THE LOST DIAMONDS OF THE ORANGE RIVER.

1.—Continued.

It would be tedious to relate all the labours of the trying trek among these awful mountain passes; but on the third day we had overcome the chief difficulties, and had outspanned for a final rest before completing our work, if to complete were possible. Shading my eyes from the fierce sunlight I looked upward at the long slope of mountain, broken here and there, and occasionally shaggy with bush. Over all the fierce atmosphere quivered, seething and dancing in the sunblaze. I looked again with doubt and dismay at the gasping oxen, many of them lying foundered and almost dead from thirst and fatigue, and my spirits, usually brisk and unflagging, sank below zero. Klaas had told me previously of a most wonderful pool of water that lay on the crown of a mountain, where we should outspan finally before entering upon the portals of the diamond valley. Now he came to me and said, pointing upwards: "Sieur, de sweet water lies yonder, op de berg. It is a beautiful pool, such as ye never saw the like of; if we reach it, we are saved, and the oxen will soon get around again. Ye must get them up somehow, even without the wagon."

The tiny, yellow, blear-eyed Bushman, standing over me as I sat on a rock, pointing with his lean arm skywards, his anxious dirt-grimed face streaming with perspiration, was hardly the figure of an angel of hope; and yet at that moment he was an angel to me; for we had tasted no water to speak of for close on three days, and had had besides a frightfully trying trek.

We lay panting and grilling for an hour or more; and then I told my men that water in any quantity lay at the mountain top, and that we must at all hazards get the oxen up to it. Only a mile of ascent, or a little more, lay before us; but so feeble were the oxen, that we had the greatest difficulty to drive the bulk of them to the top, even without the encumbering wagon. Three utterly refused to move, and were left behind. At last we reached the krantz, and after a hundred yards' walk upon its flat top, we came almost suddenly upon a most wonderful and, to us, more soul-thrilling sight.

A dense bush of mimosa-thorn and other shrubs grew around, here and there relieved by wide patches of open space. The oxen getting the breeze, and scenting water, suddenly began to display a most extraordinary freshness; up went their heads, their dull eyes brightened, and they trotted forwards to where the jungle apparently grew thickest. For a time they found no opening; but after following the circling wall of bush, at length a broad avenue was disclosed—an avenue doubtless worn smooth by the passage of elephants, rhinoceroses, and other mighty game, and then there fell upon our sight the most refreshing prospect that man ever gazed upon. Thirty yards down the opening there lay a great pool of water, about two hundred feet across at its narrowest point, and apparently of immense depth. The pool was circular, its sides were of rock and quartz and completely inaccessible from every approach save that by which we had reached it. It was indeed completely encompassed by precipitous walls, about thirty feet in height, which defied the advent of any other living thing than a lizard or a rock-rabbit.

How the poor beasts drank of that cool pellucid flood, and how we human beings drank too! I thought we should never have finished. The oxen drank and drank till the water literally ran out of their mouths as they at last turned away. Then I cast off my clothes and plunged into the water. It was icy cold and most invigorating, and I swam and splashed to my heart's content. After my swim and a rest I directed my men to fill the four buckets we had brought; and then, leaving the horses in charge of one of their number, we drove the cattle, loth though they were to leave the water, back to the wagon, going very carefully, so as not to spill the water. At length we reached the valley only to find two of our foundered bullocks lying nearly dead. The distant lowing of their refreshed comrades, had I think, warned them of good news, and the very smell of the water revived them; and after two buckets apiece of the cold draught had been gulped down their kiln-dried throats, they got up and shook themselves and rejoined their fellows.

We rested for a short time, and then inspanned and started for the upland pool. The oxen, worn and enfeebled though they were had such a heart put into them by their drink, and and seemed so well to know that their watery salvation lay up there, only a short mile distant, that they one and all bent gallantly to the yokes, and dragged their heavy burden to the margin of the bush-girt water. We now outspanned for the night, made strong fires for the spoor of leopards was abundant, strewed some bustards ate a good supper, and turned in.

I suppose we had not been asleep two hours when I was awakened by the sharp barks and yelping of my dogs, the kicks and scrambles of the oxen, and the shouts of the men. Snatching up my rifle and rushing out, I was just in time to see a firebrand hurled at some dark object that sped between the fires.

"What is it, Klaas?" I shouted.

"Allemaghte! it is a tiger, leopard, sieur," cried the Bushman, "and he has clawed one of the dogs."

True enough, on inspecting the yelping sufferer, Rooi-Kat, a brindled red dog, and one of the best of my pack, I found the poor wretch at its last gasp, with its throat and neck almost torn to ribbons. Cursing the sneaking cowardly leopard, I saw that the replenished fires blazed up, and again turned in.

