

Girls and Boys.

THE HOTTENTOT'S MESSAGE.

BY DAVID KERR.

"I tell you, Matu, that I saw it with my own eyes."

"And I tell you, Klaas, that I won't believe it until I see it with mine. Your eyes see too much sometimes, you know. Don't you remember telling us how your boat had been upset by a sea-cow [hipopotamus], when it was only a log that struck it? or how you came scampering home saying that you'd been chased by a lion, and after all it was nothing but Mynheer Jansen's big yellow dog."

A loud laugh arose from the other Hottentots, and poor Klaas (who certainly was given to telling wonderful stories) looked very foolish indeed.

The building in front of which the little black faced, long-armed fellows were having their talk was a very good sample of the ordinary South African farm house. It was a long, low, white-fronted building of one story, with a thatched roof that stuck out so far in front and came so low down over the windows that it quite reminded one of the huge white, broad-brimmed hats worn by the Dutch and English farmers of those parts.

"Don't be too hard upon Klaas, lads," said another Hottentot, coming up at that moment. "You know that the white men are workers of wonders, and that whoever goes among them sees many strange things. Come, brother Klaas, let us hear all about it."

And Klaas, a little encouraged by seeing that there was one man in the company who seemed inclined to believe him, began as follows:—

"When I was with the Dutch Christimenshe [Christians] at Springboks Kloof [Antelope Gully] seven years ago, they were building a new stable, and wanted some long iron nails to finish it. So the Baas [master] told me to go and borrow some nails from the Englishman on the other side of the spruit [water course]. I was just wondering how that was to be done—for I didn't know English, and I was pretty sure the English Christimenshe didn't know Hottentot—when the Baas made some scratches on a chip of wood with a burned stick, and told me to give that to the Englishman, and he would know what was wanted."

The listeners all looked at each other, as if hardly knowing whether to believe him or not.

"I thought he was laughing at me," continued Klaas, "and at first I didn't want to go; but the Baas was beginning to look angry, and there was a big *shambuk* [whip of rhinoceros skin] hanging behind the door, so I thought I'd better start. And when I gave the chip to the Englishman—believe me or not as you like—he went and brought out the nails directly."

There was a pause when Klaas ended, and no one seemed to know what to say to his story.

"Well," observed at length the man who had just come up, "I have heard that the white man can do such things. Perhaps the Baas drew a picture of the nails on the wood."

"Well, I won't believe that till I see it," said Matu, a young Hottentot who had but lately left his own tribe, and was new to the ways of the white men.

"Matu," cried a voice from the veranda at this moment, "take this letter and these six cakes over to Mynheer Van Zeel."

"Aha!" cried Klaas, exultingly, as Matu came back with the letter in his hand and the cakes in a bag on his shoulder, "these are just the same kind of scratches that the Dutch Christimenshe made on that chip of wood. Now you'll see, brother Matu, whether I've been telling lies."

The words haunted Matu all the way across the bare stony plain that lay between him and Mynheer Van Zeel's farm-house. But something else haunted him still more, and that was the thought of the cakes he was carrying. Like all Hottentots, he was fond of sweet things, and the temptation to eat one of them grew stronger every moment.

But how about the letter? According to Klaas, the scratches on the chip had told the story which they were meant to tell. If these scratches on the paper had the same power it might be awkward for him.

All at once a bright idea struck him. He stopped short, thrust the letter under a huge stone, and having satisfied himself that it

was quite out of sight (or rather that it had no chance of seeing what he was about) he pulled out and ate one of the cakes, took up the letter again, and then went merrily on his way, feeling quite sure that all was safe now.

The very first person he met on reaching the farm was Mynheer Van Zeel himself, who, with his broad-leaved hat pulled down over his hard brack-red face, his big silver-mounted pipe in his mouth, and a long knife stuck in the waistband of his close-fitting buckskin trousers, looked every inch a regular Boer farmer. He glanced through the letter, emptied the cakes out of the bag, and then turned suddenly upon Matu, and roared:

"You skellum [rogue], how dare you eat one of my cakes?"

"How do you know I ate it?" stammered the Hottentot, whose black face was almost gray with terror.

"This letter told me so," answered the Dutchman.

"What? even when I hid it under a stone before I began to eat?" shrieked Matu, with his eyes starting out of his head. "Can it see right through a stone, then?"

"So it would seem," replied Van Zeel, gravely, although he was almost bursting with suppressed laughter.

"Klaas was right," said the Hottentot in tones of settled despair. "The white man can indeed do wonders."

He crouched down as he spoke, expecting to feel the Dutchman's whip whistling about his ears. But Mynheer Van Zeel, angry as he was, was a good man at heart, and began to pity the poor fellow on seeing him in such trouble.

"You really deserve a good flogging," said he, "but I will let you off this time, for I think you've had a good lesson."

Indeed, Matu had been so frightened that he was never known to steal again; and he always spoke with great reverence of letters or papers, calling them "the scratches that know everything."—*Truth.*

WOODS FULL OF BOYS.

It is a cold day when there is not some boy wanting advice from this advice foundry, and there is no duty that is more pleasant to the editor than that of setting the boys right when they have symptoms of going wrong. A letter from a boy at West Alexandria, Ohio, is as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—I have been a reader of your paper for some time and have noticed your advice to boys. I am in a predicament to know what to do, and I thought I would write and ask your advice. I am a young man of seventeen years, am very desirous of going into saloon business, I have capital enough, but my father and mother object. I think I am capable of running my own affairs. Any advice from you will be kindly received by.

Your's truly,

Now, here is a chance to save a seventeen year old boy from almost sure ruin, if he will take the medicine. The medicine is this: Boy, take a sharp hatchet, lay your right wrist across a butcher's block and with the left hand take the hatchet and hagglet it, because you can't do a clean job of cutting with the left hand. Then go through life peddling pop-corn balls with the left hand, rather than enter the business of selling whiskey at your age. As a pop-corn peddler you will be respected, as a seventeen year old saloon-keeper, you will be pitied and despised, and at the age of twenty you will be a drunkard, or will have made a dozen other boys drunkards, and the friends of the other boys will hate you, your parents will not be proud of you, no girl of respectability will be seen in your company, and your companions will be loafers, you will be disgusted with your self, you will smell of stale lemon peel, whiskey and two-for-a-nickle cigar nicotine, and you will be a sign-post of warning to other boys to take the other road. There, you got more advice than you expected, didn't you. Well, any successful and respectable saloon-keeper—and there are successful and respectable men who keep saloons, though they are as scarce as hen's teeth—would give you the same advice. Any of them will tell you, if they tell you the truth, that ninety-seven boys out of a hundred, who begin life at your age behind the bar of a saloon, become either drunkards, gamblers, thieves, loafers, or else they lose their health, leave the business in disgust and die paupers. You don't want to be an unsuccessful saloon-keeper. Well to be a successful one you have got to have ability enough to be a successful lawyer, doctor or merchant. The men who are successful as saloon-keepers have ability, which,