us in their arms and rubbing noses with us.

As we had not commenced the hunt until well on in the day, evening was now closing in, so the king gave orders to encamp on a dry rising ground not far distant, where the jungle was less dense, and thither we all repaired, the natives bringing in all the game, and cutting up the elephants in a very short space of time.

"Your shot was not such a bad one this time, Ralph," observed Peterkin, as we three stood looking at the large elephant which the natives were cutting up. "There they are, just above the proboscis; but let me warn you never again to venture on such a foolhardy thing as to fire in the face of a charging elephant unless you are a dead shot."

"Thank you, Peterkin, for your advice, which, however, I will not take when a comrade's life may depend on my doing so."

"I give you full credit for the excellence of your

intention," rejoined my friend, "but if Jack's life had depended on those two shots from your double-barrel, he would have been but a dead man now. There is only one vulnerable spot in the front of an elephant's head ; that is, exactly in the centre of the forehead. The spot is not bigger than a saucer, and the bone is comparatively thin there. If you cannot make *sure* of hitting that, you simply face certain death. I would not have tried it on any account whatever, had I not seen that both you and Jack would have been killed had I not done so."

On examination we found that the heavy ball from Peterkin's rifle had indeed penetrated the exact spot referred to, and had been the means of killing the elephant, while my two bullets were found imbedded in the bone.

The tusks of this animal were magnificent. I do not know what their exact weight was, not having the means wherewith to weigh them. They were probably worth a considerable sum of money in the British market. Of course we did not lay claim to any part of the spoil of that day, with the exception of a few of the beautiful birds shot on the voyage up the river, which were of no value to the natives, although priceless to me. Alas! when I came to examine them next morning, I found that those destructive creatures, the white ants, had totally

destroyed the greater part of them, and the few that were worth stuffing were very much damaged.

Experience is a good, though sometimes a severe, teacher. Never again did I, after that, put off the stuffing of any valuable creature till the next day. I always stuffed it in the evening of the day on which it was killed, and thus, although the practice cost me many a sleepless night, I preserved, and ultimately brought home, many specimens of rare and beautiful birds and beasts, which would otherwise have been destroyed by those rapacious insects.

That night the scene of our camp was indescribably romantic and wild. Numerous huge fires were lighted, and round these the negroes circled and cooked elephant and venison steaks, while they talked over the events of the day or recounted the adventures of former hunts with noisy volubility and gesticulation.

The negro has a particular love for a fire. The nights in his warm climate are chill to him, though not so to Europeans, and he luxuriates in the heat of a fire as a cat does in the rays of the sun. The warm blaze seems to draw out his whole soul and causes his eyes to sparkle with delight. A good supper and a warm fire renders him almost perfectly happy. There is but one thing wanting to render him supremely so, and that is—a pipe! No doubt,

under similar circumstance, the white man also is in a state of enviable felicity, but he does not show his joy like the negro, who seems to forget his cares and sorrows, the miseries which his gross superstitions entail on him, the frequency with which he is exposed to sudden destruction, everything, in short, is forgotten save the present, and he enjoys himself with unmitigated fervour.

It really did my heart good as I sat with my comrades beside our fire and looked around me on their happy faces, which were rendered still happier by the gift from us of a small quantity of tobacco with which we had taken care to provide ourselves for this very purpose.

I could scarcely believe that the jovial, kindly, hearty fellows were the very men who are well known to be such cruel blood-thirsty fiends when under the influence of their dreadful superstitions, and who, but a few hours before, had been darting through the woods, besmeared with blood, and yelling like maniacs or demons. In fact the whole scene before me, and the day's proceedings, seemed to me, at that time, like a vivid dream, instead of a reality. Moreover, after I lay down, the reality became a dream, and I spent that night, as I had spent the day, shooting gazelles, lions, wild pigs, and elephants in imagination.

CHAPTER VI.

DREAMING, AND FEEDING, AND BLOODY WORK
ENLARGED UPON.

THE first object of which my senses became cognizant on awaking next morning was my friend Peterkin, who had evidently awakened just a moment or two before me, for he was in the act of yawning and rubbing his eyes.

I have all my life been a student of character, and the most interesting yet inexplicable character which I have ever studied has been that of my friend Peterkin, whose eccentricities I have never been able fully to understand or account for. I have observed that, on first awaking in the mornings, he has been wont to exhibit several of his most eccentric and peculiar traits, so I resolved to feign myself asleep and watch him.

"Heigho!" he exclaimed, after the yawn I have just referred to. Having said this, he stretched out both arms to the utmost above his head, and then flung himself back at full length on his couch where he lay still for about half a minute. Then he started up suddenly into a sitting posture and looked slowly from one to another of the recumbent forms around him. Satisfied, apparently, that they were

asleep, he gave vent to a long yawn which terminated in a gasp, and then he looked up contemplatively at the sky which was, at that hour, beginning to warm with the red rays of the rising sun. While thus engaged, he caressed, with his right hand, the very small scrap of whisker that grew on his right cheek. At first it seemed as if this were an unconscious action, but he suddenly appeared to become absorbed in it and stared straight before him as one does when only half-awake, mumbling the while in an under tone. I could not make out distinctly what he said, but I think I caught the words, "Yes, a little—a *very* little thicker—six new hairs I think—umph! slow, very slow." Here he looked at Jack's bushy beard and sighed.

Suddenly he thrust both hands deep into his breeches' pockets and stared at the black embers of the extinct fire; then, as suddenly, he pulled out his hands and placing the fore finger of his right hand on the end of the thumb of his left, said slowly,—

"Let me see—I'll recall it."

He spoke with intense gravity. Most persons do when talking to themselves.

"Yes, I remember now. There were two elephants and four—or three, was it?—no, it must have been four lions. The biggest elephant had on a false front of fair curls and a marriage ring on its tail. Stay;

was it not the other one had that? No, it was the biggest. I remember now, for it was just above the marriage ring I grasped it when I pulled its tail out. I didn't pull it off, for it wouldn't come off; it came out like a telescope or a long piece of india-rubber. Ha! and I remember thinking how painful it must be. That was odd, now, to think of that. The other elephant had on crinoline. That was odder still; for of all animals in the world it least required it. Well, let me see. What did I do. Oh yes, I shot them both; of course, that was natural—but it wasn't quite so natural that the big one should vomit up a live lion which attacked me with incredible fury. But I killed it cleverly. Yes, it *was* a clever thing, undoubtedly, to split a lion in two, from the tip of its nose to the extremity of its tail, with one stroke of a pen knife!—”

At this climax I could contain myself no longer, and burst into a loud laugh as I perceived that Peterkin had spent the night as I myself had done, in hunting—though, I confess, there was a considerable difference in the nature of our achievements, and in the manner of their accomplishment.

“Why, what are you laughing at?” said Jack, sitting up and gazing at me with a stupid stare.

“At Peterkin's dreams,” said I.

“Ah!” said Jack with a smiling yawn, “that's

it, is it? Been hunting elephants and lions, eh?"

"Why, how did you guess that?" I asked in surprise, "were you not asleep just now?"

"Of course I was, and dreaming too, like yourself, I make no doubt. I had just bagged my fifteenth elephant and my tenth lion when your laugh awoke me. And the best of it is that I was carrying the whole bagful on my back at once, and did not feel much oppressed by the weight."

"That beats my dream hollow," observed Peterkin, "so it's my opinion we'd better have breakfast. Hallo! Makarooroo, hy! d'ye hear? rouse up, you junk of ebony."

"Yis, massa, comin'," said our guide, rising slowly from his lair on the opposite side of our fire-place.

"D'you hear?"

"Yis, massa."

"You're a nigger!"

"Dat am a fact."

"Well, being a nigger you're a brick, so look sharp with that splendid breakfast you promised us last night. I'll wager a million pounds that you had forgotten all about it."

"No, massa, me no forgit. Me up in centre ob de night and put'im in de hole. Wat you call 'im—oben?"

"Ay, oven, that's it."

"Yis, well, me git 'im d'rec'ly."

"And, I say, hold on," added Peterkin. "Don't you suppose I'm going to stand on ceremony with you. Your name's too long, by half. Too many rooroos about it, so I'm going to call you Mak in future, d'ye understand?"

The negro nodded and grinned from ear to ear as he left us. Presently he returned with a huge round, or lump of meat, at which we looked inquisitively. The odour from it was delightful, and the tender, juicy appearance of the meat when Makarooroo, who carved it for us, cut the first slice, was quite appetizing to behold.

"What is it?" inquired Peterkin.

"Elephant's foot," replied the guide.

"Gammon," remarked Peterkin.

"It's true, massa. Don't you see him's toe?"

"So it is," said Jack.

"And it's first-rate," cried I, tasting a morsel.

With that we fell to and made a hearty meal, after which we, along with the king and all his people, retraced our steps to the river and returned to the native town where we spent another day in making preparations to continue our journey towards the land of the gorilla.

During the hunt which I have just described I was very much amused as well as amazed at the reck-

less manner in which the negroes loaded their rusty old trade-guns. They put in a whole handful of powder each time, and above that as much shot and bits of old iron of all kinds as they dared—some I saw charged thus to within a few inches of the muzzle, and the owners seemed actually afraid to put them to their shoulders, as well they might be, for the recoil was tremendous, and had the powder been good their guns must have been blown to pieces and themselves killed.

On our return to the village we found the people on the eve of one of those terrible outbursts of superstitious passion which rarely if ever pass away without some wretched human creature perishing under the hands of murderers.

“There is something wrong with the fetish-man, I think,” remarked Jack as we disembarked at the landing. “He seems excited. Do you know what it can be at, Makarooroo?”

“Jack,” interposed Peterkin, “I have changed his name to Mak, so you and Ralph will please to remember that. Mak, my boy, what’s wrong with your doctor?”

The negro looked very grave and shook his head as he replied, “Don’ know, massa. Him’s be goin’ to rizz de peepil wid him norrible doin’s. Dere will be death in the camp mos’ bery quick. P’raps dis night.”

"That is terrible," said I. "Are you sure of what you say?"

"Sartin sure," replied the negro, with another shake of the head.

