

ADVENTURES
OF
MRS. COLONEL SOMERSET
"
IN CAFFRARIA,
DURING THE WAR.

EDITED BY
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Second Edition.

"Charity is praised of all, and fear not thou that praise; God will not love thee less because men love thee more."

TUPPER'S *Proverbial Philosophy*.

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CHAPTER XV.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for ev'ry fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

LONGFELLOW.

I SHALL not fatigue my readers with an account of Helen's musing, but proceed with my narrative.

Very shortly after the events detailed in the preceding chapter, peace was finally declared ; and the English troops marched away, happy to escape the troubles and disagreeables of such an unsatisfactory warfare. With them poor Amakai saw Kenneth borne

It was upon the seventh day, after they had started, that Helen and Amakai accidentally became separated from the rest of the band.

Steering their course by the sun, they gave rein to their horses, and set off at a quick pace across the high ground, in hopes of either obtaining a view of their friends, or striking the spoor left by the horses. Amakai, more used to the plains than Helen, led the way.

Upon gaining the top of a ridge, the Caffre girl stopped ; beckoning Helen to do so also, she jumped down from her horse, and, leaving him, crept back alone.

With a smile she told Helen to dismount, and creep after her, and, wondering what she could mean, Helen obeyed.

Immediately below the crest of the ridge were three ostriches. There they stood, not

which Helen found, with the seasoning of a ten hours' fast, a first-rate dish.

Keeping watch by turns, each managed to have a little refreshing rest, and, after a breakfast similar to the supper of the previous night, prepared to descend and proceed upon their journey.

Amakai bounded lightly down the pathway to look about for the horses, while Helen, glad of a few moments' solitude, knelt down to give her thoughts to God.

There is something almost painful in the intense stillness of early morning in a desert. The solemnity weighs upon the brain as well as heart—nature seems buried in a breathless sleep, as quiet and still as that of death. Helen's eyes roamed over the mighty plain stretched illimitable before her; extending far away, as far as she could distinguish on one hand, and on the other

fading until it mixed with the early glow of the morning sky. She could have dreamt for hours, but her thoughts were suddenly recalled by a loud cry from Amakai, and, looking down, she beheld with horror the Caffre girl flying before an immense borelè.

During the search for the horses, which had strayed up the valley, the girl had unwittingly disturbed the slumber of one of these ferocious creatures, certainly the most implacable enemy in the wilds of Africa; a beast that neither requires hunger nor provocation to induce him to attack every species of living thing; and, in spite of his apparent unwieldiness, can turn and run with extraordinary agility.

Of this Helen now saw a fearful proof; for Amakai, retaining complete presence of mind, and profiting by her knowledge, that his speed being greater than hers, the only

possibility of escape was to dodge him until she reached the pathway, which, of course, he could not attempt.

Acting upon this, she planned her course, first running a short way, then stopping to let the monster shoot past.

In an instant, however, he turned, foaming with disappointed rage, and, catching sight of the girl, quickly followed. Again Amakai stopped; again he turned, but turning this time not quite so quickly, she was tempted to try a second turn before he could get under weigh.

Amakai had, however, miscalculated; he turned almost with her, and that moment would have ended all had not an involuntary shriek from Helen arrested his attention for a minute; but though Amakai gained a slight start, on came the brute again at increased speed. Breathless and terror-stricken,

Amakai flew towards the path, but it was beyond her power to reach it—fear was paralyzing her limbs. Looking over her shoulder, she saw the animal's hideous face within a few yards, and driven to desperation she attempted a last expedient—the trial was for life or death.

Turning to the foot of a smooth rock, she ran directly towards it, and, leaning against it, waited.

The borelè seemed surprised, and stopped short to gaze at his prey; then, with a sort of roar, charged the spot. Helen would feign have turned her eyes away, but they were spell-bound. She saw the slight figure of the girl pressed against the hard rock—she saw the frightful monster dash towards her. Then there was a fearful crash—a sort of roaring shriek—and the borelè lay struggling on the grass, while Amakai flew like a

bird along the valley, and was next instant clasping her arms round Helen's neck.

