

INCIDENTS
of the
South African
Campaign



BY J. J. HART



KING EDWARD VII.



QUEEN ALEXANDRA.

And Hearts and Hands of Free-Born Men
Are all the Ramparts round Them.

INCIDENTS

G. M. Bell

SOUTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

Being a Series of Personal
Experiences of the Author



By J. J. HART,

Colonel of the Grenadier Guards

ST. JOHN, N. S.
THE TELEGRAPH PRESS,
1901



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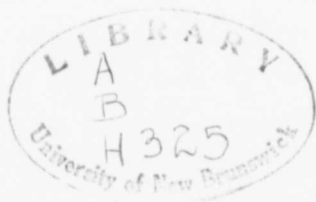
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THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE (in Two Acts.)





A REVIEW

OF CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND A FORE-
CAST OF ITS FUTURE.

Basing my conclusion on the probable reduction which the conduct of the campaign would have made in the estimated number of Boers in the field immediately before I left South Africa, I believe their entire strength should now be about seventeen thousand men.

Of this number, a large percentage consists of the military adventurers which the first successes of the Republican armies drew to their standard from Continental Europe. This is evident because of the fact that those whom the fear of confiscation of their property caused to lay down their arms were naturally, without any exceptions, the burghers who owned property in the country.

Besides these foreign adventurers, with whom no fear of future pecuniary loss can

be an influence, nor whom dread of exile as the punishment of continued resistance cannot intimidate, there is an Irish element in the Boer army, and this, more than any other, conduces to the unyielding spirit of the whole. The devotion to a losing cause which is so characteristic of Irishmen is strengthened in this case by a hatred of their enemy which — born far back in the centuries — has been transmitted as a heritage from father to son.

Considering an army so constituted, officered by men to whom death is preferable to defeat, it follows as a sequence that by nothing short of total annihilation can it be conquered.

Only those actually engaged in the task can form an adequate idea of the enormous difficulty of locating and surrounding those mobile bands of Boers, scattered as they are over many hundreds of miles of territory. If the great array of British infantry now in South Africa was replaced by an equal number of mounted troops, there is little room for doubting that the war would be ended in a week. Whereas, under

the present conditions, the fight will continue indefinitely until either the food or ammunition supplies of the Boer forces become exhausted. Notwithstanding the presence of British war ships in Delagoa Bay, it is matter for conjecture whether the Boer commissariat is not even now being replenished from over seas. In the other event, of their being entirely dependent on the produce of the country — with sympathizers from Cape Town to Pretoria — there is little probability that the soldiers of Botha and De Wet will want food for many months to come.

It is clear, however, that some time in the future, if no fortuitous circumstance or extraordinary event occurs to prevent it, the preponderance of the British Empire will triumph in the struggle on the issue of which, not its prestige in South Africa, but its existence as an integral unit among the nations depends.

Then there will remain the task of establishing and continuing a government in a country where proverbially race differences and

race hatred shall long continue to retard its progress and corrupt its laws.

When the last shot has been fired, after the last show of resistance has disappeared, it will still be necessary to maintain a large army in the country. Only government as a Crown colony, under military law, will be practicable at the outset. When the passions aroused by the present contest have become in a measure subdued and civil government, unsupported by British bayonets, can with safety be adopted, capitalists will find many natural obstacles to the development of the country. There is an almost entire absence of wood that could be used in the construction of railways and a total absence of navigable rivers that would lessen the cost of transit from Central Africa or from the sea. The dryness of the climate, except in the rainy season, is inimical to agricultural prosperity, and the country's everlasting plains do not afford many facilities for the catching and storing of rainfall. Sheep raising may become a source of profit.

Little is yet known of the Transvaal's mineral wealth.

The lifetime of the gold mines, in the opinion of experts, shall not be a long one; but they promise coal and iron in abundance in the immediate vicinity of Johannesburg.


When passions become yet more subdued and an English cabinet makes a first attempt to establish self-government in South Africa, if the ruling voice in its councils be "Equal rights to all men;" if the small politician and place-hunter be rigidly excluded from the government of the new colony and the Boer experiences a rule of justice and integrity, much good may be expected to follow.

History, however, affords us no example, under circumstances entirely similar to South Africa, of a nation shaking the hand of its conqueror, and it is doubtful whether Boer and Briton shall ever bury their differences and kiss the olive branch of peace.



CAMPING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

THE GUARDS IN SOUTH AFRICA.


