

appetite, and the whole clutch found their way into an omelette.

No true flowers of the veldt are more typical of the rocky rugged kopjes than the cactus and the Natal lily. Most of the hills are crowned with the mottled cactus plants flowering red and yellow, and at a distance they look exactly like the figures of men standing up against the sky-line, and by the novice in warfare are invariably mistaken at first sight for the enemy. The Natal lily—as lovely as our white Christmas lilies and of much the same shape—comes up in early spring like the belladonna, and the little bunch of fleshy leaf always appears to have blighted away, leaving only a black line above ground. Looking down into these floral chalices from the hill tops they seem half filled at times with a greenish golden liquid, which on a near view turns out to be a cluster of beetles. One of the queerest little bits of nature on the veldt, which always suggested to me the globe-walkers of a circus, is a large spider, which, moving on its hind legs, rolls everywhere in front of it a ball of earth as large as a boy's marble composed of rolled leaf mould and such material in which, presumably, its eggs are being hatched.

As compared with the heath lands of Australia the veldt, amongst its manifold evils, has few deadly snakes. We met often the black Rinkalse or spitting snake, which has a nasty habit of ejecting its poison some ten or twenty feet, and with such deadly accuracy that it generally lodges in the eye

of an intruder, causing for a few days frightful agony and very often loss of eyesight. As it threatens one with head raised a foot from the grass, curved neck, and six inches below the head two large air sacs, which give the motive power to carry the poison from the glands, it has a peculiarly cobra and deadly look. More deadly, however, is the short, gray, stumpy puff adder, which we killed one night in our bedroom after we had given ourselves every chance of standing on it in the dark. The two deadliest of the Natal snakes are the green and black momba, which swing tendril-like from the low trees by the coast where the vegetation is tropical almost in its luxuriance, and strike the intruder suddenly as he passes underneath. A big harmless boa constrictor is often found round about the rocky kloofs, making life eventful for the dog apes and little Mozambique monkeys.

When all has been said of the wild life of the veldt there is the one bird which first, last and always—but especially in war times—seems typical of desolation and destruction, that is the assvogel, or carrion vulture, ever wheeling in circles against the opaline African sky. A revolting bird, gorging itself with carrion until it can only flap its broad wings drunkenly, without power of flight, and croak and threaten the intruder, it seems always the kindred spirit to death and cold mortality. Many features of the veldt, the garrison of Ladysmith may soon forget, but never, I think, the eternal vulture.