Her escape was truly wonderful. Blinded by rage, the brute had charged the solid rock; the girl slipped aside as he came on; with his whole strength concentrated he had made his last charge, and his horn had given way like glass,—his enormous skull had actually split open.

It was with feelings almost of pity, in spite of his ferocity, that the two women saw the fearful agony of his death; nor dared they venture from their security until all cessation of movement showed that he was really dead.

Even then avoiding the place, they succeeded in finding their horses, and thankfully left the memorable valley far behind; soon after meeting a detached party of the hunters, who had set off in search of their

“Mother Doctor,” whose appearance they hailed with great delight.

Their astonishment was great when told the story of Amakai's escape from the dreaded borelè; and when they had satisfied their curiosity as to the details, they insisted upon being shown the valley, in order to secure certain parts of the animal's flesh, which are considered as great delicacies.

Upon reaching the hill which overhung the place, the leading Caffres stopped abruptly and looked fearfully down.

Immediately below them was the body of the borelè, surrounded by at least a dozen lions, not eating, but, as it rather seemed, holding an inquest upon their foe, or rejoicing over his fall.

Some lay flat upon the grass, wagging their tails, and purring like cats; some sat up licking their lips; and others walked

round and round contemplating the body, all keeping their eyes fixed upon the object of attraction.

A consultation among the Caffres, as to the wisdom of leaving the body in possession of the enemy, was interrupted by one of the lions, whose appetite was greater than the others, giving vent to his feelings in a loud roar, and springing upon the carcass. In an instant every lion disputed the prize, and, there being a number of lions, of course the stronger won the day; the weaker, generally females, took to fighting amongst themselves, thus adding to the wildness and noise.

The valley now echoed and re-echoed with their angry roars. Altogether it was a scene scarcely ever witnessed by travellers; and Helen would have remained watching the conflict, if her rein had not been taken and

her horse carefully drawn away by one of the hunters, who bade her follow and ride for her life, as the animals, maddened by rage, would, in all probability, take to the plains; and though it is well known that even a hungry lion will avoid a human being, still there is no time when they are so likely to be dangerous as after fighting among themselves; indeed, it is natural, and I have remarked it with all animals, that the smell even of blood makes them ferocious.

After the adventure with the borelè some time elapsed before anything worthy of recording transpired; at length, however, the party fell in with a herd of buffaloes, gnus, and zebras—of these they succeeded in slaughtering as many as they could carry.

The gnu is an extraordinary looking beast, combining, at the first glance, the forms of the lion, bull, and horse. Its head

and neck belong to the two former, while the body is as finely shaped as a thoroughbred, and one is perfectly puzzled how such limbs can support the unseemly mountain of neck, main, and forehead, expecting every moment to see the beast over-balance himself. Certainly nature must have been in a strange mood when she tried her hand upon such an oddity as the gnu.

It is ludicrous to see how fiercely he comes charging on, shaking his grizzly mane, through which his piercing eyes twinkle like two stars. On you see him come, as if he would carry all before him. Then, just when you think it all up with you, you are as much surprised as pleased to see his hind-quarters where his head so lately was, and watch him galloping and curvetting off in another direction. He had his look at you, and, not admiring, has taken himself off.

It is one of the most amusing sights that can fall to the desert hunter's lot, to watch the gambols of a herd of these animals, and their almost constant companion, zebras. How they charge each other in their tournaments, turning, twisting, and rearing, as they gallop across the plain, until they dance themselves out of sight.

Giraffes, though rare, were still frequently seen in the distance, yet being of such a timid nature, Helen had no opportunity of judging closely of them in their wild beauty.

The hunting-party had been out nearly a month, and having had great success, and accumulated a large store of provisions, they were now gradually returning, having arranged their hunting-line in a semi-circle, so as to keep an entirely new tract of country still to pass on their way home.

It was upon their homeward route that