 The Guards, the Grenadier Guards, now long been acknowledged to be the flower of the British infantry. Once, when we were visited by the German Emperor—who is a high authority on matters military—he pronounced us to be the smartest regiment he had ever seen, although he was acquainted with the armies of all civilized countries. Our fighting history as a regiment is second to none. At Waterloo the men who wore the uniform which us responded to the call of "Go, Guards, and at them!" and with the bayonet fixed themselves against the solid front of the veteran troops of Napoleon. When, therefore, I ask




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INCIDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

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CAMPBELL'S IN SOUTH AFRICA.

you, reader, to accompany us to South Africa, I would have you remember that you are travelling in very distinguished company. The early battles of the war were fought with bravery on both sides, and with varying success. Long lists of killed and wounded had come home to us, and, while our comrades fought and died, we, the *elite* of the service, were left to chafe at the monotony of garrison duty in the capital city of the Empire.

"When are you going to the front?" was the question that met us at every street corner. We had grown tired of answering it, and of vainly trying to make those troublesome civilians understand that we were not our own masters, and consequently could not charter a troop ship to take us to South Africa at our own will. The first eventful February of the war came and went. The loungers in the saloons began to look suspiciously at us and whisper to themselves about the stay-at-home soldiers who were kept for ornament. Our natural enemies, the London cab drivers—they

were our natural enemies because many in our ranks had a habit of driving to barracks at night and offering to the cabby profuse thanks for his trouble instead of his legal fare—our natural enemies, I say, jested us unmercifully from their box seats as they drove past, till at last, unable to stand their banter and keep our tempers longer, we unanimously resolved not to appear outside the barrack gates for our evening walks in future.

It was just after the relief of Ladysmith and the defeat and capture of Cronje at Paardeberg. The vacillating War Office had long been considering whether the services of the Light Division would be required at the front. My battalion had lost all hope, when, one afternoon, the monotony of daily routine was unexpectedly broken by the guard drummer blowing the assembly. There was a general rush down stairs, and, before the last notes of the bugle had died away, we had formed up and were standing motionless on parade. Our colonel came towards us from the gates carrying a

blue paper in his hand. After keeping us in suspense for about five minutes, during which he walked up and down on our flank, he suddenly stopped, faced us, and, grasping his sword hilt with one hand and holding up the other, in his very loudest tones—I think he wanted the civilians in the street to hear— informed us that he had received orders to the effect that the battalion should hold itself in readiness to sail for South Africa at an early date. For one moment the highly disciplined ranks wavered, the next all military and parade etiquette was forgotten; caps were thrown in the air, the colonel's sword was cutting wide circles in the air round his head, and we were all cheering like an excited street mob. When order was at length restored, and we returned to our rooms, pens and pencils were busy, and in a short time the news was flashing along the wires to distant homes, where fond mothers and sisters and wives were anxiously hoping that such news should never come. To fair girls

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of the city also many epistles were written, and men of fickle minds wanted to know if their "Dear May" could possibly see them on Monday evening; if "Dearest Kate" could come on Tuesday; if "Darling Sue" could come on Wednesday; and so on to the end of the week. That night every man walked out of barracks with head erect. We were under orders for the front.



CHAPTER II.

DURING the succeeding days all was bustle and preparation; home service clothing had to be stowed away, and khaki, cork helmets and foreign service boots procured instead. Field dressings and identity cards, bearing the name of the soldier's next of kin, had to be sewn in the jackets. Then there was medical inspection, at which the doctors pronounced each man fit or unfit for campaigning in South Africa.

When all was ready orders for embarkation were received, and at 4.30 a. m. the last reveille that we should hear in England for some time sounded. Many of us were never to hear it again, but we did not think of that then. Some had partaken too freely of the parting glass the previous night, and awoke with a headache as the effect. A few

had been so foolish as to think that, like the camel, they could lay by a reserve in their systems to be used on future occasions, and it took a little forcible persuasion to separate these latter from the blankets. The quarter for parade had sounded; we were due there at five. Beds were hastily rolled, and everything left in order for the militia who were to occupy the barracks after we had gone. We partook of a little cold breakfast in marching order, and when the bugle had sounded the fall in every man had taken his place in the ranks. The morning was cold and foggy and we wore our great coats over our khaki uniforms. After a formal inspection of companies by captains, we sloped arms and marched away through cheering crowds to the music of Burns' immortal "Lang Syne."

On the way to the station, where we were to entrain for Southampton, discipline was relaxed, and sweethearts and wives, sisters and mothers, were allowed to walk in the ranks. I noticed one young man who was placed in

a rather embarrassing situation. Two ladies, each of whom doubtless thought she was the sole claimant for his affections, had come to say the last good bye. Presence of mind, however, saved him, for the time at least. "My sister," he said as he introduced them in an absent-minded manner; but he did not indicate which. So, naturally, each supposed the other to be the sister and attributed his omission of her own name to the distraction of his grief at parting. If they discovered his fickleness as they walked home together, well, let us hope they sang in unison "We forgive him now he's gone." He was thoughtless and did not mean to be faithless. He found pleasure in the society of both, and had never seriously reflected that bigamy was prohibited by the laws of his country. On the way to Southampton, too, I noticed his face wore an expression of genuine sorrow.