It must have been about two o'clock in the morning—the coldest, the most silent and the dreariest of the dark hours, that fatal hour betwixt night and day when many a flickering life, unloosed by death, slips from its moorings—when I was again startled from slumber by a most blood-curdling yell. Hunters as you know, sleep light, and seem instinctively to be aware of what passes around them, even although apparently wrapped in the profoundest sleep. I knew in a moment that that agonized cry came from a human throat; and I rushed out. What a din was there, from dogs men, and oxen, and above all those horrid human screams. I had my loaded rifle and rushing up to a confused crowd, struggling near the firelight, I saw what had happened. The youngest of my servants, a mere Bechuana boy, was hard and fast in the grip of an immense leopard, which was tearing with its cruel teeth at his throat. Klaas, bolder than his fellows, was lunging an assegai into the brute's ribs, seemingly without the smallest effect; others were thrashing it with firebrands; and the dogs were vainly worrying at its head and flanks. All this I saw instantaneously. Thrusting my followers aside, I san up to the leopard, and putting my rifle to its ear, and fired. The express bullet did its work at once; the fierce and most tenacious of the feline race could not refuse to yield its life with its head almost blown to atoms; and loosening its murderous hold, the brute fell dead. But too late! The poor Bechuana boy lay upon the sand, wounded to the death. After these horrors, sleep was banished, and as the gray light came up, we prepared for day.

The morning broke at length in ruddiest splendour; and as the terrain was slowly unfolded before my gaze, I realised the desolate magnificence of the country. Mountains, mountains, mountains of grim sublimity rolled everywhere around! Far away below, as I looked westward, a thin silvery line, only visible for a little space, told of the great river flowing into the sea, inexorably shut in by precipitous mountain walls that guaranteed for ever its awful solitude.

Klaas stood near, and as I gazed he whispered, for my men were not far away: "Sieur, yonder straight in front of you, five miles away, lie the diamonds. If we start directly after breakfast, we shall have four hours' hard climbing and walking to reach the valley."

"All right, Klaas," said I. "Breakfast is nearly ready, and we'll start as soon as we have fed."

Breakfast was soon over, and then I spoke to my men. I told them that I intended to stay at this pool for a few days, and that in the meantime I was going prospecting in the mountains bordering the river. I despatched two of them to go and hunt for mountain buck in the direction we had come from; the others were to see that the oxen fed round about the water, where pasture was good and plentiful, and generally to look after the camp. For Klaas and myself, we should be away till dusk, perhaps even night;b ut we did not wish to be followed or disturbed; and unless those at the camp heard my signal of four consecutive rifle shots, they were on no account to attempt to follow up our spoor. My men by this time knew me and my ways well, and I was convinced we should not be followed by prying eyes; and indeed, the lazy Africans were only too glad of an easy day in camp after their hard journey.

II.

Taking some dried flesh, biscuits, and a bottle of water each and each shouldering a rifle, Klaas and I started away at seven o'clock. The little beggar, who, I suppose, in his Bushman youth had wandered baboon-like over all this wild country till he knew it by heart, showed no sign of hesitation, but walked rapidly down hill to a deep gorge at the foot, that led half a mile or so into a huge mass of mountain that formed the north wall of the Orange River. This kloof must at some time or another have served as a conduit for mighty floods of water, for its bottom was everywhere strewn with boulders of titanic size and shape, torn from the cliff-walls above. It took us a long hour of the most laborious effort to surmount these impediments; and then, with torn hands and aching legs we went straight up a mountain whose roof-like sides consisted of masses of loose shale and shingle, over which we slipped and floundered slowly and with difficulty. I say we; but I am bound to admit that the Bushman made much lighter of his task than I, his ape-like form, seeming, indeed, much more fitted for such a slippery breakneck pastime.

At length we reached the crest and then, after passing through a fringe of bush and scrub, we scrambled down the thither descent, a descent of no little danger. The slipping shales that gave way at every step, often threatened, indeed, to hurl us headlong to the bottom. At last this stage was ended, and we found ourselves in a very valley of desolation. We were almost completely entombed by narrowing mountain walls, whose dark-red sides frowned upon us everywhere in horrid and overpowering silence. The sun was up, and the heat, shut in as we were, overpowering. Moreover, to make things more lively, i noticed that snakes were more than ordinarily plentiful, the bloated puff-adder, and yellow cobra, and the dangerous little night-adder, several times only just getting out of our path.

