

scription of the hero or heroine and their surroundings, is not to be expected. But in first-class monthlies, when the author says the hero has a beard, the artist should see to it that he gets one in his picture.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Notices to Contributors.—Any letters or MSS. received by the Editor of the "New Zealand Graphic" will be immediately acknowledged in this column.

'Daystar.'—Many thanks, I regret very much I cannot avail myself of your offer, but it would not be suitable for this column.

'Paerau's Aunt.'—I wonder if you will take this non-de-plume to yourself? I could think of no other which would catch your eye. Have just received your nice long letter, and am saving myself time by letting you know in this way that I have received it. Many thanks for your kind remarks about this column. It was those remarks which suggested this rather new way of replying. The pictures of the cousins have now appeared, and if another member of the family is ready to join, Cousin Kate begs me to say she would be very glad of his photograph also.

'Blue-bell.'—Why not put a flower aigrette in place of the feather? It is newer and more suitable for your age. The feather is better for an older person.

'Mother.'—It is no trouble at all, I assure you. Do let me beg you to see about your drains before summer. If you complain of a smell now, what will there not be to worry about when the hot weather sets in? Boil all your drinking water before you put it in the filter and sterilize every drop of milk. With your family of young children you cannot be too careful. I saw the following formula for preventing typhoid, which may be of use to you. It was sent by a lady to the Sydney "Morning Herald." I have not proved its efficacy; it sounds simple enough to be worth trying. She says "it is an almost certain preventive for typhoid, which seems, unfortunately, to be somewhat on the increase. Let all mothers of families give their children rectified spirits of turpentine in the following quantities every night on going to bed:—three to 12 years, four to eight drops in half teaspoon of sugar; above 12 years, 8 to 10 drops. It destroys the typhoid germ, and much suffering may be prevented by this simple and cheap remedy. If a child is seized with typhoid, repeat the dose 5 or 6 times a day, and let no solids or meat in any form be given. I speak from certain knowledge, and hope this little information may prove of use to some one."

'Miss Lucky.'—You are unfortunate. I hope you will be able to keep to your pseudonym. With regard to your dresses. Get a good pair of nice walking shoes; a pair of evening shoes—you had better have black ones, unless you buy one pair of black for ordinary evening wear, and one to match your ball dress. Then you require tennis shoes, and if you have a pair of fairly good walking shoes, take them in case you have any rather rough picnics, for these expeditions cut up one's foot-wear terribly. You must have two pairs of silk stockings, and four of black cashmere; three changes of underlinen; a silk petticoat and two good white ones, also a pretty one for morning wear. Get a very good white evening dress, with different coloured flowers and ribbons to transform it for two balls at least. Two or three low blouses will make it a dinner dress, and the good black silk skirt will also make, with these, more evening frocks. I should advise one tailor-made serviceable summer costume, with one plain waistcoat, and two or three full pouch ones. A good skirt with several cotton blouses takes up less room than whole cotton costumes, though no doubt you would find a pretty muslin dress very acceptable. You will also want a very fetching tea jacket. Take some lace scarfs and neck ruffles, as these smarten up a dress wonderfully, also a good supply of gloves, sunshade, umbrella, and a light waterproof. You must have a separate box for your millinery, though in

with it you can judiciously pack a silk blouse, lace, handkerchiefs, gloves, etc. Travel in a fresh straw hat; a fly-away chiffon and floral thing is apt to look very second hand after a long journey. Pack up also all the good temper, brightness, and unselfishness that you can lay your hands on, and I need hardly wish you a very pleasant Christmas holiday.

'Mrs B.'—Smocking is still very much used for children's frocks. Advise that you are able to do this.

'Madeline.'—Pray accept my sincerest sympathy. The longest period is nine months—black for six months, half mourning for three months; the shorter period is six months black, no half mourning. In such a hot climate as this, there can be no objection to plain white and black blouses, with black ribbon.

'Housekeeper.'—The food supply for a large family in hot weather is certainly a serious question. Are you not giving the children too many potatoes? If a man were to live entirely on potatoes, he would require to eat 13 pounds every day to get the necessary amount of nitrogen to keep him in health. You will find a mixed diet very much better and less fattening. Beer, wine, and spirits are no use as foods. Give more fruit, a little meat, and other vegetables besides those potatoes. See they have some bread and treacle or butter for tea, and oatmeal for breakfast; then occasionally fry a few left-over potatoes.