"Then, Mak," said Jack," it behoves us to look to ourselves. You look like an honest fellow, and I believe we may trust you. We cannot expect you to help us to fight against your own kith and kin, but I do expect that you will assist us to escape if any foul-play is intended. Whatever betides, it is as well that you should know that white men are not easily conquered. Our guns are good—they never miss fire. We will sell our lives dearly, you may depend on it."

"Ay," added Peterkin, it is well that you should know that; moreover, it is well that the rascally niggers of your tribe should know it too; so you can take occasion to give them a hint that we shall keep ourselves prepared for them, with my compliments."

"De mans ob my peepil," replied the negro, with some dignity of manner, "be not wuss dan oder mans. But dem is bad enuff. But you no hab need for be 'fraid. Dey no touch de white mans. Dem bery much glad you com' here. If any bodies be killed it be black mans or 'oomans."

We felt somewhat relieved on hearing this, for to say truth we knew well enough that three men, no matter how well armed or resolute they might be,

could not hope to defend themselves against a whole tribe of savages in their own country. Nevertheless we resolved to keep a sharp look out and be prepared for the worst. Meanwhile we did all in our power to expedite our departure.

That evening the trader started on his return journey to the coast, leaving us in charge of King Jambai, who promised earnestly to take good care of us. We immediately put his willingness to fulfil his promise to the test by begging him to furnish us with men to carry our goods into the interior. He tried very hard to induce us to change our minds and remain hunting with his tribe; telling us that the gorilla country was far far away from his lands; that we should never reach it alive, or that if we did we should certainly be killed by the natives who, besides being cruel and warlike, were cannibals; and that if we did meet in with gorillas we should all be certainly slain, for no one could combat successfully with that ferocious giant of the monkey tribe.

To this we replied that we were quite aware of the dangers we should have to encounter in our travels, but added that we had come there for the very purpose of encountering such dangers, and especially to pay a visit to the giant monkeys in their native land, so that it was in vain his attempting to dissuade us, as we were resolved to go.

Seeing that we were immovable the king eventually gave in and ordered some of his best men to hold themselves in readiness to start with us on the following morning. We then proceeded to his majesty's house, where we had supper, and afterwards retired to our own hut to rest.

But we were destined to have little or no rest that night. The doctor or fetish-man of the tribe had stirred up the passions of the people in a manner that was quite incomprehensible to us. King Jambai, it seems, had been for some weeks suffering from illness—possibly from indigestion, for he was fond of gorging himself—and the medicine-man had stated that his majesty was bewitched by some of the members of his own tribe, and that unless these sorcerers were slain there was no possibility of his getting well.

We never could ascertain why the fetish-man should fix upon certain persons to be slain, unless it was that he had a personal enmity against them; but this seemed unlikely, for two of the persons selected were old female slaves who could never, of course, have injured the doctor in any way. But the doings of Africans, especially in regard to religious superstitions, I afterwards found were so mysterious that no one could or would explain the meaning of them to us. And I am inclined to believe that in reference to the

meaning of many things they were themselves utterly ignorant.

Towards midnight the people had wrought themselves up to a frenzied condition, and made so much noise that we could not sleep. In the midst of the uproar Makarooroo, who, we observed, had been very restless all the evening, rushed into our hut, exclaiming, "Massa! massa! come, save my Okandaga! come quick!"

The poor fellow was trembling with anxiety and was actually pale in the face, for a distinctly discernible pallor overspreads the countenance of the negro when under the influence of excessive terror.

Okandaga we had previously heard of, and seen. She was, according to African notions, an exceedingly pretty young girl, with whom our worthy guide had fallen desperately in love. Makarooroo's education had done much for him, and especially in regard to females. Having observed the kind respectful consideration with which the missionaries treated their wives, and the happiness that seemed to be the result of that course of conduct, he resolved in his own mind to try the experiment with one of the girls of his own tribe, and soon after rejoining it, paid his attentions to Okandaga, who seemed to him the most modest and loveable girl in the village.

Poor Okandaga was first amazed and then terrified

at the strangely gentle conduct of her lover, and thought that he meant to bewitch her ; for, having never before been accustomed to other than harsh and contemptuous treatment from men, she could not believe that Makarooroo meant her any good. Gradually, however, she began to like this respectful wooer, and finally she agreed to elope with him to the sea-coast and live near the missionaries. It was necessary, however, to arrange their plans with great caution. There was no difficulty in their getting married. A handsome present to the girl's father was all that was necessary to effect that end, and a good hunter like Makarooroo, knew he could speedily obtain possession of his bride, but to get her removed from her tribe and carried to the coast was quite a different affair. While the perplexed negro was pondering this subject and racking his brains to discover a way of getting over the difficulty, our arrival at the village occurred. At once he jumped to the conclusion that somehow or other he should accomplish his object through our assistance ; and, holding this in view, he the more willingly agreed to accompany us to the gorilla country, intending first to make our acquaintance, and afterwards to turn us to account in furthering his plans. All this we learned long afterwards. At the period of which I am now writing, we were profoundly ignorant of everything save the fact that Okandaga was his

affianced bride, and that the poor fellow was now almost beside himself with horror because the fetish-man had condemned her, among others, to drink the poisoned cup.

This drinking of the poisoned cup is an ordeal through which the unhappy victims to whom suspicion has been attached are compelled to pass. Each one drinks the poison, and several executioners stand by, with heavy knives, to watch the result. If the poison acts so as to cause the supposed criminal to fall down, he is hacked in pieces instantly ; but if, through unusual strength or peculiarity of constitution, he is enabled to resist the effects of the poison his life is spared and he is declared innocent.

Jack, and Peterkin, and I seized our weapons, and hurrying out, followed our guide to the spot where this terrible tragedy was enacting.

“ Don't fear, Mak,” said Peterkin, as we ran along, “ we'll save her somehow. I'm certain of that.”

The negro made no reply, but I observed a more hopeful expression on his countenance after the remark. He evidently had immense faith in Peterkin ; which I must say was more than I had, for, when I considered our small numbers, my hope of influencing savages was very slight.

The scene that met our eyes was indescribably horrible. In the centre of a dense circle of negroes,

who had wrought themselves up to a pitch of ferocity that caused them to look more like wild beasts than men, stood the king, and beside him the doctor or fetish-man. This latter was ornamented with a towering head-dress of feathers. His face was painted white, which had the effect of imparting to him an infinitely more hideous and ghastly aspect than is produced in the white man when he is painted black. A stripe of red passed round his head, and another down his forehead and nose. His naked body was decked with sundry fantastic ornaments, and altogether he looked more like a fiend than I had believed it possible for man to appear.

The ground all round him was saturated with blood and strewn with arms, fingers, cleft skulls, and masses of flesh that had been hewn from the victims who had already fallen, one of whom, we afterwards learned, had belonged to the royal family. Two still remained, a young female and an old man. The emaciated frame and white woolly head of the latter showed that in the course of nature his earthly career must soon terminate. It is probable that the poor old man had become a burden to his relations, and the doctor took this opportunity of ridding the tribe of him. The girl was Okandaga, who stood weeping and trembling as she gazed upon the butchery that had already taken place.

The old man had swallowed the poison shortly be-

fore we arrived, and he was now struggling to maintain an erect position. But he failed, his quivering limbs sank beneath him, and before we could interfere, the bloody executioners had cut off his head, and then, in a transport of passion they literally hacked his body to pieces.

We rushed hastily forward to the king, and Jack, in an earnest voice, implored him to spare the last victim.

"Surely," said he, "enough have been sacrificed already. Tell him, Makarooroo, that I will quit his village and never see him more, if he does not spare the life of that young girl."

The king appeared much perplexed by this unlooked for interference on our part.

"I cannot check the spirits of my people now," he replied. "They are roused. The girl has bewitched me, and many others. She must die. It is our custom. Let not my white men be offended. Let them go to their hut and sleep."

"We cannot sleep while injustice is done in the village," answered Jack in a lofty tone. "Let not King Jambai do that which will make his visitors ashamed of him. Let the girl live till to-morrow at midnight. Let the case be investigated, and if she be proved guilty then let her die."

The king commenced a long reply in the same

dignified manner and tone which Jack had assumed. While he was thus engaged Peterkin touched our guide on the shoulder and whispered,—

“I say, Mak, tell the doctor to back up Jack’s request, and I’ll give him a gun.”

The negro slipped at once to the side of the doctor, who had begun to frown fiercely on Jack, and whispered a few words in his ear. Instantly his face assumed a calmer aspect, and presently he stepped up to the king, and a whispering conversation ensued, in which the doctor, carefully refraining from making any mention of the gun, commended the wise advice of the white man, and suggested that the proposal should be agreed to, adding, however, that he knew for certain that the girl was a witch, but that the investigation would do good in the way of proving that he, the doctor, was correct, and thus the girl should perish on the following night, and the white men would be satisfied.

Having announced this to the multitude, the king ordered Okandaga to be conducted back to her prison and carefully guarded, and we returned to our hut—not, however, to sleep, but to consult as to what was to be done next.

“I knew that you wanted a respite for her,” said Peterkin, as we sat round our fire, “that you might have time to consider how to act, and I backed up

your request accordingly, as you know. But now, I confess, I'm very much at a loss what to suggest. It seems to me we have only purchased a brief delay."

"True," answered Jack; "the delay is not so brief, however, but that we may plan some method of getting the poor girl out of this scrape. What say you, Mak?"

"If *you* no can tink 'pon someting, I gib up all hope," replied our guide sorrowfully.

"Come, Mak; cheer up!" cried Peterkin. "If the worst comes to the worst, you can, at any rate, fight for your bride."

"Fight!" exclaimed the negro, displaying his white teeth like a mastiff, rolling his eyes and clenching his fists convulsively. Then in a calmer tone he continued, "Ay, me can fight. Me could kill all de guards an' take Okandaga by de hand, an' run troo de bushes for eber. But guards no die widout hollerin' an' yellin' like de gorilla; an' nigger mans can run fasterer dan womans. No, no, dat am dumpossobable."

