

GENERAL DE WET WRITES A BOOK.

Tells Many Interesting Stories of the Boer War That Have Hitherto Been State Secrets—"Be Loyal to the New Government."

In the withering blight and bitterness of defeat, General C. R. De Wet, the commander in chief of the Boer forces in the Orange Free State—that little hand so great of heart, which struggled against such desperate odds—sat down to write his sad story of the long and fateful struggle of the sturdy men of the veldt with the great British Empire. The result of his writing is a book which he calls "Three Years' War," set forth in the uncompromising language of the Dutch, translated into rather brittle English and published by Chas. Scribner's Sons. This book is full of that heart interest with which rhetoric has absolutely nothing to do. It is seen at the start that De Wet is a writer, and we like this, for it accords well with the character of a soldier who never knew when he was beaten and simply would not surrender until his president had given his army order to the enemy.

Last words of the General who was never defeated to those for whom he fought:
To my nation I address one last word; Be loyal to the new government. Loyalty pays best in the end. Loyalty alone is worthy of a nation which has shed its blood for freedom.

Stonewall Jackson, a man of large-eyed faith—a fanatic, if you please—who is always praising God, giving thanks, observing the humiliation days most meekly—tenderness toward his men and their animals and toward his prisoners ("I pitied the poor Tommies," he exclaims) and yet preserving such a front to the foe as Lycurgus the Spartan must have presented. He is very critical of Prinsloo, the commander-in-chief, whom he succeeded, and of some of the lesser chiefs who

lost their battles and surrendered. This criticism is, of course, from the point of view of the man who does not know how to surrender. Very early in his task as a historian De Wet begins to prepare his reader for the inevitable defeat, but he makes it appear that this defeat could have been avoided; and his argument, to which he brings unacceptable support, might be accepted if he would add that all the men in the ranks were De Wets. This, of course, he cannot do, for he is as devoid of self-consciousness throughout as if no part of his writing were autobiography. He lays the ultimate defeat to Prinsloo's weakness and strongly suggested duplicity, to the Kaffirs and to the treachery of the national scouts. And yet "God willed it so—His name be praised!"



LORD ROBERTS GEN DE WET KRUGER

undoing." Again he says, "From the first weeks of the winter of 1901 the English began to make night attacks upon us; at last they had found out a way of inflicting severe losses upon us, and then night attacks grew more and more frequent during the last period of the war. But they would never have thought of them at all if they had not been instructed in them by the National Scouts—our own flesh and blood!"

De Wet makes reference from time to time to the frightful effect of lyddite, used so unparingly by the British. On one occasion a lyddite shell fell into the position held by Commandant Steenkamp near Bethlehem and struck a rock behind which were twenty-five horses. Without a single exception every horse was killed. A young bugler, while riding behind a ridge and thus quite hidden from the enemy, was struck by a bomb and both he and his horse were blown to atoms. Yet with the tremendous shelling from the British that was always going on there were comparatively few casualties. De Wet says that he does not want to imply that the British artillery were poor shots. "I ascribe our comparative immunity," he says, "to a Higher Power, which averted misfortune from us."

A Higher Power! Ever the faith in the Higher Power! Our Boer Cromwell never faltered in that, no matter what might betide. After De Wet was forced into the Transvaal and was returning to the Orange Free State, he encountered some of the greatest difficulties of his whole campaign. His horses were exhausted and the English were closing in upon him in mighty numbers. In order to escape he decided on climbing the Magalies mountains without a path or a road! He tells of this ascent in the following language: "Near by there was a Kaffir hut, and I rode up to it. When the Kaffir came out to me I pointed to the Magalies mountains and asked: 'Right before us—can a man cross there?' 'No, baas; you cannot,' the Kaffir answered. 'Has a man never ridden across there?' 'Yes, baas,' replied the Kaffir, 'long ago!'

"Do baboons walk across?" "Baboons do, but not a man." "Come on," I said to my burghers. "This is our only way, and where a baboon can cross we can cross." With us was one Adrian Matthissen, a corporal, who came from the district of Bethlehem and was a sort of jocular character. He looked up at the mountains, 2,000 feet above him, and sighed, "Oh, Red Sea!" "I replied, 'The children of Israel had faith and went through, and all you need is faith: This is not the first Red Sea we have met with and will not be the last.' We climbed up unobserved to a bit of bush which, to continue the metaphor of the Red Sea, was a pillar of cloud to hide us from the English.

The author is very caustic in his censure of the British in regard to their mistreatment of the Boer women. He says that proclamations had been issued by Lord Roberts prescribing that any building within ten miles from the railway where the

British for tearing children from their mothers' arms—keeping a separate watch over them. He says that was the reason why he was obliged to take along with him so many young lads, hardly able to carry a rifle, and adds: "Some of these little ones became a prey to the bullets of the enemy and the South African soil is stained with the blood of children slain by England."

The story of his attempt to enter Cape Colony, with a large body of British troops at his rear, is very interesting. Here he details some of the ruses by which he misled the attacking forces and kept them from following him too closely. It was a common thing for his seasoned men of the veldt to deceive the British and "make fools of them." The burghers who had the best horses would remain behind any rise or kopje they could find in the neighborhood. When the enemy approached and saw ahead of them two or three hundred burghers they would halt and bring their guns (which were usually placed in the middle of the column) to the front. When they had got the guns in position they would bombard the ridge behind which the burghers were hidden. But as the Boers had no wish to remain under fire they would quietly withdraw out of sight. But the English would continue bombarding the hill and would send flanking parties to the right and left. Sometimes it would take the English several hours before they could make sure that there were no Boers behind the rise.