The awful silence of this sepulchral place was presently, as we rested for ten minutes, broken by a company of baboons, which, having espied us from their krantzes above, came shoggling down to see what we were. They were huge brutes, and savage, and quahquahed at us threateningly, till Klaas sent a bullet among them, when they retreated pell-mell. We soon started again, and pressed rapidly along a narrow gorge some fifty feet wide, with perfectly level precipitous walls, apparently worn smooth at their bases by the action of terrific torrents, probably an early development of the Orange River when first it made its way through these grim defiles. Presently the causeway narrowed still more; and then turning a sharp corner, we suddenly came upon a pair of leopards sauntering coolly towards us. I didn't like the look of things at all, for a leopard at the best of times is an ugly customer, even where he knows and dreads firearms. The brutes showed no intention of bolting, but stood with their hackles up, their tails waving ominously, and their gleaming teeth bared in fierce defiance. There was nothing for it—either we or they must retreat; and having come all this frightful trek for the diamonds, I felt in no mood to back down even to Felis pardus in his very nastiest mood. Looking to our rifles, we moved very quietly forward until within thirty-five yards of the grim cats. They were male and female, and two as magnificent specimens of their kind as sun ever shone upon. The male had now crouched flat for his charge, and not an instant was to be lost. The female stood apparently irresolute. Noticing this, and not having time to speak, we both let drive at the charging male. Both shots struck, but neither stopped him. The lady, hearing the report, and apparently not liking the look of affairs, incontinently fled. With a horrid throaty grunt, the male leopard flew across the sand, coming straight at me, and then launched himself into the air. I fired too hurriedly my second barrel, and, for a wonder clean missed, for in those days I seldom failed in stopping dangerous game; but these beggars are like lightning once they are charging. In a moment, as the yellow form was flying through space straight at my head, I sprang to one side, and Klaas firing again, sent the leopard struggling to earth, battling frantically for life amid sand and shingle with a broken back. Lucky was the shot, and bravely fired, or I had probably been as good as dead. Klaas soon whipped the skin off the dead leopard and hid it under some stones; and we then proceeded, the whole affair having occupied but twenty minutes.

Another mile of this canal-like kloof brought us to a broad opening where the wall of mountain on our left stood up straight before the hot sunlight, a dark reddish-brown mass of rock. I suppose some five hundred feet in height, and then sloped away more smoothly to its summit, that overlooked the river, as I should judge, about a mile distant. As we came out into the sunshine, Klaas pointing to the cliff, ejaculated in quite an excited way: "The Pearl! the Pearl! Look sir, look." Looking upwards at the mass of rock, my eye was suddenly arrested by a gleaming mass that protruded from the dead wall of mountain. Half dazzled, I shaded my eyes with my hand and looked again. It was a most strange and of nature the most curious that I had ever set eyes on. The glittering mass was a huge egg-shaped ball of quartz of a semi-transparent milky hue, flashing and gleaming in the radiant sunshine with the glorious prismatic colours that flash from the unlucky opal. But yet more strange, above "de Paarl," as Klaas quaintly called it, and overhanging it, was a kind of canopy of stalactite of the same brilliant opalescent colours. It was wonderful Klaas here began to caper and dance in the most fantastic fashion, and then suddenly ceasing, he said: "Now, sieur, I will soon show you the diamonds—they are there," pointing to a dark corner of the glen, "right through the rock."

"What made you call that shining stone up there "de Paarl?" said I, as I gazed in admiration at the beautiful ball of crystal.

"Well, sieur, I was once with a wine Boer at the Paarl down in the old Colony, and a man told me why they called the mountain there "de Paarl;" and he told me, too, what the pretty gems were that I saw in the young vrouw's best ring when she wore it; and I then knew what a pearl was, and that it came from a fish that grows in the sea. And I remembered then the great shining stone that I found up here when I was a boy on the Groot Rivier, and I thought to myself: "Ah, Klaas, that was the finest pearl ye ever saw, that up in the cliff near where the pretty white stones lay." I mean the diamonds yonder, sieur."

At last, then, we were within grasp of the famous stones concerning whose reality I had even to the last had secret misgivings. It was a startling thought. Just beyond there, somewhere through the rock-walls, whose secret approach at present Klaas only knew, lay "Sindbad's Valley." Could it be true? Could I actually be within touch of riches unspeakable, riches in comparison with which the wealth of Croesus seemed but a beggar's hoard?

(To Be Continued.)

ANT PIE.

Curious Insect in Mexico Regarded as a Delicacy.

Savages, we know, indulge in such luxuries as grubs and locusts, but for a civilized white man to finish up his dinner with a dish of raw ants seems too nasty to be credible. Yet in Mexico it is the custom—and a custom adopted by plenty of colonists and visitors.