"Nothing's 'dumpossobable' to brave hearts and stout arms," replied Jack. "There are only four guards put over her, I believe. Well, there are just four of us—not that we require to be equal, by any means; Peterkin and I could settle them easily, but we require to be equal in numbers in order to do it

quietly. I have a plan in my head, but there's one hitch in it that I cannot unravel.

"And what may that be?" I asked.

"Why, I don't see how, after getting clear off with Okandaga, we are to avoid being pursued on suspicion and captured."

"Dere is one cave," remarked the guide, "not far off to here. P'raps we be safe if we git into 'im. But I 'fraid it not do, cause him be peepiled by fiends an' dead man's spirits."

"That's a grave objection," said Peterkin, laughing.

"Yes, an' de tribe neber go near dere. Dey is most drefful terrorfied to be cotched dere."

"Then, that will just do," cried Jack with animation. "The very thing. And now I'll tell you what my plan is. To-morrow morning early we will tell the king that we wish to be off at once. That we have put off too much time already, and wish to make no further delay. Then we'll pack up and start. At night we will encamp in a quiet out-of-the-way part of the woods and slip back to the village in the dark a short time before midnight. The whole village will at that time be assembled, probably, at the spot where the execution is to take place, so we can rush in, overpower the guard, free Okandaga, and make our escape to the cave where they will never think of looking for us."

Peterkin shook his head. "There are two difficulties in your plan, Jack. First, what if the natives are *not* assembled on the place of execution, and we find it impossible to make our entrance into, or exit from the village quietly?"

"I propose," replied Jack, "that we shall undress ourselves, rub ourselves entirely over with charcoal and grease, so that they shall not recognise us, and dash in and carry the girl off by a *coup de main*. In which case it will, of course, be neck or nothing, and a tremendous race to the cave, where, if they follow us, we will keep them at bay with our rifles."

"Umph, dashing, no doubt, but risky," said Peterkin, "extremely risky. Yet it's worth trying. Well, my second difficulty is, what if they don't stick to their promise after we quit, and kill the poor thing before midnight?"

"We must take our chance of that. But I shall put the king on his honour before leaving, and say that I will make particular inquiry into the way in which the trial has been conducted on my return."

"Put the king on his honour!" observed Peterkin, "I'm afraid that you'll put his majesty on an extremely unstable foundation. However, I see nothing better that can be done."

"Have you any more difficulties?"

"Yes," said I. "There is one other. What do

you propose to do with the men who are to be supplied us by the king during these extremely delicate and difficult manœuvres ? ”

The countenances of my comrades fell at this question.

“ I never thought of them,” said Jack.

“ Nor I,” said Peterkin.

Makarooroo groaned.

“ Well,” said I, “ if you will allow me to suggest, I would recommend that we should, towards the close of the day, send them on ahead of us, and bid them encamp at a certain place, saying that we shall spend the night in hunting and return to them in the morning.”

“ The very thing,” said Jack. “ Now, comrades, to rest. I will occupy myself, until I fall asleep, in maturing my plans and thinking out the details. Do you the same, and if anything should occur to you let us consult over it in the morning.”

We were all glad to agree to this, being wearied more, perhaps, by excitement than want of rest, so bidding each other good night we lay down side by side to meditate, and, for my part, to dream of the difficult and dangerous work that awaited us on the morrow.

CHAPTER VII.

WE CIRCUMVENT THE NATIVES.

WE arose on the following morning with the dawn of day, and began to make preparation for our departure.

To our satisfaction we found the king quite willing that we should go; so, embarking our goods in one of the native canoes, we ordered our negroes to embark, and commenced our journey amid the firing of guns and the good wishes of the natives. I must confess that I felt some probings of conscience at the thought of the double part we were compelled to play; but the recollection of the horrible fate that awaited the poor negro girl put to flight such feelings, and induced a longing for the time of action to arrive.

I have more than once referred to our goods. Perhaps it may be as well to explain that, when we first landed on the African coast, we made inquiries of those who were best acquainted with the nature and requirements of the country we were about to explore, as to what goods we ought to purchase of the traders, in order to be in a position to pay our way as we went along—for we could not, of course,

expect the savages to feed us, and lodge us, and help us on our way for nothing. After mature consideration, we provided ourselves with a supply of such things as were most necessary and suitable; such as, tobacco, powder, and shot, and ball, a few trade-guns, several pieces of brightly coloured cloth, packages of beads,—some white enamelled, others of coloured glass,—coffee and tea, knives, scissors, rings, and a variety of other knick-knacks. These, with a little brandy to be used medicinally, our blankets and camp-cooking utensils, formed a heavy load for ten men; but of course, as we advanced, the load was lightened by the consumption of our provisions and the giving away of goods. The additions which I made, however, in the shape of stuffed specimens began in the course of time to more than counter-balance this advantage.

Being resolved to impress the natives with a respect for our physical powers, we made a point of each carrying a pretty heavy load on our journeys—excepting, of course, when we went out a-hunting. But, to return :—

Our crew worked willingly and well, so that ere night closed in upon us we were a considerable distance away from the village. As the sun set we landed, and ordering our men to advance in the canoe to a certain bend in the river, and there en-

camp and await our return, we landed and went off into the woods as if to search for game.

"Now, Makarooroo, quick march, and don't draw rein till we reach the cave," said Jack, when we were out of sight of the canoe.

Our guide obeyed in silence, and for the next two hours we travelled through the woods at a sort of half trot, that must have carried us over the ground at the rate of five miles an hour. The pace was indeed tremendous, and I now reaped the benefit of those long pedestrian excursions which for years past I had been taking, with scientific ends in view, over the fields and hills of my native land. Jack and Peterkin seemed both to be made of iron, and incapable of suffering from fatigue. But I have no doubt that the exciting and hazardous nature of the expedition on which we had embarked had much to do with our powers of endurance.

After running and doubling, gliding and leaping through the dense woods, as I have said, for two hours, we arrived at a broken rocky piece of ground over which we passed, and eventually came upon a thick jungle that concealed a vast cliff almost entirely from view. The cracking of the bushes, as we approached, showed that we had disturbed the slumbers of more than one of the wild beasts that inhabited the spot. Here Makarooroo paused, and, although

it was intensely dark I could observe that he was trembling violently.

"Come, Mak," said I in a whisper, "surely you, who have received a Christian education, do not really believe that devils inhabit this spot?"

"Me don know, massa. Eber since me was be a pikaniny me fraid—horrobably 'fraid ob dat cave."

"Come, come," said Jack impatiently, "we have no time for fears of any kind this night. Think of Okandaga, Mak, and be a man."

This was sufficient. The guide pushed boldly forward, and led us to the mouth of a large cavern at which he halted and pointed to the gloomy interior.

"You have the matches, Peterkin, quick strike a light. It is getting late," said Jack.

In another moment a light was struck, and with it we kindled three goodly sized torches with which we had provided ourselves. Holding these high over our heads we entered the cavern—Jack first, Peterkin second, I next, and the terrified negro in rear.

We had scarcely entered, and were peering upwards at the black vault overhead, when an indescribable rushing sound filled the air of the cavern, and caused the flame of our torches to flicker with such violence that we could not see any object distinctly. We all came to a sudden pause, and I confess that at that moment a feeling of superstitious

dread chilled the blood in my veins. Before we could discover the cause of this strange effect several large black objects passed through the air near our heads with a peculiar muffled noise. Next instant the three torches were extinguished.

Unable to command himself any longer, the negro uttered a cry of terror and turned to fly, but Jack, whose wits seemed always prepared for any emergency, had foreseen the probability of this, and springing quickly after him threw his arms round his neck and effectually prevented his running away.

The noise caused by the scuffle seemed to arouse the fury of all the evil spirits of the place, for a perfect hurricane of whirring sounds raged around us for a few seconds.

"It's only bats," cried Jack, "look alive, Peterkin, another light."

In a few seconds the torches were rekindled and we advanced into the cavern, and Mak, after recovering from his fright and learning the cause thereof, became much bolder. The cave was about a hundred yards deep by about fifty wide; but we could not ascertain its height, for the light of our torches failed to penetrate the deep gloom overhead. It was divided into two natural chambers; the outer being large, the inner small, a mere recess in fact. In this latter we planted our torches and proceeded

with our hasty preparations. Peterkin was ready first. We endeavoured to make ourselves as like to the natives in all respects as possible, and when I looked at my companions I was obliged to confess that except in the full blaze of the torch light I could not discern any point of difference between them and our guide.

"Now then, Jack," said Peterkin, "as you're not quite ready, and I am, I shall employ myself in preparing a little plan of own which I intend to put in force if the savages dare to venture into the cavern after us."

"Very good, but see that you finish it in less than five minutes, for I'll be ready in that time."

Peterkin immediately poured out a large quantity of powder on a flat rock and mingling with it a little water from a pool near by, converted it into a semi-moist ball. This he divided into three parts, and, forming each part into the shape of a tall cone, laid the whole carefully aside.

"There," said he, "lie you there until you are wanted."

At this moment, while Jack and I were bending down fastening the latchet of our shoes, our ears were saluted with one of the most appalling yells I ever listened to. Makarooroo fell flat to the earth in his fright, and my own heart chilled with horror,

while Jack sprang up and instinctively grasped the handle of his hunting knife.

"Very good," said Peterkin, as he stood laughing at us quietly, and we immediately perceived that it was he who uttered the cry.

"Why, what mean you?" said Jack almost angrily. "Surely this is no time for foolish jesting."

"I am anything but jesting, Jack. I'm only rehearsing another part of my plan."

"But you ought to give us warning, when you are about to do such startling things," said I re-monstratively.

"Nay, that would not have done at all, because then I should not have known what effect my cry is likely to produce on unexpectant ears."

"Well, now, are you all ready?" inquired Jack. "Then let us go."

Issuing forth armed only with our double-barrelled guns and heavy hunting knives, we hastened towards the native village. When within a hundred yards of the edge of the wood that skirted it we stopped to pull off our shoes, for it was necessary that we should have nothing about our persons to tell who we were, should any one chance to see us as we ran. We also left our rifles beside the shoes at a spot where we could find them in an instant in passing, and then slowly approached the outskirts of the village.