We had now arrived at the station, and no civilians were allowed to enter its precincts. The time had come to say adieu—the moment

when hands are met that dread to part. Wives
clung to their husbands and mothers to their
sons till they were torn away from them by
such of us as were not so encumbered. These
partings before the battle have ever seemed
to me harder to bear than the parting by a
death bed. At the one the worst is known;
after the other, although there is hope, there
is ever an agony of suspense and fear.



CHAPTER III.



ARRIVED at Southampton the loading of our baggage and ammunition was soon completed — all aboard — and the great troop ship slipped her cables and glided slowly away from the wharf. It was Sunday, and a crowd had gathered to see us off. They cheered and with their handkerchiefs waved us adieu. When the sound of their voices died away, from the shore the strains of a cornet reached us: "Say Au Revoir, but Not Good Bye!" It sounded clear and sweet over the water and touched an answering chord in our hearts, and made us think of the loved ones we left behind, and mentally pray that it was for us only "Au revoir." Then the player changed his tune and loud and high the stirring notes of "The Charge" sounded on our ears. Its effect was magical. England faded away and the bloody

battlefields of South Africa rose before our mental vision. For a full minute the silence was unbroken and then from bow to stern of the ship there arose a wild cheer, which was thrice repeated. Then a bugle call on board, which sounded oddly at the time, brought us back to the present. It said as plainly as bugle could speak: "Come to the cookhouse door!" "Come to the cookhouse door!" Our hearts were full, but our stomachs were very empty. We took one more look at the now fading shore and then slowly trooped down the companion ladders to partake of the unpalatable salt junk and biscuit, which is the regulation fare of troop ships outward bound.



CHAPTER IV.

LIFE on board, especially if the voyage is a long one, generally becomes monotonous. The day begins on a troop ship at 5 a. m. : reveille sounds ; there is a hurried scrambling out of hammocks and a rush to the ladders to get a breath of pure air, after breathing the stifling atmosphere of the crowded spaces between decks all night ; next hammocks and blankets are folded and stowed away in the hammock rooms for the day. At seven o'clock breakfast is served, each mess, consisting of about twenty men, being waited on by two soldiers detailed by captains of companies to perform this duty during the voyage. The meal generally consists of porridge without milk, followed by ships' biscuit or bread with butter, and tea or coffee, the quality of which is always so bad that it is thrown through the port holes. When breakfast

is finished the tables are cleared and knives, forks, spoons and tin cups polished and placed on the tables again for inspection by the captain of the ship. Decks are scrubbed and washed down by a party of men who perform this duty during the whole voyage. At ten o'clock there is a parade, at which the men appear without boots and with chests and arms bared. While the parade is being formed on the upper decks the captain of the ship goes on his round of inspection below. At 12.30 dinner is served. This consists of salt junk and potatoes. The time between dinner and five o'clock tea is passed in card playing; or, if in the tropics, lying like cats asleep in the sun. After tea hammocks are taken out and slung from their hooks ready to sleep in, after which the men go on the upper decks to smoke or chat, or some to sit alone looking over the moonlit waters, thinking perhaps of the past and the uncertainty of their future. At nine o'clock, except when an occasional concert might be arranged for, the bugle sounds the retire and the day is done.

On Sunday morning, if there are any chaplains on board, which is usually the case, services are held for the different religions.

We had very foul weather going down channel, and as we emerged into the Atlantic the gale which was blowing became a hurricane, and we were driven far into the Bay of Biscay, where we labored for two days. On the seventeenth day of the voyage we reached St. Vincent, where we stopped for two days to take in coal. During these two days our ship was constantly surrounded by boatloads of hungry looking niggers, who were very anxious to dive after coins if we would throw them into the water, and as we did not think money would be of much use to us in South Africa they received a goodly share. They showed great skill in diving and never failed to secure the prize before it had time to reach the bottom.

On the third day after leaving St. Vincent death visited our ship. The victim was a very young man who succumbed to pneumonia, brought on by a cold which he caught coming

down channel. The afternoon after his death the funeral took place. There is not another burial service so touching as that which a chaplain reads over a soldier's body before it sinks to its nameless grave in the waste of waters.

I watched the service from the aft deck, where I had a few minutes before been observing the movements of a large shark, which followed a little in the wake of the ship on the starboard side. A group with bared heads, reverent and silent, stood around the bier. The chaplain stood reading at its foot, and two buglers, holding their bugles in hand, stood at its head. The corpse, which was sewn in a blanket and weighted with shot, was slowly lifted and lowered with ropes down a sloping plank over the ship's side. The chaplain's voice was heard again: "We commend thy soul to heaven and commit thy body to the deep until the sea gives up its dead." There was a mournful plash in the water, the bugles sounded the soldier's last post, a blood-crested wave floated past me; the hungry shark was satisfied, for I saw him no more.