The ant eaten is called the honey-ant, and is perhaps as curious an insect as lives. With a tiny head and legs, it has a huge body as big as a large pea, and this is yellow and swollen with excellent honey.

In each nest there are 300 or 400 of these honey-ants, which are attended by thousands of others. The honey-ants hung on to the roof of the cells in the nest while the others feed them. They are, in fact, living storehouses of winter food. An observer says that if one of the honey-ants falls from his perch a worker will go and pick him up and replace him. This is as if a man were to walk up the face of a cliff carrying a large buffalo or cart horse on his back.

Chatham talks of building a civic abattoir.

AGRICULTURAL

SUMMER BUTTERMAKING.

The making of butter that in a temperature of ninety degrees will still have the ability to hold up its head, and at the same time have a good flavor, is not so very difficult if a little care is exercised beforehand. The way to make a horse win a race is to train him before the race, and the way to make good butter, says National Stockman, is to train the cream before it goes into the churn. The cream should not be allowed to get too sour. Too sour cream is fatal to good butter. No matter how careful the churning may be, if the cream has passed the line of too much sourness good butter cannot be the result. Just here is where a separator gets in its innings. The cream is separated from the milk twenty-four hours ahead of creamery milk, and that much start is had in the keeping of the cream, and in warm, sultry weather a day means a good deal. Another point is to keep the cream well stirred. I have never seen this point emphasized as much as it seemed to me to require, for my experience has been that one of the most important points in good butter making is to get a liberal supply of fresh air mixed with the cream twice a day. Have an extra vessel and pour the cream from one to another two or three times twice a day. This airs the cream better than stirring it with a ladle. Two ends are gained by this stirring: First the cream is kept well mixed and consequently ripens together, and also the admitting of the air to the cream has some effect that I do not understand, but I do know that it is a great benefit to the resulting butter. I read somewhere that a certain kind of bacteria got into cream that produced an off flavor in the butter, and that oxygen would kill these same bacteria. Be that as it may I have found that air is a good thing for cream that is to be churned into butter. And the last thing is temperature. Possibly this should be put first on account of its importance, but anyway the cream should be put into the churcn at the lowest possible temperature at which the butter will come. And in getting this temperature the temperature of the room in which the churn has stood should be taken into consideration. A churn that has been church at the lowest possible temperaof eighty degrees will raise the temperature of the cream higher than would be thought unless the matter had been actually tested with a thermometer. If ice is to be had allow the churn to stand for half an hour filled with ice water. This will cool the wood sufficiently to prevent the outside temperature from having very much effect. As to just how low the cream may be put into the churn each must find out for himself. i have put in cream at fifty degrees, and had no trouble in churning, but the outside temperature, had warmed the butter up to sixty by the time it had come. Keep the cream from getting too sour, keep it well stirred, and churn it as cold as it will come, and good butter must almost surely be the result. Try it next time, and see how nice it is to have butter that will stand up of its own accord on a warm day in midsummer.

SHALL FARMERS BUILD HAY SHEDS?

Frequently questions are asked in relation to building hay sheds, writes a correspondent. Men recognize the fact that hay should be protected from the weather from the time it is cut in summer, till the time, some months or perhaps a year after, when it is to be fed out. Barns are expensive and many are studying how to preserve the hay in a more economical manner than having a barn for it. In the early days here in the West we cut the prairie or marsh grass for hay on the vacant or unoccupied land, and all the hay cost us was the cutting and stacking. Such hay when well stacked would shed rain good and there was but little loss, which was easily provided for by cutting a litteh more than we needed to feed. In those days nobody thought it economy to build barns or sheds to hold hay. All that was needed was a stable or shelter for the stock, and even that was more than many of us had. But times changed; hay became more valuable; clover and Timothy hay would not shed rain when stacked like the native hay. A good farmer felt 'that he could not afford to suffer the loss occasioned by not having his hay under some kind of a shelter. At one time many farmers built "hay barracks," which consisted of a square roof with a heavy post at each of the four corners. It was so constructed that the roof could be raised or lowered so as to set close down over the hay which was stacked under it. A few years ago, there was quite a rage for building hay sheds. These consisted of a strong, well-made roof supporter by posts and a framework, and were fitted out with a hay fork and carrier.