'Penelope.'—As you are an artist, why not paint your own dailings-room? You could mix your own colours, and you will not find even the mantel piece hard to do. In the panels of the door, paint some pretty trailing flowers. With taste and care and some experience in paints and brushes, you can make a lovely room, the cost of doing which would not exceed two shillings.

'Dolly.'—Wash the scalp carefully in warm water and ordinary brown soap, applying the lather which the soap has made to the skin with a soft brush; afterward wash the head thoroughly with clear warm water and fan it dry. If it is given this treatment once every two weeks, and brushed thoroughly every day, there is no reason why it should not be entirely free from dandruff.

'Maggie.'—I liked your letter very much indeed. You are quite right; reading is a great temptation. I will quote a line or two from your letter, as the reply may help others similarly circumstanced: "You see we have a great many visitors during the summer; when they come they bring with them the books they have bought on the train, and when they go away they are apt to leave them behind. Of course, we are not near book shops, and most of us are greedy for good books; sometimes those left are delightful; sometimes they make me wonder, and I am left undecided as to whether they are quite the books I ought to read. Of course, I know the difference between a good and a trashy novel, but there are other books the worth of which is unknown to me. How shall I decide?" I can only tell you of one way. After you have read a book, or when you begin to read it, unless you would like to tell every word of it to your father and your brothers I advise you to drop it. Then there is another way: If it is a book that in any way shakes your belief, drop it; do not wait to see how it ends, do not wait for anything, but regarding it as a weapon of evil, put it in the fire. Between you and me, the so-called religious novel has done more to make people unhappy than anything I can think of and I do not advise your reading it. Even a belief that seems sure may be shaken, and it is wisest not to tamper with it. I do advise your reading good, sweet, honest stories—stories of devotion either to duty or to love; in fact, I do not think there is anything quite as good for a girl as an honest love story which ends happily, and where the right people get married, and try their very best to be happy ever after.

'Bolus.'—It is courteous when a man friend is saying good-bye to ask him to come again, for in this way you show the appreciation of his visit. I do not advise the giving of presents to your men friends, unless it is to one to whom you are engaged to be married. Unless a bride wears a travelling dress, she should choose

white, and as it may be gotten in inexpensive materials, the expense cannot be a reason for objecting to it. In speaking to a bride and groom, you congratulate the bridegroom and wish much happiness to the bride. When a new acquaintance expresses pleasure at meeting you, simply acknowledge by a pleasant word or two.

'Mr Paul.'—If some misunderstanding has come between you and the girl whom you are so fond of, go to her and ask what it is you have done. There is no loss of dignity in doing this, and friends, my dear sir, are much easier to lose than to gain.

## A DESERT COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.

By Hugh Wakefield.

Of all the deserts in the world, the Great American Desert, in spite of the railroad running through it, is the only one which bears the least resemblance to the ideal geography desert, while the Kalahari of South Africa is furthest of all from what I ever supposed a desert could be.

Well as I knew South Africa, I knew absolutely nothing of the Kalahari except that it was a desert, when it became possible—imperative, in fact—to cross it in one of those sudden changes frequently falling to the correspondent's lot.

I had four Dongola Kaffirs with me for servants. Not one of them, either, had ever been upon the desert, though they were near enough neighbours. It made very little difference, however. There was serious objection to increasing the escort, and no real necessity.

Horses and mules were the means of travel. Providing myself with the necessities, I left Griqualand and the Transvaal, and setting the course by the compass, began the journey.

The first day on the desert was full of interest. Fantastic rock formations, as grand and unique as in the Garden of the Gods, rose in every direction. Between them stretched a bed of glistening sand, as smooth and almost as hard as a granite floor. In the moonlight it was white as snow.

Some rocks rose in sharp cones, like miniature mountains. Some were sheer cliffs to the summit on one side and a rugged hill on the other.

Now and then a spring of ice-cold mineral water, often worse than no water at all, found vent among the crevices, and came rippling down the ledges. If it was fortunate enough not to fall into a rift by the way and be lost there, it would wander for a short distance out upon the sand; but it was always swallowed up before it had wandered far, and was always marked, as far as it did wander, by a solid mass of forget-me-nots, so blue that, from a distance, one would think the imperial African sky lay reflected there in the mirror-surface of a pool.

