THE LOST DIAMONDS OF THE ORANGE RIVER.

I.

Many are the stories told at the outspan fires of the South African transport riders, some weird, some romantic, some of native wars, some of fierce encounters with the wild beasts of the land. Often as I travelled with my friends up-country, we stopped to have a chat with these rugged people, and some strange and interesting information was obtained in this way. The transport rider—the carrier of Africa—with his stout wagon and span of oxen travels year after year over the rough roads of Cape Colony, and far beyond, in all directions, and is constantly encountering all sorts and conditions of men, white, black, and off-coloured; and in his wanderings or over his evening camp-fire he picks up great store of legend and adventure from the passing hunters, explorers, and traders.

One night, after a day's journey through the Bush-veldt, we lay at a farmhouse near which was a public outspan. At this outspan two transport riders were sitting snugly over their evening meal. They seemed a couple of cheery good fellows, one an English Africander, the other an Englishman, an old University man, and well read, as we afterwards discovered, and nothing would suit them but that we should join them and take pot-luck.

Supper finished, some good old Cango, the best home-manufactured brandy of the Cape, made in the Outshoorn district, was produced, pipes lighted, and then we began to "yarn." For an hour or more we talked upon a variety of topics—old days in England, the voyage to the Cape, the Colony, its prospects, and its sport.

"'Tis strange," said one of our number, "how little is known of the Orange River—at all events west of the Falls. I don't think I ever met a man who had been down it. One would think the Colonists would know something of their northern boundary; as a matter of fact they don't."

"Ah! talking of the Orange River reminds me," said the younger of the transport riders, the ex-Oxonian and the more loquacious of the two, "of a most extraordinary yarn I heard from a man I fell in with, some years back, stranded in the 'thirst-land,' north-west of Shoshong. Poor chap! he was in a sorry plight. He was an English gentleman, who for years had, from sheer love of sport and a wild life, been hunting big game in the interior. That season he had stayed too late on the Chobe River near where it runs into the Zambesi, and with most of his people had got fever badly. They had had a disastrous trek out, losing most of their oxen and all their horses; and when I came across them they were stuck fast in the doorst-land (thirst-land), unable to move forward or back. For two and a half days they had been without water; and from being in bad health to begin with, hadn't half a chance; and if I had not stumbled upon them, they must all have been dead within fifteen hours. I had luckily some water in my vatjes, and managed to pull them round; and that night, leaving their wagon in the desert, in hope of being saved subsequently, and taking as much of the ivory and valuables as we could manage, and Mowbray's, the Englishman's, guns and ammunition, we made a good trek, and reached water on the afternoon of the next day. I never saw a man so grateful as Mowbray. During the short time I knew him I found him one of the best fellows and most delightful companions I ever met. I dosed him with quinine, and pulled him together till we got to Shoshong; but before we had got half-way down to Griqualand, Mowbray grew suddenly worse, and died one evening in my wagon just at sunset. We buried him under a kameel-doorn tree, covering the grave with heavy stones, and fencing it strongly with thorns, to keep away the jackals and hyenas.

"Many and many a talk I had with poor Mowbray before he died. One evening in particular, as we sat before the camp-fire on the dewless ground, where I had propped him up and made him comfortable, he told me a most strange story, a story so wonderful that most people would look upon it as wildly improbable. He began in this way:

Felton, you have been a kind friend to me—kind and tender as any woman and I feel I owe you more than I am ever likely to repay. Yet, if you want wealth, I believe I can put it in your way. Do you know the northern bank of the Orange River between the Great Falls and the sea? No, I don't suppose you do, for very few people have ever trekked down it; still fewer have ever got down to the water from the great walls of desolate and precipitous mountain that environ its course; and except myself and two others, neither of whom can ever reveal its whereabouts, I believe no mortal soul upon this earth has ever set eyes upon the place I am going to tell you about. Listen!

In 1871, about the time the Diamond Fields were discovered and people began to flock to Griqualand West, I was rather bitten with the mania, and for some months worked like a nigger on the Fields. During that time I got to know a good deal about stones. I soon tired of the life, however, and finally sold my claim and what diamonds I had acquired fitted up a wagon, gathered together some native servants, and trekked again for those glorious hunting-grounds, of the interior, glad enough to resume my old and ever-charming life. Amongst my servants was a little Bushman, Klass by name, whom I afterwards found a perfect treasure at spooring and hunting. Like all true Bushmen, he was dauntless as a wounded lion and determined as a rhinoceros, which is saying a good deal. I suppose Klaas had had more varied experience of South African life than any native I ever met. Originally, he had come as a child from the borders of the Orange River, where he had been taken prisoner in a Boer foray, in which nearly all his relations were shot down. He had then been "apprenticed" in the family, of one of his captors, where he had acquired a certain knowledge of semi-civilized life. From the Boar family of the back country he had subsequently drifted further down into the Colony, and thence into a nelephant-hunter's retinue. The western Orange River and its mysteries—for it is a mysterious region—he knew, as I afterwards discovered, better than any man in the world. Well, we trekked up to Matabeleland, and after some trouble got permission to hunt there; and a fine time we had, getting a quantity of ivory, and magnificent sport, among lions, elephants, buffalos, rhinoceros, and all manner of smaller game.

