

"President," said De Wet, "you are a boer" (meaning the word as the Dutch use it to signify "farmer") "but I am older than you, and I think I know the boers a little better than you do. I sent the men home because it was the best thing to do. They had been fighting and retreating for many days and nights, till they would soon be able to fight no more. They were becoming discouraged, and they had not seen their wives and children and farms for months. They could not hold together longer. Roberts has so many men that nothing we could do would prevent his advance. If I had kept the men at a hopeless job we should have gone to pieces. So I told them to go home, and see to things, and meet me at Brandfort in ten days' time.

"But the city?" said the astounded President. "What is to become of our city, if we don't defend it, general? Have you thought of that?"

"Oh, yes," answered the imperturbable De Wet. "We have saved the city, as well as the men. We could not prevent Roberts taking the city. If he had taken it by first destroying it, we should have had no capital left, and the war would have been over as far as our burghers are concerned. When Roberts has taken possession, and destroyed nothing, he cannot move for weeks. His supplies have got to come up over our railway from Colesberg, and he is going to have an outbreak of typhoid. His men have been drinking unboiled water from the river where dead horses have lain. When he begins to use the railway, we will do him a great deal more harm