Presently we heard the hum of distant voices shouting, and the fear that the scene of bloodshed had already begun induced us to quicken our pace to a smart run. I never saw a man so deeply affected as was our poor guide, and when I looked at him I felt extremely anxious lest his state of mind should unfit him for acting with needful caution.

We gained the first cottages—they were empty. The village having been recently built, no stockade had yet been thrown round it, so our progress was unimpeded.

“We must be very cautious now,” observed Jack in a whisper. “Restrain yourself, Makarooroo, Okandaga’s life depends on our coolness.”

On reaching the back of the next hut, which was also empty, Jack motioned to us to halt, and coming close to us looked earnestly in each of our faces without saying a word. I supposed that, like a wise general, he was reviewing his troops—seeing whether the men he was about to lead into battle were fit for their work.

“Now,” said he rapidly, “it’s evident from the shouting that’s going on that they won’t waste much time with their palaver. The hut in which she is confined is not fifty yards off—I took care to ascertain its position before leaving this morning. What

we have to do is simple. Spring on the guards and knock them down with our fists or the hilts of our hunting knives or with bits of stick, as suits us best. But *mind*, here he looked pointedly at our guide, no shedding of blood if it can be avoided. These men are not our enemies. Follow me in single file; when I halt come up into line; let each single out the man nearest to him and when I hold up my hand spring like wild cats. If there happen to be five or six guards instead of four, leave the additional ones to me. We merely nodded assent, and in another minute were close upon the prison. Peterkin, Mak, and I had provided us with short heavy bludgeons on our way. These we held in our right hands; our left hands we kept free either to grasp our opponents with or to draw our knives if necessary. Jack carried his long knife—it might almost have been termed a short sword—in his left hand, and from the manner in which he clenched his right I saw that he meant to make use of it as his principal weapon.

On gaining the back of the house we heard voices within, but could see nothing, so we moved softly round to the front, keeping, however, well behind the screen of bushes. Here Jack halted, and we ranged up alongside of him and peeped through the bushes. The hut was quite open in front, and the interior was brightly lighted by a strong fire, round which

the four guards—stout fellows, all of them—were seated with their spears beside them on the ground. They were conversing in an excited tone, and taking no notice of Okandaga who sat behind them partially in the shade with her face buried in her hands. She was not tied in any way, as the guards knew well enough that she could not hope to escape them by mere running away.

One rapid glance showed us all this, and enabled us to select our men. Then Jack gave the signal, and, without an instant's hesitation, we darted upon them. I know not in what manner my comrades acted their part. From the moment I set eyes on the negro nearest to me, my blood began to boil. Somehow or other I saw Jack give the signal without taking my eyes off my intended victim, then I sprang forward and he had barely time to look up in alarm, when I struck him with all my force on the right temple. He fell without a groan. I looked round instantly and there lay the other three with my companions standing over them. Our plan had been so well concerted, and so promptly executed that the four men fell almost at the same instant, and without a cry.

Poor Okandaga leaped up and uttered a faint scream of alarm, but Makarooroo's voice instantly reassured her, and with an exclamation of joy she

sprang into his arms. There was no time for delay. While the scene I have described was being enacted the shouts in the centre of the village had been increasing, and we guessed that in a few minutes more the blood-thirsty executioners would come for their helpless victim. We therefore left the hut at once, and ran as fast as we could towards the place where our guns and shoes had been left. Our guide seized Okandaga by the wrist and dragged her along, but indeed she was so nimble that at first she required no assistance. In a short time, however, we were obliged to slacken our pace in order to enable her to keep up. We reached the guns in safety, but while we were in the act of lifting them a burst of wild cries, that grew louder and fiercer as they approached, told that the natives were rushing tumultuously towards the prison.

"Now, lads," said Jack, "we must put on full speed. Mak, take her right hand—here, Okandaga, your left."

At that instant there was a shout in the village, so loud that we knew the escape was discovered. An indescribable hubbub ensued, but we soon lost it in the crackling of the underwood as we burst through it in our headlong flight towards the cave. The poor girl, feeling that her life depended on it, exerted herself to the utmost, and with the aid of Jack and her lover kept well up.

"She'll never hold out to the end," said Peterkin, glancing over his shoulder as he ran.

The cries of the savages filled the woods in all directions, showing that they had instantly scattered themselves in the pursuit, in order to increase their chances of intercepting us. We had already traversed the greater part of the wood that lay between the village and the haunted cavern when two negroes, who must have taken a shorter route, deserted us. They instantly uttered a yell of triumph and followed us at full speed, while from the cries closing in upon us we could tell that the others had heard and understood the shout. Just then Okandaga's strength began to fail and her extreme terror as the pursuers gained on us tended still further to increase her weakness. This was all the more unfortunate that we were now almost within a couple of hundred yards of the mouth of the cave.

Makarooroo spoke encouragingly to her, but she was unable to reply, and it became evident that she was about to sink down altogether. Jack glanced over his shoulder. The two negroes were within fifty yards of us, but no others were in sight.

"Hold my gun," said Jack to me, sharply.

I seized it. He instantly stooped down, grasped Okandaga round the waist, and without stopping, swung her, with an exertion of strength that seemed

to me incredible, into his arms. We gained the mouth of the cavern, Jack dropt Okandaga, who immediately ran in, while the rest of us stopped abruptly and faced about.

"Back, all of you," cried Jack, "else they will be afraid to come on."

The words had scarcely passed his lips when the two negroes came up, but halted a few yards from the mouth of the cave on seeing such a giant-form guarding the entrance

To let those men escape and reveal the place of our concealment was not to be thought of. Jack darted out upon them. They separated from each other as they turned to fly. I was peeping out of the cave and saw that Jack could not secure them both, I therefore darted out, and, quickly overtaking one, seized him by the hair of the head and dragged him into the cave with the aid of Peterkin. Jack lifted the other savage completely from the ground, and carried him in struggling in his gripe like a child in its nurse's arms.

This last episode was enacted so quickly that the two negroes were carried into the cavern and gagged before the other pursuers came up. At the cave's mouth the whole of the men of the village shortly assembled with the king at their head. Thus far the excitement of the chase had led them, but now

that the first burst of their rage was over, and they found themselves on the threshold of that haunted cavern, the fear of which had been an element in their training from infancy, they felt, no doubt, overawed by superstitious dread and hesitated to enter, although most of them must have been convinced that the fugitives were there. Their fears increased as their anger abated, and they crowded round King Jambai, who seemed loth to take upon himself the honour of leader.

“ They must have sought shelter here,” said the king, pointing to the cavern and looking round with an assumption of boldness which he was evidently far from feeling. “ Who among my warriors will follow me ?”

“ Perhaps the evil spirits have carried them away,” suggested one of the sable crew.

“ That is the word of a coward,” cried the king, who, although somewhat timorous about spirits, was in reality a bold, brave man, and felt nettled that any of his warriors should show the white feather. “ If evil spirits are there, our fetish-man will drive them away. Let the doctor stand forth.”

At that moment the doctor, worthy knave! must have wished in his inmost soul that he had remained quietly at home and left to warriors the task of capturing the fugitives, but there was no resisting the

mandate of the king; besides his honour and credit as a fetish-man was at stake; moreover, no doubt, he felt somewhat emboldened by the presence of such a large number of men—there were certainly several hundreds on the ground—so, all things considered, he thought it best to accept the post of leader with a good grace. Stepping quickly forward he cried, "Let torches be brought, and I will lead the way."

A murmur of approbation ran through the crowd of blacks, who, like a flock of sheep, felt bold enough to follow a leader blindly.

While the consultation was going on outside we were making hasty preparation for defending ourselves to the last extremity. Peterkin, in particular, was extremely active, and, to say truth, his actions surprised us not a little. I once or twice fancied that excitement had turned his brain. He first dressed up his head in a species of wild turban made of dried grass and tall sedgy leaves; then he put several patches of red and white earth on his black face, as well as on his body in various places, and fastened a number of loose pieces of rag, torn from a handkerchief, and bits of tattered leaves to his arms and legs in such a manner as to give him an extremely wild and dishevelled appearance. I must say that when his hasty toilette was completed he seemed to me the most horrible-looking demon I had

ever conceived of. He next poured out nearly a whole flask of gunpowder on a ledge of rock, the edge of which was visible from the entrance to the cave, while the rock itself concealed him from view. Last of all, he took up the three cones of moistened gunpowder which the reader will remember he had made before we left the cave to attack the village. One of these he placed among the grass and branches on his head, the other two he held in his hands.

"Now, boys," he said, when all was ready, "all I have to ask of you is that you will stand by with matches, and when I give the word light the points of those three cones of gunpowder simultaneously and instantly, and leave me to finish the remainder of my part. Of course, you will be prepared to back me up with your rifles if need be, but keep well out of sight at first."

"We now saw the drift of our eccentric friend's intention, but for my part I felt little confidence in his success. The plan seemed altogether too wild and absurd. But our danger was imminent. No way of escape seemed possible, and it is wonderful how readily men will grasp at anything in the shape of a ruse or stratagem, no matter how silly or wild, that affords the most distant chance of escape from danger. Jack, too, I could see from the look of his face, put little faith in the plan, and I observed an expression

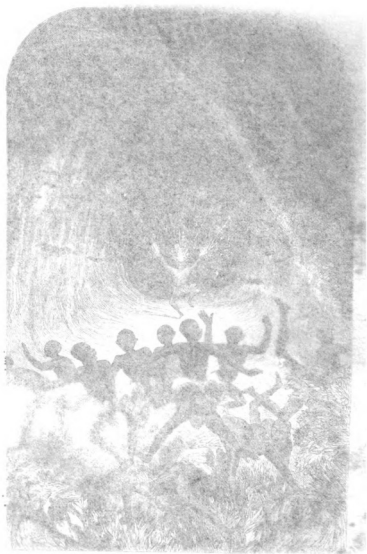
on the countenance of our negro guide which seemed to indicate that his respect for Peterkin's wisdom was on the wane.