Klaas, who was sometimes a bit too venturesome got caught one day in the open by a black rhinoceros, a savage old bull. The old brute charged and slightly tossed him once, making a nasty gash, in his thigh, but not fairly getting his horn under him; and was just turning to finish the poor little beggar, when I luckily nicked in. I had seen the business and had time to rush out on to the plain, and just as Borele charged at poor Klaas, to finish him off as he lay, I got up within forty yards, let drive, and, as luck would have it, dropped him with a 500 express bullet behind the shoulder. Even then, the fierce brute recovered himself and tried to charge me in turn; but he was now disabled, and I soon settled his game. After that episode, Klaas proved himself about the only grateful native I ever leard of, and seemed as if he couldn't do enough for me.

Sometime after he had got over his wound, he came to me and said: "Sieur! you said one day that you would like to know whether there are diamonds anywhere else than at New Rush, as Kimberley, was then called. Well, sieur, I have been working at New Rush, and I know what diamonds are like, and I can tell you where you can find as many of them in a week's search as you may like to pick up."

"What do you mean, Klaas?" said I turning sharply round, to see if the Bushman was joking. But, on the contrary, Klaas's little weazened monkey-face wore an expression perfectly serious and apparently truthful.

"Ja, sieur, it is truth. If ye will so trek with me to the Groot, (Orange) River, three or four days beyond the Falls, I will show you a place where there are hundreds and hundreds of diamonds, big ones too, many, of them, to be found lying about in the gravel. I have played with them, and with other mooi steins too, often and often as a boy, when I used to poke about here and there, up and down the Groot Rivier. My father and grandfather lived near the place I speak of; and I know the way to the valley where these diamonds are, well, though no one but myself knows of them; for I found them by chance, and, selfish-like, never told of my child's secret. I will take you to the place, if you like,"

"Are you really speaking truth, Klaas?" said I severely.

"Ja, ja! sieur; I am, I am!" he earnestly and vehemently reiterated.

"Well, Klaas," said I at last, "I believe you; and we'll trek down to the Orange River, and see this wonderful diamond valley of yours."

Shortly after this conversation, we came back to Shoshong, where I sold my ivory; and then, with empty wagon and the oxen refreshed by a good rest, set our faces for the river. From Shoshong in Bamangwato we went straight away across the south-eastern corner of the Kalahari in an oblique direction pointing south-west. It was a frightfully waterless and tedious journey, especially after passing the Langeberg, which we kept on our left hand. Towards the end of the journey we found no water at a fountain where we had expected to obtain it, and thereby lost four out of twenty-two oxen, for I had six spare ones; and at last, after trekking over a burning and most broken country, we were beyond measure thankful to strike the river some way below the Great Falls. Klaas had led us to a most lovely spot, where the ground slopes gradually to the river, —the only place for perhaps thirty or forty miles, where the water, shut in by mighty mountain walls, can be approached—and where we could rest and refresh ourselves and our oxen. Here we stopped for days. It was a perfect resting-place. Down the banks of the river, and following its course, grew charming avenues of willows, mimosa, and bastard ebony. Two or three islands densely clothed with bush and greenery dotted the broad and shining bosom of the mighty stream. Hippopotami wallowed quietly in the flood, and fish were plentiful. The mimosa was now in full bloom, and the sweet fragrance of its yellow flowers everywhere perfumed the air as we strolled by the river's brim.

I had some old scraps of fishing tackle with me; and having cut myself a rod from a willow-tree, I employed some of my spare time in catching fish, and had, for South Africa—which, as you know, is not a great angling country—capital sport. The fish captured were a kind of flat-headed barbel fellows with dark greenish-olive backs and white bellies; and I caught them with scraps of meat, bees, grasshoppers, anything I could get hold of, as fast as I could pull them out, for an hour or two at a time.

