



## LITERARY NOTICES.

CAPE TOWN TO LADYSMITH.—The Copp, Clark Company, Limited, have just published in book form the letters written from South Africa by the late Mr. G. W. Steevens to the *London Daily Mail* from Oct. 10, the day he landed in Cape Town, on the very eve of the war, to Dec. 6, when within a few days of his fatal illness he wrote the wonderful word-picture, "In a Conning Tower," where he shows us the Naval Brigade manfully playing their part in the defence of Ladysmith. The volume will be treasured by all who read it as a memorial of a man who had won, in a brief career, a well-deserved eminence among his comrades of the press. His friend, Mr. Vernon Blackburn, has added a "Last Chapter," telling us something about Steevens himself. Unlike many who have gathered fame at an early age, he was unspoiled by his success. He had a singularly winning character. One cannot pay a better tribute to his memory than to say, as can be said with truth, that in his few years of strenuous, active life he had made a host of friends and not one enemy. In this, his last work, as in his other writing, the two most prominent features are the wonderful vividness of the descriptions and the simple directness of the narrative. His classical training at Oxford left him the pregnant phrase and the forceful epigram ever at hand, while his experience as a journalist had taught him the folly of long and tedious descriptions. He had, too, a great faculty for entering into the spirit of the thing. Look at his first impression of Cape Town.

"After the surprise of being ashore again, the first thing to notice was the air. It was as clear—but there is nothing else in existence clear enough with which to compare it. You felt that all your life hitherto, you had been breathing mud and looking out on the world through fog. The town itself 'seemed half Western American with a faint smell of India—Denver with a dash of Delhi. . . . Cape Town itself—you saw it in a moment—does not hustle. The machinery is the West's, the spirit is the East's or the South's."

The following extract from Mr. Steevens' description of the battle of Landslaagte calls for no comment.—

"As the men moved forward before the enemy the heavens were opened. From the eastern sky swept a sheer sheet of rain. With the first stabbing drops horses turned their heads away trembling, and no whip nor spur could bring them up to it. It drove through Mackintoshes as if they were blotting paper. The air was filled with hissing; under foot you could see solid earth melting into mud, and mud flowing away in water. It blotted out hill, dale and enemy in one grey curtain of swooping water. You would have said that the heavens had opened to drown the wrath of man. And through it the guns still thundered and the khaki column pushed doggedly on.

"The infantry came among the boulders and began to open out. The supports and reserves followed up, and then in a twinkling, on the storm pitted hill face, burst loose that other storm—the storm of lead, of blood, of death. In a twinkling the first line was down behind rocks firing fast, and the bullets came flicking around them. Men stopped and started, staggered and dropped limply as if the strings were cut that held them upright. The line pushed on; the support and reserves followed up. A colonel fell, shot in the arm; the regiment pushed on. They came to a rocky ridge about twenty feet high. They clung to cover, firing, then rose, and were among the shrapnellets again. A major was left at the bottom of that ridge with his pipe in his mouth and a Mauser bullet through his leg; his company pushed on. Down again, fire again, up again and on! Another ridge won and passed—and only a more hellish hail of bullets beyond it. More men down, more men pushed into the firing line—more death piping bullets than ever. The air was a sieve of the heavy beat on the boulders like a million hammers; they tore the earth like a harrow.

"Another ridge crowned, another welcoming, whistling gust of shot—more men down, more pushed into the firing line. Half the men were down; the men puffed and stumbled on. Another ridge. God! Would the cursed hill never end? It was sown with the seed of death and death behind, it was edged with stinging fire

before. God! Would it never end? On, and get to the end of it! And now it was surely the end. The merry bugles rang out like cock-crow on a fine morning. The pipes shrieked of blood and the lust of glorious death. Fix bayonets! Staff-officers rushed shouting from the rear, imploring, cajoling, cursing, slamming every man who could move into line. Line—but it was a line no longer. It was a surging wave of men—Devons and Gordons, Manchester and Light Horse all mixed inextricably; subalterns commanding regiments, soldiers yelling advice, officers firing carbines, stumbling, leaping, killing, falling, all drunk with battle, shoving through hell to the throat of the enemy. And there beneath our feet was the Boer camp and the last Boers galloping out of it. There also—thank Heaven, thank Heaven!—were squadrons of Lancers and Dragoon Guards storming in among them, shouting, spearing, stamping them into the ground. 'Cease fire!'

"It was over—twelve hours of march, of reconnoissance, of waiting, of preparation, and half an hour of attack. But half an hour crammed with the life of half a life-time."

The pages of the book bristle with such stirring passages. In describing the home-coming of the Dundee column to Ladysmith, he writes, —

"Rents in their khaki showed white skin; from their grimed hands and heads you might judge them half red man, half soot-black. Eyelids hung fat and heavy over hollow cheeks and pointed cheek-bones. Only the eye remained the sky-blue, steel-keen, hard, clear, unconquerable English eye—to tell that thirty-two miles without rest, four days without a square meal, six nights—for many—without a stretch of sleep, still found them soldiers at the end."

Of the dreariness of the siege Mr. Steevens gives a most interesting picture, relieving it by glimpses of the humorous side of things. His chapter on the sailors in full of merry conceits. Here is the commanding officer's opinion of a pertinaciously annoying Boer artillerist:—

"'That gunner,' said the Captain, waving his stick at Surprise Hill, 'is a German. Nobody but a German atheist would have fired on us at breakfast, lunch and dinner, the same Sunday. It got too hot for us when he put one ten yards from the cook. Anybody else we could spare. Then we had to go.'

But here also there comes a touch of longing homesickness:—

"Even as the constant blue jacket says, 'Right Gun Hill up, sir, there floats from below, ting ting ting ting, ting. Five bells! The rock-rending double bang floats over you unheard, the hot iron hills swim away. Five bells—and you are on deck, swishing through cool blue water among white-clad ladies in long chairs, going home.'

The moment's dream of the homeward journey on the liner's deck was not to be realized. A few weeks more and there was the mid-night funeral in Ladysmith cemetery, under the falling rain, with the Boer searchlight from Bulwer flashing through the darkness. He had gone home.

REYNARD KIPLING'S new animal story, "The Elephant's Child," is a feature of the April *Ladies Home Journal*. It is the first of a series of "Just So" stories, and describes, with Kipling's inimitable drollery, how the elephant got his trunk. Rev. Cyrus Townsend Brady begins an interesting series of articles on his experiences as "A Missionary in the Great West," and Julian Ralph writes of "The Choir Boys of England." The now almost forgotten "Mysteries of the Century," which held the centre of the world's stage in their day, are graphically recalled, and "Singing 'The Messiah' on the Plains" gives a close view of the life of a music-loving Swedish community in the West. Edward Bok, in decrying "The Ease With Which We Marry," suggests some restricting, uniform legislation, and speaks plainly on divorce. Ian Maclaren pays his respects to "The Genteel Tramps in Our Churches," and "An American Mother" writes of "The American Woman in the Market-Place." "Through Picturesque America" is begun in the April Journal, two pages being devoted to views of the natural beauties of our country. "A Successful Country House in New England" and "Wellesley Girls in the Play" are among the other notable pictorial features.