We had not to wait long. The doctor, with several torch-bearers, suddenly darted in with a shout, followed closely by the warriors who yelled furiously, in order, no doubt, to keep up their courage.

Alarmed by such an unusual hubbub in their usually quiet domain, the bats came swooping from their holes in the walls by hundreds, and the torches were extinguished almost instantly. The savages who were near the entrance drew back in haste; those who had entered stood rooted to the spot in terror.

"Now!" whispered Peterkin eagerly.

We struck our lights at once and applied them to the points of the gunpowder cones, which instantly began to spout forth a shower of sparks with great violence. Peterkin darted out from behind the rock with a yell so appalling that we ourselves were startled by it, having forgotten that it formed an element in his plan. In passing he allowed a few sparks to fall on the heap of powder, which exploded with so bright a flame that the whole cavern was illuminated for an instant. It also set fire to the ragged scraps with which Peterkin had decked himself out—a result which had neither been intended nor anticipated, so that he rushed towards the mouth of



THE DANCE OF THE FEATHERS

the men were ordered to fire. The men fired their rifles and

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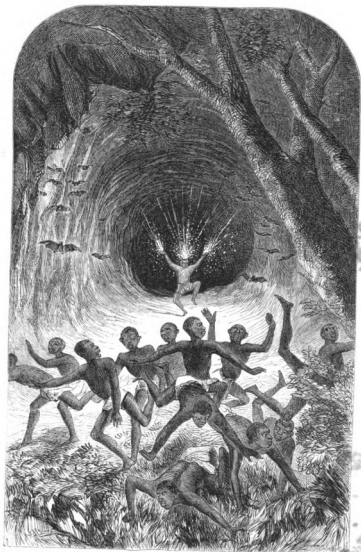
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PETERKIN BECOMES A DEMON.

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the cave howling with pain as well as with a desire to scare the savages.

The effect of this apparition was tremendous. The negroes turned and crushed through the narrow entrance screaming and shrieking with terror. The bats, no less alarmed than the men, and half suffocated with smoke, fled out of the cave like a whirlwind, flapping their wings on the heads of the negroes in their flight, and adding, if that were possible, to their consternation. The negroes ran as never men ran before, tumbling over each other in their mad haste, dashing against trees and crashing through bushes in their terror, while Peterkin stood leaping in the cave's mouth, smoking and blazing and spurt-ing, and unable to contain himself, giving vent to prolonged peals of demoniacal laughter. Had the laugh been that of negroes it might have been recognised; but Peterkin's was the loud, violent, British guffa, which, I make no doubt, was deemed by them worthy of the fiends of the haunted cave, and served to spur them on to still greater rapidity in their wild career.

Returning into the cave's innermost recess, we lighted one of the torches dropt by the savages, and placing it in a sort of natural niche, seated ourselves on several pieces of rock to rest.

Our first act was to look earnestly in each other's faces; our next to burst into peals of laughter.

"I say, comrades," I exclaimed, checking myself, "don't we run some risk in giving vent to our feelings so freely?"

"No fear," cried Peterkin, who was still smoking a little from unextinguished sparks. "There is not a man in the whole crew who will draw rein till he is sitting, with the teeth still chattering in his head, at his own fireside. I never saw men in such a fright since I was born. Depend upon it, we are safe enough here from this day forth. Don't you think so, Mak?"

Our guide, who was now trying to reassure his trembling bride, turned with a broad grin on his sable countenance and said,—

"Safe? Ho! yis, massa. Dere not be a man as'l come to dis yere cavern for de nix tree hun'r year or more. Massa Peterkin be de most horribble ghost dey ever did saw, an' no mistake. But, massas, we mus' go 'way quick an' git to our camp, for de king sure to go dere an' see if you no hab someting to do wid it all. Him's a bery clebber king, am Jambai—berly clebber; him's no be bug-hummed bery easy."

"Humbled, you mean," said Jack, laughing, "you're right, Mak; we must set off at once; but what *are* we to do with poor Okandaga, now that we have got her?"

This was indeed a puzzling question. It was impossible to take her to our camp and account to the negroes for her appearance in a satisfactory manner; besides, if Jambai took it into his head to pursue us in order to ascertain whether we had had anything to do with the rescue, our case would be hopeless. It was equally impossible to leave her where she was, and to let her try to make her escape through the woods alone was not to be thought of. While we pondered this dilemma an idea occurred to me.

"It seems to me," said I, "that men are seldom, perhaps never, thrown into a danger or difficulty in this world without some way of escape being opened up, which, if they will but grasp at it promptly, will conduct them at last out of their perplexities. Now, it has just occurred to me that, since everything else seems to be impossible, we might send Okandaga into the woods with Makarooroo to guide and defend her and to hunt for her. Let them travel in a line parallel with the river route which we intend to follow. Each night Mak will make a secure shelter for her, and then return to our camp as if he had come in from hunting. Each morning he will set off again into the woods as if to hunt, rejoin Okandaga, and thus we will journey together, as it were, and when we reach the next tribe of natives, we will leave the girl in their charge, until we return from

the gorilla country. What do you think of that plan?"

"Not a bad one," replied Jack, "but if Mak is away all day what are we to do for an interpreter?"

"Make him describe to us and to the men the day's route before leaving us," suggested Peterkin, "and as for the talking, we can manage that well enough for all needful purposes by a mixture of the few phrases we know with signs."

In the excitement of this whole affair we had totally forgotten our two prisoners, who lay not far from us on the ground, gagged and pinioned. We were now reminded of their presence rather abruptly. We must have secured their fastenings badly, for, during the time we were conversing they managed to free themselves, and made a sudden dash past us. Jack's eye fortunately caught sight of them in time. He sprang up, rushed at the one nearest him, and throwing out his foot as he passed, tripped him up. It chanced that at that spot there was a deep hole in the floor of the cavern. Into this the poor wretch plunged head first, and he was killed on the spot. Meanwhile, the other gained the outlet of the cave, and had almost escaped into the forest when Maka-rooro darted after him with the speed of an antelope. In a few seconds we heard a cry, and shortly after our guide returned with his knife clotted

with blood. He had overtaken and slain the other negro.

I cannot convey to the reader the horror that filled me and my two companions at this unexpected and melancholy termination of the affair. Yet we felt that we were guiltless of rashly spilling human blood, for Jack had no intention of killing the poor negro whom he tripped up, and as to the other we could not have prevented our guide from doing what he did. He himself deemed it justifiable, and said that if that man had escaped to the village and told who it was that frightened them out of the cave, they would certainly have come back and murdered us all. There was truth in this. Still we could not but feel overwhelmed with sadness at the incident.

We were now doubly anxious to get away from this cave, so we rapidly finished the discussion of our plan, and Jack arranged that he should accompany what may be termed the overland part of our expedition. This settled, we washed the charcoal off our persons, with the exception of that on our faces, having been advised by King Jambai himself to hunt with black faces, as wild animals were quicker to perceive our white skins than their black ones. Then we resumed our garments, and quitting the haunted cavern, set out on our return journey to the camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

PETERKIN DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF, AND OKANDAGA IS
DISPOSED OF, ETC.

WHEN within about three miles of the place where our men had been ordered to haul the canoe out of the water and make the camp, we came to a halt and prepared a spot for Okandaga to spend an hour or two in sleep. The poor creature was terribly exhausted. We selected a very sequestered place in a rocky piece of ground where the light of the small fire we kindled, in order to cook her some supper, could not be seen by any one who might chance to pass by that way.

Jack remained with her, but the guide went on with us in order to give instructions to our men, who, when we arrived, seemed much surprised that we had made such a bad hunt during the night. Having pointed out our route, Makarooroo then left us, and we lay down to obtain a few hours' repose.

We had not lain more than an hour when one of our men awoke us, saying that it was time to start, so we rose, very unwillingly, and embarked.

"I say, Ralph," observed Peterkin, as we glided up the stream, which in this place was narrow and sluggish, "isn't it strange that mankind, as a rule,

with very few exceptions, should so greatly dislike getting up in the morning?"

"It is rather curious, no doubt. But I suspect we have ourselves to thank for the disinclination. If we did not sit up so late at night we should not feel the indisposition to rise so strong upon us in the morning."

"There you are quite wrong, Ralph. I always find that the sooner I go to bed the later I am in getting up. The fact is, I've tried every method of rousing myself, and without success. And yet I can say conscientiously that I am desirous of improving; for when at sea, I used to have my cot slung at the head with a block-tackle, and I got one of the middies to come when the watch was changed and lower me, so that my head lay on the deck below, and my feet pointed to the beams above. And would you believe it, I got so accustomed to this at last that, when desperately sleepy, I used to hold on in that position for a few minutes, and secure a short nap during the process of suffocation with blood to the head."

"You must indeed have been incorrigible," said I, laughing. "Nevertheless I feel assured that the want of will lies at the root of the evil."

"Of course you do," retorted Peterkin testily; "people always say that when I try to defend myself."

“Is it not probable that people always say that just because they feel that there is truth in the remark?”

“Humph!” ejaculated my friend.

“Besides,” I continued, “our success in battling with the evil tendencies of our natures depends often very much on the manner in which we make the attack. I have pondered this subject deeply, and have come to the conclusion that there is a certain moment in the awaking hour of each day which, if seized and improved, gains for us the victory. You know Shakspeare’s judicious remark—‘There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,’ or something to that effect—I never feel quite sure of the literal correctness of my quotations, although I am generally certain as to the substance;—well, there is a tide also in the affair of getting up in the morning, and its flood-point is the precise instant when you recover consciousness. At that moment every one, I believe, has moral courage to leap violently out of bed; but let that moment pass, and you sink supinely back, if not to sleep, at least into a desperate condition of unconquerable lethargy.”

“You may be very correct in your reasoning,” returned Peterkin; “but, not having pondered that subject quite so deeply as you seem to have done,

I shall modestly refrain from discussing it. Meanwhile I will go ashore, and stalk yonder duck which floats so comfortably and lazily in the cove just beyond the point ahead of us, that I think it must be in the condition of one who, having missed the flood-tide you have just referred to, is revelling in the luxury of its second nap. Ho! you ebony-faced scoundrel!" he added, turning to the negro who steered our canoe; "shove ashore, like a good fellow. Come, Ralph, lend me your fowling-piece, and do you carry my big rifle. There is nothing so good for breakfast as a fat duck killed and roasted before it has had time to cool."