After the parching and most harassing trek across the desert, our encampment seemed a terrestrial paradise. The guinea-fowls called constantly with pleasant metallic voices from among the trees that margined the river, and furnished capital banquets when required. Other feathered game and small antelopes were plentiful. At night, as I lay in my wagon contentedly looking into the starry blue, studded with a million points of fire, and mildly admiring the glorious effulgence of the greater constellations, I began to conjure up all sorts of dreams of the future, of which the bases and foundations were piles of diamonds culled from Klaas's wonderful valley.

Having recruited from the desert journey, and all men and beasts, being in good heart and fettle, we presently started away down the river, for the valley of diamonds. I had, besides Klaas, four other men as drivers, voerloopers, and afterriders, and they, naturally enough, were extremely curious to know what on earth the "Baas" could want to trek down the Orange River for—a country where no one came, and of which no one had ever even heard. I had to tell them that I was prospecting for a copper mine; for, as you probably know, there are many places in this region where that metal occurs. As we were doubtful whether we should find water at the next fountain that Klaas knew of, owing to the prevalence of drought, I filled the water vatjes and every other utensil I could think of; and then, all being ready and the oxen inspanned, we moved briskly forward.

We had now to make a detour to the right, away from the river, and for great part of a day picked our painful footsteps over a rough and semi-mountainous country. Towards evening, we emerged upon a dreary and interminable waste that lay outstretched before us, its far horizon barred in the dim distance by towering mountains, through which we should presently have to force our passage. That evening we outspanned in a howling wilderness of loose and scorching sand, upon which scarcely a bush or shrub found subsistence. Next night, more dead than alive, we halted beneath the loom of a gigantic mountain range, whose recesses we were to pierce on the following morning. Half a day beyond this barrier lay the valley of diamonds, as Klaas whispered to me after supper that night with gleaming excited eyes.

That night as we lay under the mountain was one of the most stifling I ever endured in South Africa, where, on the high tablelands of the interior, nights are usually cool and refreshing. Even the moist heat off the Zambesi Valley was not more trying than this torrid empty desert. The oven-like heat cast up all day from the sandy plain, seemed to be returned at night by these sun-scorched rocks with redoubled intensity. Waterless we lay, sweltering in our misery, with blackened tongues and parched and cracking lips. The oxen seemed almost like dead things. Often have I inwardly thanked Pringle, the poet of South Africa, for his sweet and touching verse, written with the love of this strange wild land deep in him, and for his striking descriptions of its beauty and its fauna. As I lay panting that night, cursing my luck and the folly that brought me thither, I lit a lantern and opened his glowing pages. What were almost the first lines to greet my gaze? These!

A region of emptiness, howling and drear,
Which man hath abandoned from famine and fear;
Which the snake and the lizard inhabit alone,
With the twilight bat from the yawning stone;
Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub takes root,
Save poisonous thorns that pierce the foot:
And here, while the night winds around me sigh,
Lost Diamonds of IOrange River

And the stars burn bright in the midnight sky,
As I sit apart by the desert stone,
Like Elijah at Horeb's cave alone,
"A still small voice" comes through the wild,
Like a father controlling his fretful child,
Which banishes bitterness, wrath and fear,
Saying—Man is distant, but God is near.

We hailed the passage of the mountains next morning with something akin to delight. Anything to banish the monotony of these last two days of burning toil. Klaas, as the only one of us who knew the country, directed our movements; and with hoarse shouts and re-echoing cracks from the mighty wagon whip, slowly our caravan was set in motion. Our entrance to the mountains was effected through a narrow and extremely difficult pass, strewn with huge boulders, and overgrown with brush and underwood.

(To Be Continued.)

A DELUSION ON THE WHEEL.

"I have found that the experience was the same with both the men and the women," said a regular bicyclist, "and during two years of observation I have never known the rule to fail. The slim, tailor-made woman, who looks tidy and pretty from behind, and is as a matter of fact neither young nor pretty when her full face is seen, is already an old theme for comic papers and jokers. But it took the bicycle to put a new phase on the theme. Nine times out of ten the woman who sits erect, wears a well-fitting suit, and displays a particularly slim and graceful figure is certain to be—well, old when you ride past her and look around to get a good view of her face. She is likely to be thin, with a wrinkled face, having as much freshness and youth about it as a dried apple. It's unfortunate that such should be the case, but it is so, and in the majority of cases the pretty, fresh-looking girl will not ride half as well as her older rival who can keep a spickness on the wheel that nobody can excel. The latter will dress better, hold herself better, and so long as she is viewed only by the men riding behind her she will be far more impressive than any of the younger and better looking women on wheels. It is of course disappointing, when the opportunity for seeing the full face comes. But the spectacle is pleasant enough for a while.