Wherever there was a spring the rocks had clothed themselves in green, brilliant green, over every inch of space that was moistened, and frequently a plant like the Mexican pulque grew about the base.

It is most appropriately called a desert, after all, for a more deserted place could not be found. For some reason wild animals rarely venture there, and though the native settlements crowd upon the very verge, the people never encroach upon the sand unless they are obliged to.

There was but one apparent danger, but that was not to be thought lightly of. It was the chance of meeting a hostile caravan from a district so set against the English still that the sight of a solitary white man would offer an opportunity not to be lost.

The Zulu outbreak was hardly crushed, and South Africa was full of natives with just such patriotic sentiments; while during the war I had seen quite enough of them, in a ferocious state, not to long for an encounter with too many at once out there alone on the Kalahari desert.

Unfortunately, too, I had a wager up with a friend, who lovingly risked ten pounds that I would not come out of the desert alive. It was very bad policy. It roused a speculative anxiety, which has a strong tendency to make one easily alarmed and over-cautious.

My Kaffirs were good fellows, and under the right conditions would have been good fighters. Any one of them would have risked his life to save me

from an attack by a wild beast, but they were quite too near home to be depended on in a struggle with natives. The universal law of an eye for an eye lasts one's life out (and if not redeemed till death it is passed on as a debt for his family) in the native wilderness. The fellow who is struck—or some of his friends for him—will be sure to turn up sometime and strike back with interest.

I knew that I could only depend upon them to run in case of an attack, with the strong probability that the direction would be over to the enemy. Thus everything conspired to prejudice me against a chance encounter with wandering natives, when the common instincts of self-preservation would have been quite sufficient for picket duty, and the result was that caution was very much overdone. I came precious near developing into a veritable coward, and was actually thrown into a state of temporary incompetency when, about an hour after sunset, I suddenly discovered that a great mound, composed of broken rock, which we were approaching, had been appropriated as a camp, not by an ordinary caravan, but by a band of Zulu warriors.

What they were doing on the Kalahari was more than I could imagine, unless they were fugitives, which would make it all the worse for me if I fell into their hands.

It was evidently a band of considerable size. As many as a dozen fellows were sitting about on guard. Often I had caught glimpses of them sitting in that way through the night in Zululand.

They were cross-legged all in a heap. Their lances were thrust into the ground between their legs, standing upright, clutched by both hands, thus steadying themselves, and forming a support for their heads, so that they slept almost as soundly as in their tents.

A native picket or sentinel is never supposed to keep awake; but these men were awake, for the very thing which caught my eye and discovered them was the swaying of their long lances, plainly outlined against the sky. The men themselves were deeper in the shadow, so that I could just discern their lurchy figures crouching on the ground.

My horse saw them at the same instant. So did the Kaffirs and the mules. We all stopped without a signal, and no sooner were we still than the lances also stopped swinging, and stood suggestively ready for use at a moment's warning. There was no room for doubt that the fellows were watching us.

I was so thoroughly impressed with the necessity of preserving my precious identity, on account of that ten pounds, that I almost lost sight of all other considerations, and for a moment utterly lost my head. I should surely have run for my life upon the slightest additional provocation. All that saved me was the absurdity of running when I had nowhere to run to.

If I turned back I should simply have to come ground to go over, and the same people to pass later. There was no hope of working around them when they were already watching me. I might make a dash, and, if I escaped their lances, get away through the darkness before they could mount and follow me; but the Kaffirs and mules couldn't do it. They wouldn't have attempted it if they could, and I should have been in a fine plight alone on the Kalahari, without food, water, traps, or servants.

All this flashed through my brain as I sat for a second with my heart thumping against my ribs, and that ten-pound wager uppermost in my mind.

It was only as a last resort that the wisdom of standing on my dignity, going quietly ahead, and making the best of it if trouble really came, finally presented itself favourably. Then I touched the spurs to my horse. He snuffed suspiciously, but moved slowly forward. The Kaffirs showed no signs of following, but I did not venture to speak to them.

I didn't dare to speak, to tell the truth, for the moment I started the lances began to swing again, and the ten-pound wager gave me a chill.

It was a signal of some sort, and I looked quickly about to see if others were equipped in the neighbourhood.

Great heavens! what an ice-cold shiver ran through me when I discovered a precisely similar picket-guard seated before the nearest hill on my