"And here is a capital spot on which to breakfast," said I, as we landed.

"First-rate. Now then, follow me, and mind your muzzle. Better put the rifle over your shoulder, Ralph, so that if it does go off it may hit the sun or one of the stars. A six ounce ball in one's spine is not a pleasant companion in a hunting expedition."

"But," retorted I, "you forget that I am particularly careful. I always carry my piece on half-cock, and *never* put my finger on the trigger."

"Indeed! not even when you pull it?"

"Of course when I am about to fire; but you know well enough what I mean."

"Hush, Ralph! we must keep silence now and step lightly."

In a few minutes we had gained the clump of bushes close behind which the duck lay; and Peterkin, going down on all fours, crept forward to get a shot. I followed him in the same manner, and when he stopped to take a deliberate aim, I crept up alongside. The duck had heard our approach, and was swimming about in a somewhat agitated manner among the tall reeds, so that my companion made one or two unsuccessful attempts to take aim.

"What an aggravating thing!" exclaimed Peterkin in a whisper.

At that moment I happened to cast my eyes across the river, and the reader may judge of my surprise when I beheld two elephants standing among the trees. They stood so silently and so motionless, and were so like in colour to the surrounding foliage, that we had actually approached to within about thirty yards without observing them. I touched Peterkin on the shoulder, and pointed to them without saying a word. The expression of amazement that instantly overspread his features showed that he also saw them.

"The rifle, Ralph," he said in a low, excited whisper.

I handed it to him. With careful deliberation he

took aim, and fired at the animal nearest to us. The heavy ball entered its huge body just behind the shoulder. Both elephants tossed up their trunks, and elevating their great ears they dashed furiously into the bush; but the one that had been hit, after plunging head foremost down a low bank, fell to the ground with a heavy crash, quite dead.

It was a splendid shot. The natives, who almost immediately after came up screaming with delight, could scarcely believe their eyes. They dashed across the river in the canoe, while some of them, regardless of the alligators that might be hidden there, sprang into the water and swam over.

"I'm sorry we did not get the duck, however," observed Peterkin, as we returned to the place where we had left the canoe. "Elephant meat is coarse, nasty stuff, and totally unfit for civilized mouths, though these niggers seem to relish it amazingly."

"You forget the baked foot," said I.

"Well, so I did; it was pretty good, certainly; but that's the only part o' the brute that's fit to eat."

Soon after this, the canoe came back and took us over the river; and we breakfasted on the side where the elephant had fallen, in order to allow the natives to cut off such portions of the meat as they required, and to secure the tusks. Then we con-

tinued our journey, and at night encamped near a grove of palm-trees which Makarooroo had described to us, and where we were soon joined by him and Jack, who told us that he had got on well during the day—that he had shot an antelope, and had seen a zebra and a rhinoceros, besides a variety of smaller game. He also told us that Okandaga was encamped in a place of safety a few miles to the right of our position, and that she had stood the journey well.

I was much interested by Jack's account of the zebra and the rhinoceros, specimens of both of which animals I had seen in menageries, and felt disposed to change places with him on the march; but reflecting that he was much more likely than I successfully to hunt anything he might pursue, I made up my mind to remain by the canoe.

Thus we travelled for several days without anything particular occurring, and at length arrived at a native village which lay on the banks of a noble stream.

Here Makarooroo introduced us to Mbango the chief, a fine-looking and good-natured negro, who received us most hospitably, supplied us with food, and urged us to remain and hunt with his people. This, however, we declined to do, telling our entertainer that we had come to his country for the pur-

pose of shooting that wonderful animal the gorilla, but assuring him that we would come back without fail if we should be spared. We further assured him on this head, by proposing to leave in his charge a woman for whom we had a great respect and love, and whom we made him promise faithfully to take care of till we returned.

Peterkin, who soon gave them a specimen of his powers as a marksman, and contrived in other ways to fill the minds of the chief and his people with a very exalted idea of his powers both of body and intellect, endeavoured to make assurance doubly sure by working on their superstitious fears.

"Tell Mbango," said he to our guide, "that though we be small in numbers, we are very powerful; that we can do deeds [here he became awfully solemn and mysterious] such as no black man ever conceived of; and that if a hair of the head of Okandaga is hurt, we will on our return—"

Instead of completing the sentence, Peterkin started up, threw himself into violent contortions, rolled his eyes in a fearful manner, and, in short, gave the chief and his people to understand that something quite indescribable and unutterably terrible would be the result of their playing us false.

"Send for Njamie," said Mbango to one of his retainers.

Njamie, who was the chief's principal wife, soon appeared. She led a sturdy little boy by the hand. He was her only son, and a very fine little fellow, despite the blackness of his skin and his almost total want of clothing.

To this woman Mbango gave Okandaga in charge, directing her in our presence how to care for her, and assuring her of the most terrible punishment should anything befall the woman committed to her care.

Njamie was a mild agreeable woman. She had more modesty of demeanour and humility of aspect than the most of the women of her tribe whom we happened to see, so that we felt disposed to believe that Okandaga was placed in as safe keeping as it was possible for us to provide for her in our circumstances. Even Makarooroo appeared to be quite at ease in his mind; and it was evidently with a relieved breast and a light heart that he bade adieu to his bride, and started along with us on the following day on our journey into the deeper recesses of the wilderness.

Before entering upon these transactions with the people of this village, we took care to keep our crew in total ignorance of what passed by sending them on in advance with the canoe under Jack's care, a few hours before we brought Okandaga into the

village, or even made mention of her existence; and we secured their ready obedience to our orders, and total indifference as to our motives in these incomprehensible actions, by giving them each a few inches of tobacco, a gift which rendered them supremely happy.

One day, about a week after the events above narrated, we met with an adventure which well-nigh cost Jack his life, but which ultimately resulted in an important change in our manner of travelling. We were traversing an extremely beautiful country with the goods on our shoulders, having, in consequence of the increasing turbulence of the river as well as its change of direction, been compelled to abandon our canoe, and cut across the country in as straight a line as its nature would permit. But this was not easy, for the grass, which was bright green, was so long as to reach sometimes higher than our shoulders:

In this species of country Jack's towering height really became of great use, enabling him frequently to walk along with his head above the surrounding herbage, while we were compelled to grope along, ignorant of all that was around us save the tall grass at our sides. Occasionally, however, we came upon more open ground where the grass was short, and then we enjoyed the lovely scenery to the full. We met with a great variety of new plants and trees in

this region. Many of the latter were festooned with wild vines and other climbing plants. Among others, I saw several specimens of that curious and interesting tree the banyan, with its drop-shoots in every state of growth—some beginning to point towards the earth in which they were ultimately destined to take root; some more than half-way down; while others were already fixed, forming stout pillars to their parent branches—thus, as it were, on reaching maturity, rendering that support which it is the glory as well as the privilege of youth to accord to age. Besides these, there were wild dates and palmyra-trees, and many others too numerous to mention, but the peculiar characteristics of which I carefully jotted down in my note-book. Many small water-courses were crossed, in some of which Mak pointed out a number of holes which, he said, were made by elephants wading in them. He also told us that several mud-pools, which seemed to have been recently and violently stirred up, were caused by the wallowing of the rhinoceros; so we kept at all times a sharp look-out for a shot.

Lions were also numerous in this neighbourhood, and we constantly heard them roaring at night, but seldom saw them during our march.

Well, as I have already remarked, one day we were travelling somewhat slowly through the long

grass of this country, when, feeling oppressed by the heat, as well as somewhat fatigued with my load, I called to Jack, who was in advance, to stop for a few minutes to rest.

"Most willingly," he replied, throwing down his load, and wiping away the perspiration which stood in large drops on his brow. "I was on the point of calling a halt when you spoke. How do you get on down there, Peterkin?"

Our friend, who had seated himself on the bale he had been carrying, and seemed to be excessively hot, looked up with a comical expression of countenance, and replied,—

"Pretty well, thank'ee. How do *you* get on *up there*?"

"Oh, capitally. There's such a nice cool breeze blowing, I'm quite sorry that I cannot send a little of it down."

"Don't distress yourself, my dear fellow; I'll come up to snuff it."

So saying, Peterkin sprang nimbly upon Jack's shoulders, and began to gaze round him.

"I say, Peterkin," said Jack, "why are you a very clever fellow just now?"

"Don't know," replied Peterkin. "I give it up at once. Always do. Never could guess a riddle in all my life."

"Because," said Jack, "you're '*up to snuff*.'"

"Oh, oh! that certainly deserves a *pinch*; so there's for you."

Jack uttered a roar, and tossed Peterkin off his shoulders, on receiving the punishment.

"Shabby fellow," cried Peterkin, rubbing his head. "But, I say, do let me up again. I thought, just as you dropped me, that I saw a place where the grass is short. Ay, there it is, fifty yards or so ahead of us, with a palmyra tree on it. Come, let us go rest there, for I confess that I feel somewhat smothered in this long grass."

We took up our packs immediately, and carried them to the spot indicated, which we found almost free from long grass. Here we lay down to enjoy the delightful shade of the tree, and the magnificent view of the country around us. Our negroes also seemed to enjoy the shade, but they were evidently not nearly so much oppressed with the heat as we were, which was very natural. They seemed to have no perception of the beautiful in nature, however, although they appreciated fully the agreeable influences by which they were surrounded.

While I lay at the foot of that tree, pondering this subject, I observed a very strange-looking insect engaged in a very curious kind of occupation. Peterkin's eye caught sight of it at the same instant with mine.

"Hallo! Jack, look here!" he cried in a whisper. "I declare, here's a beast been and shoved its head into a hole, and converted its tail into a trap!"

We all three lay down as quietly as possible, and I could not but smile when I thought of the literal correctness of my friend's quaint description of what we saw.