"Something of the same kind is true of the men. I have known slim fellows with finely developed calves, to turn out sallow-faced, dyspeptic-looking men with eyeglasses and a discontented expression. Riding behind them they looked like young athletes, and the contrast with their real looks was something awful. Not only physically, but also as far as their dress goes, such men look better, when seen from the rear, and they ride along so slowly and delicately that they are never ruffled, and never wilt their collars. They are like the disappointing women, the spickest looking riders on the road. But they are never able to stand the front view."

TRUE ACCOUNT OF A RUSSIAN HORROR.

CHAPTER IV.

Nearly three months had passed. A great empire had lost its spiritual and mundane head, a hundred millions of people, their father. Princess Tella was a bride, perhaps the most envied woman in the wide world, for the influence which Gen. Weripoloff had once imputed to her was now a reality, a factor that all the governments of the earth had to reckon with, if one might believe the public prints.

At a reception held in the winter palace towards the end of the month she espied Prince Weripoloff among thousands of guests, and all of a sudden the memory of her short stay in Kornoff flashed across her mind. An Adjutant brought the smiling Governor quickly into her presence.

"I want to thank your Excellency for the splendid welcome afforded me some months ago," she addressed the smiling official, "and then furthermore ask what has become of my model with the Christ head?"

"The master of police in Kornoff was, at the time informed of your Highness' wishes. I will ask him by telegraph to report immediately.

"Do so, General," said the Princess, "and tell the peasant I will pay him royally for his trouble."

Six hours later Prince Weripoloff received an answer to his dispatch which read as follows:

"Michael Alexandroff was sent in irons to the Peter-Paul fortress on September 4th. —Ussloff.

The Governor drove at once to the fortress. "Michael Alexandroff, mused the commander, turning over the leaves of a ledger, "let me see,—ah, I knew there was something disagreeable to report on this case, here it is:

"After behaving most insolently at his trial and refusing to confess, Michael was knouted, receiving fifty strokes," the commander added: "Fifty; not too much for a man of his build." But next morning he was found hanging in his cell—dead."

The official looked up complacently, after making this statement, and offered the inquiring General a cigarette. But Weripoloff rudely pushed away the silven case.

"Found hanging," he cried, "you might as well tell me that he died of the measles. I tell you—"shaking his fist in the commander's face, "it's some of your dirty work. You, or your men, murdered this poor peasant."

The commander tried to explain, to prove that "the whole mistake" was due to Weripoloff's peculiar method of issuing orders, but the Prince would not hear of it. Instead, he persisted in charging the commander with all sorts of crimes. They parted as enemies for life.

When the Governor General arrived at the palace Princess Tella was absent, and before he could see her next day she had received the report of the commander of the Peter-Paul fortress, supplemented by one which the Kornoff authorities sent by wire. However, she listened to the General's excuses, but when he went so far as to remark that he would procure another model for her Highness, she dismissed him abruptly. In the antechamber was Count Wolnoff, the Adjutant du jour.

"I have orders to request your Excellency to hand in your resignation at once," he said.

"I knew it would come to this," replied Weripoloff," but pray, what will be done with the master of police, who caused all the trouble?"

He has been dismissed without the usual pension.

"And Schelinsky, the blockhead?"

"He will be sent to Siberia for manslaughter, there to remain within the pleasure of the crown."

"So my dream has become true," moaned Weripoloff—a lowly peasant is the cause of my dismissal and disgrace."

Tella is building a church in Kornoff. It will be called St. Michael's chapel. The act will not atone for the fearful crimes committed, but poor Mischa's brethren will have work and their physical condition will be improved.

Even the almighty Czar could not do more.

ALEXANDRA.

The End.

COMPLIMENTING.

Some people have the faculty for finding a compliment to fit every case, and condition, and as a rule, compliments are generally pleasing to the receiver even if not quite sincere. The person who distributes compliments promiscuously may be one of those kind souls who are always trying to please, and the motive which prompts the compliments is doubtless a good one, but no one can prize such compliments as if they came from one who seldom gave them. A genuine compliment is delightful, and more especially so if it comes from one who rarely speaks so. A sincere compliment is not flattery, and one can both give and receive such with a knowledge of their truth. A well-timed compliment may do a great deal of good for if sincere it expresses the appreciation of certain qualities in someone else. An honest compliment has often been known to awaken in people just the powers necessary to "make something of themselves.