I doubt the economy of building hay sheds or hay barracks anyway. We must have a stable and can build a stable and storage room for hay under one roof cheaper than under two roofs. Tight barns keep hay better than open sheds. All hay should be fed in stables, and if it is stored in a shed instead of in the barn over the stable it must be hauled to the stable. Often in winter the wind draws through under the roof of the shed, covering the hay with snow. When the shed is empty a hard wind is liable to lift the roof off and entirely ruin it, as many a farmer has learned to his sorrow. I thought this whole thing over years ago, and after observing the experience of others I came to the conclusion that it was better and cheaper in the end, when labor and everything else was considered to build a barn big enough to hold the stock and also the hay. If one has more hay than he has barn room for I will give a plan of taking care of it which has been successfully tried and is very much cheaper and better than building a hay shed. Stack the hay in a long stack or rick in sections. Have it well topped out. Then make a roof by laying on sound foot-wide boards, clapboard fashion. These boards are held in place by having a good strong wire hung over the stack near the ends of the boards. In the wires are loops one foot wide which Of course the wires are put over the stack before the boards are put on. It will be found better to put the boards on by commencing at the eaves, alternating from one side of the stack to the other.

When the hay is to be hauled away the stack can be uncovered one section at a time, leaving all the rest covered. The boards and wires can be preserved to be used another year for the same purpose, perhaps in another field or on a different part of the farm.

TO MANAGE LITTLE CHICKENS.

Little chickens should not be removed from the nest and from the brooding influence of the mother hen for from twenty-four to thirty-six hours after hatching says a writer. About all that little chickens need the first forty-eight hours of their life is brooding, and if you have not been in the habit of thus managing, just try it for an experiment. There is a very great difference in the hatching qualities of hens and it matters not how perfect an arrangement we have in this respect, we take great chances on Biddy performing her part of the work. Hens usually take proper care of their eggs during incubation if they are rightly provided for, but when it comes to hatching out the chicks and caring for them properly a large per cent. of them make a failure, and to see healthy and fully matured little chicks murdered in the nest by numbers is more than a fellow can stand without putting his wits to the severest tests.

There are always a number of mother hens in all flocks that attend to business properly, and bring out every chick that the eggs are capable of producing, and save them without the loss scarcely of a single chick. We can take advantage of this, and I have practiced it to quite an extent. In the usual lot of setting hens we have one or more of these good mothers, and when a nest of eggs is just beginning to hatch I change places, or "swap," nests, and place the good mother that understands her business on the eggs just hatching. I allow her to hatch and brood the chickens for forty-eight hours, after which I remove them to their former mother, or give them to any other that I see proper. I have kept such hens repeatedly hatching out chicks thus, until I have worn their patience entirely out; and some hens will endure it much longer than others, but the most of them will continue to hatch out brood after brood, and will do you in this way, invaluable service.

Heavy hens, such as Cochins and Brahmas, are good setters, and the best at incubation, but when it comes to hatching them out the light hen is always best, and it is these I employ for the business. In arranging the setting hens I do not find it necessary to have each hen separately partitioned or yarded off to herself, but I use small houses or rooms—say ten or twelve feet square—with a yard to each one, and I keep from six to ten or twelve hens, as the case may be, in each apartment, with feed, water and all conveniences necessary for them.

TELEGRAPHY WITHOUT WIRES.

Italian Boy Sent a Message From London to Paris on Thin Air.

Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian lad of 23 years of age, appears to have solved the problem of wireless telegraphy. His discoveries are declared to be quite as important as any discoveries of this age. What he does is to transmit telegraphic messages from sender to receiver, many miles apart, without the us eof a metal circuit. The words are literally flashed through the air.

Marcona is now in London, where he is soon to make his greatest experiment. As soon as proper instruments can be prepared he will endeavor to send a message from St. Paul's Cathedral in London to the Eiffel tower in Paris.

Vertical wires will be run from St. Paul's in London, and the Eiffel tower, in Paris, many hundred feet in the air. The electric waves radiating from the tiny metal spire on St. Paul's will finally reach the wire on the tower in the French capital, and record, letter by letter, the message sent more than 100 miles away.

Throw a pebble into a pond. A series of tiny waves will move onward and onward until they cease. So Marconi's instrument throws out a series of electric waves through the air until they reach the receiving instrument. Each wave is made to vary, and means a letter. The wave is the same when it reaches its destination as when it started. And so, letter by letter, the message is recorded.

When perfected messages can be sent over polar seas, uninhabitable deserts—in fact, to the ends of civilization—without the use of wire. Despatches can be flashed from continent to continent without the use of a cable. A man in a balloon or at the north pole can talk with his friends, and millions of dollars that would otherwibe be spent in wires, cables, and telegraph equipment will be saved.

DREADFUL FATE.

Teacher—Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin. That is correct. And when Belshazzer saw the writing on the wall, what do you suppose were the feelings of this wicked King?

Prize Scholar—It is recorded that he was teckeled to death.