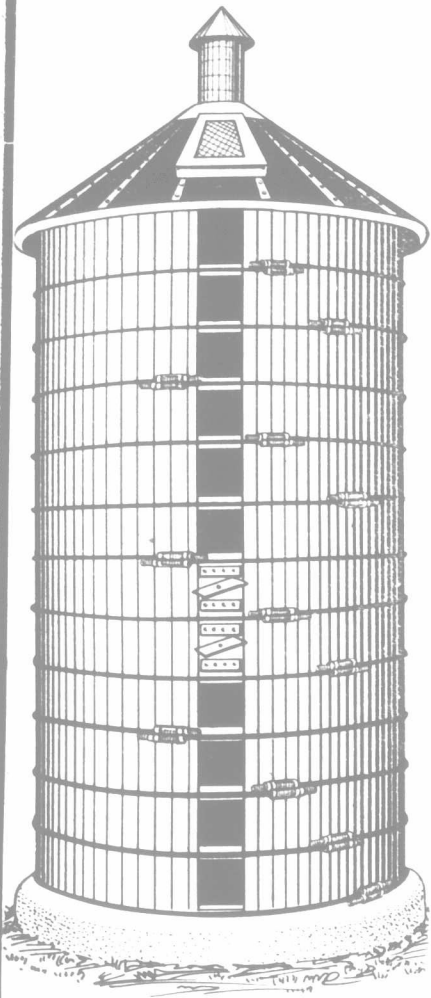


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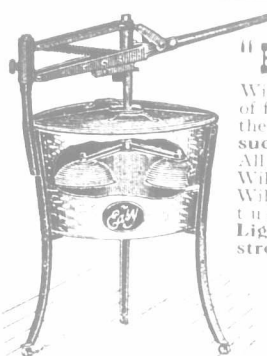
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"Those night attacks played the mischief with one's nerves anyway. Sometimes it would be so dark that though we marched six in a row, feeling and touching the man ahead every instant, we never knew what the next step would bring. The Kaffir scout would go first. I remember one night I was in the front rank and was supposed to follow the sergeant's white pony; I felt its tail; I could not see it. Of course now and then there'd be a flash of lightning that helped a lot.

"Talking about those dreadful thunderstorms—you remember 'em, eh?—well, we had a fellow in our troop who couldn't stick them at all. I've seen him almost fall off his horse with terror when we were crossing one of those salt lakes that they call 'pans' in a storm. And yet he was brave enough in action.

"Was I ever wounded? No. Once the man next me was killed and I've had bullets singing pretty close; one's not exactly afraid, you know—just scared that you're going to funk it and run. I always made sure I'd get a bullet in my forehead and actually I used to feel a dull pain there—where my imagination got hurt, maybe.

"There were some fine instances of nerve. The bravest fellow I knew was a boy of fifteen who went all through the war without a scratch; he did not give his right age when enlisting, of course. I saw him once playing cards while bullets were spattering all about him. Fact. He was the only Number Three, or man delegated to hold horses, who escaped that day in a little set-to we had with our friend the enemy. Over a hundred of our men were in our fort full with dysentery, and we left ten more to guard them while we, seventy strong, rode out to some expedition or other. We saw a troop of our khaki-clad men coming towards us and clattered out to greet them; just as we discovered that they were Boers we looked back and saw another similar crowd behind us. Well, there wasn't much time for thinking, but the Colonel ordered us to make for a Kaffir kraal a distance away, which by pure luck happened to be brick-lined. The unfortunate Number Threes were detailed to stay outside and hold the horses. Usually, the Boers never surrounded the enemy's post, because they were afraid they would hit their own men; but this time they did, and the fire was deuced hot, and all the Number Threes, except the boy of whom I speak, were killed, to say nothing of the killed and wounded within the enclosure. Sixty horses were done for, as well. And all this time the boy with the iron nerve played solitaire behind his breastworks of dead animals.

"One poor fellow who had been applying for a discharge for ever so long owing to bad teeth, which laid him up with dyspepsia—and who, owing to red tape, was still on the job—was knocked over, and as he lay wounded to death the boy behind the horse heard him say, 'Thank God, I've got my discharge at last!'

"We were in a pretty tight corner there, but it was growing dusk and this proved our salvation. The colonel ordered the men to take the few remaining horses and string themselves out to appear as numerous as possible; the Boers heard the pop of the magazine rifles and thought the number far greater than it was; under cover of the fire we stole out on foot and eventually we all got to shelter, the horses tearing along after us as soon as we were safe.

"The thing I liked least was sentry-go. We would be on for two hours and off for four, but it was horrid sitting there trying to keep awake and straining to keep the horses from straining. You saw all sorts of things. Kipling has got the thing down fine:

"Rivers at night that chuck and peer,
Mountains that never let you near,
Plains that the moonshine turns to sea,
And stars to all eternity;
And the quick blood-drip that tells
The fellows of the wilderness
When the wind worries through the hills."

"Once I remember—after a bout of it, thinking I saw a bunch of Boers in every clump of bush, a spear at my hand, and I felt my hair stand up on end. I could sympathize with the



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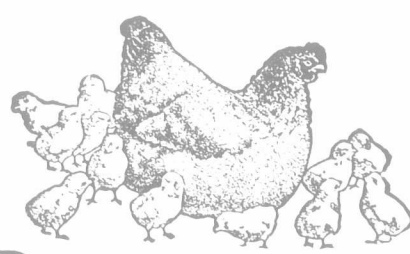
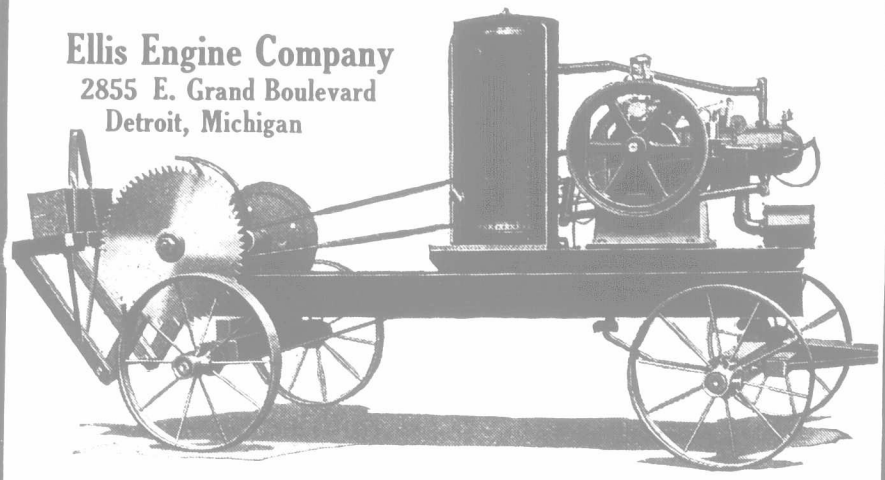
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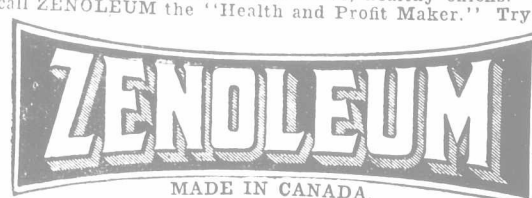
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