Flattery is insincere, and only feeds the vanity, often doing more harm than good. Such falseness is hateful. Many compliments are given by a certain class of people with self-seeking motives, and they are hardly better than insults. No doubt most people can estimate the value of the compliments they receive, yet a little kind praise is generally well appreciated. To be able to always say the right thing at the right time is a gift, and it is never unworthy of anyone to try to please. Where encouragement and happiness result from an honest compliment there should certainly be no hesitation in giving one.

NINETEENTH CENTURY MIRACLE.

The pathetic story of Helen Keller, the marvellous blind and deaf girl, of whom the whole world has heard, has acquired new interest by news of her success in passing with high credits the seven preliminary examinations of Harvard University, entitle her to enter Radcliffe College. Helen Keller is but sixteen years old, yet her mental development, in face of appalling physical deficiencies, is one of the marvels of the age. Because of her misfortunes and the remarkable facility with which she has acquired knowledge by peculiar methods, her name is known throughout the world, and everywhere there has been awakened the liveliest interest and sympathy. In London an institution for the education of blind mutes has been named after her, and if her life is spared the future has great triumphs in store for this marvelous intellectual child of misfortune.

Helen Keller has had a wonderful though sad career. She was born and spent her early childhood at her father's home in Tuscumbia, Ala. She was born blind, deaf and, as her parents soon discovered, mute. She had none of the sense of taste. Up to her seventh year her mind was a blank. Her family could only communicate with her by means of the crudest signs. Therefore all that she has accomplished is the work of a little more than eight years. To Miss Sullivan, her intelligent and faithful teacher, is due much of the credit of unlocking the mysteries of this child's wonderful mentality. With but one sense to aid her—that of touch—one can form an idea of the tremendous obstacles the teacher had to overcome. Miss Sullivan began by a code of signs impressed upon the palm of the child's hands, and after much patience, succeeded in conveying the first gleams of understanding to the virgin brain. The next task was to teach her to speak, and this, too was soon accomplished, thanks to the child's eagerness to learn. The method of teaching her to utter words was to have her place the tips of her fingers upon her teacher's lips, and thus by the sense of touch conveyed to her the idea of sound. She was also taught the raised alphabet, and thus in a short time was able to read.

Miss Keller can now converse with any one. Her utterance is a little imperfect, as is to be expected of one who knows not the sound of her own voice, but she has no difficulty in making herself understood. The only way however, by which she can receive oral communications is by the sense of touch. Let her place her finger tips upon the throat or lips of any one speaking, and there is instantly conveyed to her brain understanding of what is said. Miss Keller has been an inmate of the Wright-Humaston school for the oral instruction of the deaf for more than a year, and it is here that she has made her most rapid progress. She has rapidly acquired knowledge of French, German and history, and already she has written much in these two languages, and her own as well. She has a very strong pietic temperament, and her diary, which she has been keeping for two years, abounds with beautiful thoughts, most beautifully expressed. What fate may have in store for this strangely gifted child no one can predict, but her future will be compassionately regarded with the keenest interest by all of civilized human kind.

MOTHER OF BRITISH TARS.

Miss Agnes Weston the Best Friend the Blue-Jacket Has.

Miss Agnes Weston, known throughout the length and breadth of England as "the mother of British blue jackets," is in reality the best friend the sailor has had, at least among womankind. She has established "rests" for the tars at Portsmouth and Devonport. Miss Weston took a prominent part in the entertainment of the sailors gathered for the Jubilee at Spithead, and was in great demand among them. She has given thirty years of her life to the uplifting of the British sailor. She strives to make him temperate without preaching at him, and her methods, it must be said, are very attractive. No man, whether he be drunk or sober, is denied admission to the "rests." These places are the brightest, cleanest and best ventilated restaurants in England, without even a suggestion of gospel or temperance tracts. As neither is thrust on him the result is that Jack usually wanders into the meetings daily held in the adjoining halls. The best results of Miss Weston's work is to be found on the ships of the navy. Upon almost all of them is to be found a temperance society and her monthly magazine, Ashore and Afloat. So salutary has been the influence of this publication that the United States authorities have especially requested Miss Weston to mail the magazine to the American war ships. Miss Weston is the daughter of a London barrister. Early in life she decided to give up her time to the care of the British tar, whose lot in life is by no means a pleasant one. That she has well succeeded in her purpose is made manifest by the universal esteem in which she is held by sailors throughout the whole world.

NOT A HABIT.

I see that some scientist claims that death is largely a matter of habit, depending upon thought and all that, he said.

Nonsense, she replied. Did you ever know any one who was in the habit of dying? she returned.

THE SOCIETY MOTHER'S DUTIES.

Little Miss Avnoo—What is mammas for?

Little Miss De Fashion—Why, they is to scold the nurses when we make a noise.