The tale of how a party of thirty-six Boers caused the retreat of 800 Britons is rather difficult of acceptance, but De Wet tells it for a fact and not without gentle touches of playful gravity. When the farm Boers wanted provisions and there was an English wagon train anywhere within easy riding distance, they would dash out and attack it, although, as in one case, it was a line with several thousand troops. The guard would scatter and the Boers would help themselves to the supplies and drive away the oxen, attached to heavy wagons full of cabbages, blankets and rifles. In this way they very often dealt severe blows to their enemy.

The memorable days in which the British were pursuing De Wet's men along the Orange river, and the Boers were searching for a fording place and finding none—are dwelt upon by the author with a sort of hopeless remembrance which is, indeed, pitiable. But even when the British were bearing down upon the little army, and threatening them at every step they did not lack the native resources that cheated their foes. The English thought they were running De Wet into a cul-de-sac in the forks of the Brak and Orange rivers, neither of which could be crossed, as they were swollen by the rains. "At our front, at our back, on our left," says De Wet, "the outlook was hopeless, and

to the right lay the cruel river. Stand still we could not—the enemy were upon us—it was impossible that anything could save us—no, not impossible—a rescue was at hand."

In the darkness of the quickly coming night he executed a most amazing flank movement, making a detour around the enemy. The next day he marched his wearied burghers twenty-three miles with nothing to eat all day long. In this way he reached a ford, crossed the Orange river and was soon well out of reach of the British. But the way was strewn with cast-off equipment. He had to leave behind, with other things, the only two guns with which his men could still shoot. Of this unhappy loss he says:

"My feelings on that day I can never forget. These Englishmen who go by the name of pro-Boers are the best fitted to describe the anguish which then overpowered me. For they stood up for justice even against their own people and this, not because they were hostile to their government or to the greatness of England's power, but only because they were not without moral sense, because they could not stifle conscience at the expense of justice nor identify themselves with iniquitous action."

Yes, wearied, battered, embattled Boers, you had with you the best sentiment of England, and the sympathy of its greatest living poet, who wrote of the onslaught upon you: "Trust back again the long-foiled light Into the night—into the night." But the end was now near. De Wet divided his command into small detachments in various districts of the Free State, and harassed the British as much as possible until the object of the peace negotiations, when they laid down their arms. He went to only one or two commandos when the disarmament took place, but to no more. He could not bear the sight of the surrender of his brave men.

As to the forces engaged in the war De Wet's figures differ from Botha's, who said the Boers had 60,000 men in arms. De Wet puts the number at 45,000, against which the British ultimately placed 250,000 men. At the close of the war only one-third of the original Boer army was fit for service.

The story of how, toward the close of the war, and while negotiations were under way, a little band under De Wet cut its way through sixty thousand British troops near Palmietfontein is told in matter-of-fact language which one would not think of questioning. This involved night attacks, forced marches, the cutting of much barbed wire and the loss of horses and supplies.

Such were the men who fought the three years' war of which the dauntless Free Stater has written: "Conquered? Yes, but who shall tame such spirits, who shall make them feel the chafing of the yoke of mastery? None, while still remains that soul of liberty of which no man ever made conquest, and while the brave burghers still feel the wild air of the kopjes and the freedom of the veldt."

Asked what he thought of the Venetian situation he brought his hand emphatically down on the table. "Thank God," he exclaimed, "it has come out all right. But it has taught our government a lesson—that it must never try its hand against such a game without the partnership of the United States. 'I don't say a word against Germany. But I do think it is to England's advantage to come right out and not only say, 'We support the Monroe doctrine, but, by heavens, we are willing to fight for it.'"

WORLD'S SHIP-TRUST WOULD PREVENT WAR

London, Jan. 3.—The ship trust can insure the peace of the world. This startling declaration is the logical conclusion to be drawn from an exhaustive defense of Morgan's shipping combination made by Lord Charles Beresford, vice-admiral of the British navy, on the eve of his departure for the United States. His argument is that the ship trust is the beginning of a natural automatic trade alliance between Great Britain and the United States which will make war between these two countries an impossibility, and by its tremendous moral influence practically eliminate the danger of a clash between any of the great world powers.

Lord Charles Beresford's conversion to the new shipping trust, which is coincident with the report that he will accept a high position in the newly formed combine, is the chief talk of naval and parliamentary circles.

Lord Charles is anxious to secure the command of the channel squadron, which is the last promotion the admiralty can confer upon him before his compulsory retirement. But it is not at all certain that Lord Charles will get the coveted assignment. He has made himself very unpopular with the admiralty by his attacks on the old fogeyism of the honorable gentlemen who preside over the destinies of the navy, and they are yet chafing over the startling state of affairs which his criticism revealed. If the assignment is not given, it is almost certain that Lord Charles will accept the berth that J. Pierpont Morgan is preparing for him. Lord Charles will sail for New York on the Kaiser in March. On the eve of his departure he said in part: "I can teach the people here to adopt American business methods, we can then have greater inter-communication of capital and interests between the two countries. It is the only way, and once England and America get on a sharing basis the world will not dare to interfere with either. We, neither of us, will stand

WIRE TO NOME

Overland Telegraph Across Alaska Nearing Completion. Washington, Jan. 3.—General A. W. Greeley, chief of the United States Signal Corps, announced today that the work on the last link of the overland telegraph line to Nome and St. Michael across Alaska has begun. Only 150 miles of line remain to be completed from Klondike to Chena, and it is believed that within three months it will be possible to send messages to Nome.

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