The insect was a species of ant-eater. It was about an inch and a quarter long, as thick as a crow-quill, and covered with black hair. It put its head into a little hole in the ground, and quivered its tail rapidly. The ants, which seemed to be filled with curiosity at this peculiar sight, went near to see what the strange thing could be; and no sooner did one come within the range of the forceps on the insect's tail, than it was snapped up.

"Now, that is the most original trapper I ever did see or hear of," remarked Peterkin, with a broad grin. "I've seen many things in my travels, but I never expected to meet with a beast that could catch others by merely wagging its tail."

"You forget the hunters of North America," said Jack, "who entice little antelopes towards them by merely wagging a bit of rag on the end of a ramrod."

"I forget nothing of the sort," retorted Peterkin. "Wagging a ramrod is not wagging a tail. Besides, I spoke of beasts doing it; men are not beasts."

"Then I hold you self-convicted, my boy," exclaimed Jack; "for you have often called *me* a beast."

"By no means, Jack. I am not self-convicted, but quite correct, as I can prove to the satisfaction of any one who isn't a philosopher. You never can prove anything to a philosopher."

"Prove it, then."

"I will. Isn't a monkey a beast?"

"Certainly."

"Isn't a gorilla a monkey?"

"No doubt it is."

"And arn't *you* a gorilla?"

"I say, lads, it's time to be going," cried Jack, with a laugh, as he rose and resumed his load.

At that moment Mak uttered an exclamation, and pointed towards a particular spot in the plain before us, where, close by a clump of trees, we saw the graceful head and neck and part of the shoulders of a giraffe. We were naturally much excited at the sight, this being the first we had fallen in with.

"You'd better go after it," said Jack to Peterkin, "and take Mak with you."

"I'd rather you'd go yourself," replied Peterkin; "for, to say truth, I'm pretty well knocked up to-day. I don't know how it is,—one day one feels made of iron, as if nothing could tire one, and the next, one feels quite weak and spiritless."

"Well, I'll go; but I shall not take any one with me. Take observation of the sun, Mak, and keep a straight course as you are now going until night. D'ye see yonder ridge?"

"Yes, massa."

Then hold on direct for that, and encamp there. I'll not be long behind you, and hope to bring you a giraffe steak for supper."

We endeavoured to dissuade Jack from going out alone, but he said truly that his load distributed among us all was quite sufficient, without adding to it by taking away another member of the party. Thus we parted; but I felt a strange feeling of depression, a kind of foreboding of evil, which I could not shake off, despite my utmost efforts. Peterkin, too, was unusually silent, and I could not avoid seeing that he felt more anxiety on account of Jack's rashness than he was willing to allow. Our friend took with him one of our large-bore rifles, and a double-barrel of smaller bore slung at his back.

Shortly after parting with him, we descried an ostrich feeding in the plain before us. I had long desired to meet with a specimen of this gigantic bird in its native wilds, and Peterkin was equally anxious to get a shot at it; so we called a halt, and prepared to stalk it. We were aware that the ostrich is a very silly and very timid bird, but not being aware

of the best method of hunting it, we asked Makarooroo to explain how he was in the habit of doing it.

"You mus' know," he began, "dat bird hims be a mos' ex'roronary beast. When hims run hims go fasterer dan—oh! it be dumpossobable for say how much fast hims go. You no can see him's legs; dey go same as legs ob leetle bird. But hims be horrobably stupid. Suppose he see you far far away, goin' to de wind'ard ob him, he no run 'way to leeward; hims tink you wants to get round him, so off him start to git past you, and before hims pass he sometimes come close 'nuff to be shoted or speared. Me hab spear him dat way, but him's awful different to git at for all dat."

"Well, then, Mak, after that lucid explanation, what d'you propose that we should do?" inquired Peterkin, examining the locks of his rifle.

"Me pruppose dat you go far ober dere, Massa Ralph go not jist so far, and me go to de wind'ard and gib him fright."

Acting upon this advice, we proceeded cautiously to the several spots indicated, and our guide set off towards an exposed place, where he intended to show himself. In a few minutes we observed the gigantic bird look up in alarm, and then we saw Makarooroo running like a deer over the plain. The ostrich instantly rushed off madly at full speed, not,

as might have been expected, in a contrary direction, or towards any place of shelter, but simply, as it appeared to me, with no other end in view than that of getting to windward of his supposed enemy. I observed that he took a direction which would quickly bring him within range of my companion's rifle, but I was so amazed at the speed with which he ran that I could think of nothing else.

Every one knows that the ostrich has nothing worthy of the name of wings—merely a small tuft of feathers at each side, with which he cannot make even an attempt to fly ; but every one does not know, probably, that with his stout and long legs he can pass over the ground nearly at the ordinary speed of a locomotive engine. I proved this to my own satisfaction by taking accurate observation. On first observing the tremendous speed at which he was going, I seized my note-book, and pulling out my watch, endeavoured to count the number of steps he took in a minute. This, however, I found was totally impossible ; for his legs, big though they were, went so fast that I could no more count them than I could count the spokes of a carriage-wheel. I observed, however, that there were two bushes on the plain in the direction of his flight, which he would soon have to pass. I therefore laid down my note-book and rifle, and stood with my watch in

hand, ready to note the precise instants at which he should pass the first and second. By afterwards counting the number of footsteps on the ground between the bushes, and comparing the result with the time occupied in passing between the two, I thus proposed to myself to ascertain his rate of speed.

Scarcely had I conceived this idea when the bird passed the first bush, and I glanced at my watch ; then he passed the second, and I glanced again. Thus I noted that he took exactly ten seconds to pass from one bush to the other. While I was in the act of jotting this down I heard the report of Peterkin's rifle, and, looking up hastily, saw the tail-feathers of the ostrich knocked into the air, but the bird itself passed on uninjured. I was deeply mortified at this failure, and all the more so that, from past experience, I had been led to believe that my friend *never* missed his mark. Hurrying up, I exclaimed,—

“ Why, my dear fellow, what *can* have come over you ? ”

Poor Peterkin seemed really quite distressed ; he looked quite humbled at first.

“ Ah ! ” said he, “ it's all very well for you to say, ‘ What has come over you ? ’ but you ought to make allowance for a man who has carried a heavy load all the forenoon. Besides, he was almost beyond range.

Moreover, although I have hunted a good deal, I really have not been in the habit of firing at animal locomotives under full steam. Did you ever see such a slapping pace and such an outrageous pair of legs, Ralph?"

"Never," said I. "But come with me to yonder bushes. I'm going to make a calculation."

"What's a calcoolashun?" inquired our guide, who came up at that moment, panting violently.

"It's a summation, Mak—a case of counting up, one, two, three, &c.—and may-be multiplying, subtracting, and dividing into the bargain."

"Ho! dat's what me been do at de missionary school."

"Exactly; but what sort of calculation Ralph means to undertake at present I know not. Perhaps he's going to try to find out whether, if we were to run at the rate of six miles an hour till doomsday, in the wrong direction, there would be any chance of our ever sticking that ostrich's tail again on his big body. But come along,—we shall see."

On reaching the spot I could scarcely believe my eyes. Each step this bird had taken measured fourteen feet in length! I always carried a rolled up yard measure about with me, which I applied to the steps, so that I could make no mistake. There were

exactly thirty of those gigantic paces between the two bushes. This multiplied by six gave 180 steps, or 2520 feet in one minute, which resulted in 151,200 feet, or 50,400 yards, or very nearly thirty miles in the hour.

"No wonder I only knocked his tail off," said Peterkin.

"On the contrary," said I, "the wonder is that under the circumstances you hit the bird at all."

On further examination of the place where we had seen the ostrich before it was alarmed we ascertained that his ordinary walking pace varied from twenty to twenty-six inches in length.

After this unsuccessful hunt we returned to our comrades and proceeded to the rendezvous where we expected to find Jack, but as he was not there we concluded that he must have wandered further than he intended, so, throwing down our packs we set about preparing the camp and a good supper against his return. Gradually the sun began to sink low on the horizon. Then he dipped below it, and the short twilight of those latitudes was rapidly merging into night, but Jack did not return, and the uneasiness which we had all along felt in regard to him, increased so much that we could not refrain from showing it.

"I'll tell you what it is, Ralph," cried Peterkin, starting up suddenly. "I'm not going to sit here

wasting the time when Jack may be in some desperate fix. I'll go and hunt for him."

"Me tink you right," said our guide, "dere is ebery sort ob ting here. Beasties and mans. Pr'aps massa Jack am be kill."

I could not help shuddering at the bare idea of such a thing, so I at once seconded my companion's proposal and resolved to accompany him.

"Take your double barrel, Ralph, and I'll lend our spare big gun to Mak."

"But how are we to proceed? which way are we to go? I have not the most distant idea as to what direction we ought to go in our search."

"Leave that to Mak. He knows the ways o' the country best, and the probable route that Jack has taken. Are you ready?"

"Yes—shall we take some brandy?"

"Ay, well thought of. He'll perhaps be the better of something of that sort if anything has befallen him. Now, then, let's go."

Leaving our men in charge of the camp with strict injunctions to keep good watch and not allow the fires to go down lest they should be attacked by lions we three set forth on our nocturnal search. From time to time we stood still and shouted in a manner that would let our lost friend know that we were in search of him, should he be within ear-shot, but no answer-

ing cry came back to us, and we were beginning to despair when we came upon the footprints of a man in the soft soil of a swampy spot we had to cross. It was a clear moonlight night, so that we could distinguish them perfectly.

“Ho !” exclaimed our guide, as he stooped to examine the marks.

“Well, Mak, what do you make of it ?” inquired Peterkin anxiously.

Mak made no reply for a few seconds ; then he rose and said earnestly, “Dat am massa Jack’s foot.”

I confess that I was somewhat surprised at the air of confidence with which our guide made this statement, for after a most careful examination of the prints, which were exceedingly indistinct, I could discern nothing to indicate that they had been made by Jack.

“Are you sure, Mak ?” asked Peterkin.

“Sartin sure, massa.”

“Then push on as fast as you can.”

Presently we came to a spot where the ground was harder and the prints more distinct.

“Ha ! you’re wrong, Mak,” cried Peterkin, in a voice of disappointment as he stooped to examine the foot-steps again. “Here we have the print of a naked foot—Jack wore shoes ; and, what’s this ? blood !”

“Yis, massa, me know dat massa Jack hab shoes.

But dat be him's foot for all dat, and him's hurt some how for certain."

The reader may imagine our state of mind on making this discovery. Without uttering another word we quickened our pace into a smart run, keeping closely in the track of Jack's steps. Soon we observed that these deviated from side to side in an extraordinary manner as if the person who made them had been unable to walk straight. In a few minutes more we came on the footprints of a rhinoceros, a sight which still further increased our alarm. On coming out from among a clump of low bushes that skirted the edge of a small plain we observed a dark object lying on the ground about fifty yards distant from us. I almost sank down with an undefinable feeling of dread on beholding this.

We held our rifles in readiness as we approached it at a quick pace, for we knew not whether it was not a wild animal which might spring upon us the moment we came close enough. But a few seconds dispelled our dread of such an attack and confirmed our worst fears, for there, in a pool of blood, lay Jack's manly form. The face was upturned, and the moon which shone full upon it showed that it was pale as death and covered with blood. His clothes were rent and dishevelled and covered with dust as if he had struggled hard with some powerful foe, and all round

the spot were footprints of a rhinoceros, revealing too clearly the character of the terrible monster with which our friend had engaged in unequal conflict.

Peterkin darted forward, tore open Jack's shirt at the breast, and laid his hand upon his heart.

"Thank God," he muttered in a low subdued tone, "he's not dead. Quick, Ralph, the brandy-flask."

I instantly poured a little of the spirit into the silver cup attached to the flask and handed it to Peterkin who, after moistening Jack's lips, began assiduously to rub his chest and forehead with brandy. Kneeling down by his side I assisted him, while Makarooroo applied some to his feet. While we were thus engaged we observed that our poor friend's arms and chest had received several severe bruises and some slight wounds, and we also discovered a terrible gash in his right thigh which had evidently been made by the formidable horn of the rhinoceros. This, and the other wounds which were still bleeding pretty freely, we stanchd and bound up, and our exertions were at length rewarded by the sight of a faint tinge of colour returning to Jack's cheeks. Presently his eyes quivered, and heaving a short broken sigh he looked up.

"Where am I? eh! why, what's wrong? what has happened?" he asked faintly in a tone of surprise."

"All right, old boy. Here, take a swig of this, you

abominable gorilla," said Peterkin, holding the brandy flask to his mouth, while one or two tears of joy rolled down his cheeks.

Jack drank and rallied a little.

"I've been ill, I see," he said gently. "Ah! I remember now. I've been hurt, the rhinoceros—eh? have you killed it? I gave it a good shot. It must have been mortal, I think."

"Whether you've killed it or not I cannot tell;" said I, taking off my coat and putting it under Jack's head for a pillow, "but it has pretty nearly killed *you*. Do you feel worse, Jack?"

I asked this in some alarm, observing that he had turned deadly pale again.

"He's fainted, man, out o' the way," cried Peterkin, as he applied the brandy again to his lips and temples.

In a few seconds Jack again rallied.

"Now, Mak, bestir yourself," cried Peterkin throwing off his coat. "Cut down two stout poles, and we'll make some sort of litter to carry him on."

"I say, Ralph," whispered Jack faintly, "do look to my wounds and see that they are all tightly bound up. I can't afford to lose another drop of blood. It's almost all drained away, I believe."

While I examined my friend's wounds and re-adjusted the bandages my companions cut down two

poles. These we laid on the ground parallel to each other and about two feet apart, and across them laid our three coats which we fastened in a rough fashion by means of some strong cords which I fortunately happened to have with me. On this rude litter we laid our companion, and raised him on our shoulders. Peterkin and I walked in rear, each supporting one of the poles, while Makarooroo, being the stoutest of the three, supported the entire weight of the other ends on his broad shoulders. Jack bore the moving better than we had expected, so that we entertained sanguine hopes that no bones were broken, but that loss of blood was all he had to suffer from.

Thus slowly and with much difficulty we bore our wounded comrade to the camp.

CHAPTER IX.

I DISCOVER A CURIOUS INSECT, AND PETERKIN TAKES A STRANGE FLIGHT.

It happened most fortunately at this time that we were within a short day's journey of a native village, to which, after mature consideration, we determined to convey Jack and remain there until he should be sufficiently recovered to permit of our resuming our journey. Hitherto we had studiously avoided the villages that lay in our route, feeling indisposed to encounter unnecessarily the risk of being inhospitably received ; perhaps even robbed of our goods, if nothing worse should befall us. There was, however, no other alternative now, for Jack's wounds were very severe, and the amount of blood lost by him was so great that he was as weak as a child. Happily no bones were broken, so we felt sanguine that by careful nursing for a few weeks we should get him set firmly upon his legs again.

On the following morning we set forth on our journey, and towards evening reached the village, which was situated on the banks of a small stream, in the midst of a beautiful country composed of mingled plain and woodland.

It chanced that the chief of this village was con-

nected by marriage with King Jambai, a most fortunate circumstance for us as it insured our being hospitably received. The chief came out to meet us riding on the shoulders of a slave, who, although a much smaller man than his master, seemed to support his load with much ease. Probably habit had strengthened him for his special work. A large hut was set apart for our accommodation; a dish of yams, a roast monkey, and a couple of fowls were sent to us soon after our arrival, and in short we experienced the kindest possible reception.

None of the natives of this village had ever seen a white face in their lives, and, as may well be imagined, their curiosity and amazement were unbounded. The people came constantly crowding round our hut, remaining, however, at a respectful distance, and gazed at us until I began to fear they would never go away.

Here we remained for three weeks, during which time Jack's wounds healed up, and his strength returned rapidly. Peterkin and I employed ourselves in alternately tending our comrade, and in scouring the neighbouring woods and plains in search of wild animals.

As we were now approaching the country of the gorilla,—although, indeed, it was still far distant—our minds began to run more upon that terrible

creature than used to be the case; and our desire to fall in with it was increased by the strange accounts of its habits and its tremendous power that we received from the natives of this village, some of whom had crossed the desert and actually met with the gorilla face to face. More than once, while out hunting, I have been so taken up with this subject, that I have been on the point of shooting a native who appeared unexpectedly before me, under the impression that he was a specimen of the animal on which my thoughts had been fixed.

One day about a week after our arrival, as I was sitting at the side of Jack's couch relating to him the incidents of a hunt after a buffalo that Makarooroo and I had had the day before, Peterkin entered with a swaggering gait, and, setting his rifle down in a corner, flung himself on the pile of skins that formed his couch.

"I'll tell you what it is," said he, with the look and tone of a man who feels that he has been unwarrantably misled, "I don't believe there's such a beast as a gorilla at all! now, that's a fact."

There was something so confident and emphatic in my comrade's manner that, despite my well-grounded belief on that point, I felt a sinking at the heart. The bare possibility that, after all our trouble and toil and suffering in penetrating thus far towards the

land which he is said to inhabit, we should find that there really existed no such creature as the gorilla was too terrible to think upon.

"Peterkin," said I anxiously, "what *do* you mean?"

"I mean," replied he, slowly, "that Jack is the only living specimen of the gorilla in Africa."

"Come, now, I see you are jesting."

"Am I?" cried Peterkin savagely, "jesting? eh! That means expressing thoughts and opinions which are not to be understood literally. Oh, I would that I were sure that I am jesting! Ralph, it's my belief, I tell you, that the gorilla is a regular sell—a great big unnatural hairy *do!*"

"But I saw the skeleton of one in London."

"I don't care for that. You may have been deceived, humbugged. Perhaps it was a compound of the bones of a buffalo and a chimpanzee."

"Nay, that were impossible," said I, quickly, "for no one pretending to have any knowledge of natural history and comparative anatomy could be so grossly deceived."

"What like was the skeleton, Ralph?" inquired Jack, who seemed to be rather amused by our conversation.

"It was nearly as tall as that of a medium sized man, I should think about five feet seven or eight

inches; but the amazing part about it was the immense size and thickness of its bones. Its shoulders were much broader than yours, Jack, and your chest is a mere child's compared with that of the specimen of the gorilla that I saw. Its legs were very short—much shorter than those of a man, but its arms were tremendous—they were more than a foot longer than yours. In fact, if the brute's legs were in the same proportion to its body as are those of a man it would be a giant of ten or eleven feet high. Or, to take another view of it, if you were to take a robust and properly proportioned giant of that height, and cut down his legs until he stood about the height of an ordinary man, *that* would be a gorilla."

"I don't believe it," cried Peterkin.

"Well, perhaps my simile is not quite so felicitous as—"

"I don't mean that," interrupted Peterkin, "I mean that I don't believe there's such a brute as a gorilla at all."

"Why, what has made you so sceptical?" inquired Jack.

"The nonsense that these niggers have been telling me, through the medium of Mak as an interpreter; that is what has made me sceptical. Only think, they say that a gorilla is so strong that he can lift a man by the nape of the neck clean off the ground

with one of his hind feet! Yes, they say he is in the habit of sitting on the lower branches of trees in lonely dark parts of the wood watching for prey, and when a native chances to pass by close enough he puts down his hind foot, seizes the wretched man therewith, lifts him up into the tree and quietly throttles him. They don't add whether or not he eats him afterwards, or whether he prefers him boiled or roasted. Now, I don't believe that."

"Neither do I," returned Jack, "nevertheless the fact that these fellows recount such wonderful stories at all, is, to some extent, evidence in favour of their existence, for in such a country as this where so many wonderful and horrible animals exist, men are not naturally tempted to invent *new* creatures; it is sufficient to satisfy their craving for the marvellous that they should merely exaggerate what does already exist."

"Go to, you sophist! If what you say be true, and the gorilla turns out to be only an exaggerated chimpanzee or ring-tailed-roarer, does not that come to the same thing as saying that there is no gorilla at all,—always, of course, excepting yourself?"

"Credit yourself with a punched head," said Jack, "and the account shall be balanced when I am sufficiently recovered to pay you off. Meanwhile, continue your account of what the niggers say about the gorilla."