CHAPTER V.



IN an evening in April, as the setting sun was touching and gilding the spires, towers and roofs of Cape Town with a golden light, we dropped anchor in Table Bay. Early next morning we went alongside the wharf, but we found that not a single train was available to take us near the seat of war. When we went on shore to take exercise we found few signs to indicate that the town was the supply base for an army of three hundred thousand men in the field. There were, it is true, great piles of biscuit boxes and corned beef tins, guarded by sickly looking soldiers, who had returned broken in health from the front; but those had been here for weeks, we were informed, and no effort was being made to get them to the men who were starving on the veldt. Pompous looking officials, more like

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fat aldermen than soldiers, walked about the streets. They puffed leisurely at their cigarettes and looked as if nothing in the world could possibly induce them to hurry up. Outside the town we found about one thousand Boer prisoners. They were inclosed on a space of about five acres, surrounded by a board fence, about ten feet high and topped with barbed wire. Outside the fence, at intervals of about one hundred yards, platforms were erected, on each a British soldier was posted with orders to shoot any prisoner attempting to escape. I observed that many of them carried their arms in splints or slings on account of wounds received in recent fights. They walked around with erect heads, and did not seem in any way dejected by their condition as prisoners of war.

On the the third day of our stay at Cape Town—after coaling, which was done by Kaffirs, who playfully jostled each other at work like schoolboys and looked as if they were greatly amused by their task—we received orders to

proceed to Port Elizabeth, about eight hundred miles round the east coast, and with all possible speed join the forces then operating in the eastern part of the Orange Free State, who were hard pressed by superior numbers and, I think I may add, baffled by superior strategy, for the force opposing them was commanded by De Wet, to whom, before all our British generals, I give the palm as the greatest tactician, if not the greatest leader of men. We were caught in a heavy fog as we steamed out of Table Bay. It lasted during the whole of the voyage and necessitated the continual blowing of the ship's fog horn, which rendered sleep impossible. We arrived at Port Elizabeth on a Sunday morning, and anchored half a mile off shore, the harbor not being deep enough to allow the nearer approach of a large ship. A boat soon put out to us from the wharf, and we were informed no trains would be available for us till the afternoon of Monday. The work of disembarkation in small boats was completed at noon of the

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following day and the march to the station began, the people of the town cheering us along the way. Before the start each man received one hundred rounds of ammunition and instructions were issued regarding the mode of defence to be adopted in case our train should be attacked by the Boers. These were to the effect that half the men in each compartment were to get out and fire from under the carriages; the other half, if possible, to remain inside and take up the fire from the doors and windows. Those who rode in open trucks—sufficient carriages were not available at Port Elizabeth—had orders to remain in them and fire over the sides. We were also informed of the cheerful possibility of some of the railway bridges being blown up. The line was patrolled, of course, and the bridges guarded by militia; but the Boers were very strong, and the guards might not be able to hold them in check. Inside the station the women of the town were waiting for us with great baskets of fruits, and the

men presented us with tobacco, pipes and cigarettes. The Kaffir girls treated us like old friends, showing us their white teeth with broad smiles on their black faces. Old men wanted to shake our hands, and as the train moved out of the station many a dusky maiden waved us a laughing adieu.

The English and French women cried; at least they applied their handkerchiefs to their eyes, but we could not help feeling more pleased with the cheerful send off of their black sisters.

A little corned beef was all the solid food we had to keep up our fighting courage on the journey. Morning and evening we stopped for water, and, as the Boers had the good taste not to attack us or blow up bridges, we amused ourselves during those intervals by throwing stones at bottles. We would have liked to try our rifles on the said bottles, but we heard that the British taxpayer was already paying the cost of the war to the tune of a million a week, so our consciences and our


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colonel prevented us from wasting ammunition. We met some few stores along the line kept by prosperous British settlers, who magnanimously offered to sell us bread at two shillings (forty-eight cents) a pound!

We arrived at Edenburg on the afternoon of the fourth day without accident of any kind. Here we found orders awaiting us to leave the train and march in a northeasterly direction for about fifty miles to where General Rundle was engaging the enemy, thirty miles east of Bloemfontein.



CHAPTER VI.

E packed our underclothing and great coats away in wagons, which we were told would follow us as soon as bullocks could be obtained to draw them. They started, I believe, about four hours after us, but it took them a month to overtake us. An extra seventy rounds of ammunition was served to us, making a hundred and seventy in all, and making the total weight which each man carried about eighty pounds; a blanket and waterproof sheet, which we carried rolled on our backs, being included. We marched out of the little station in a drizzling rain, which had been falling for some hours and had already thoroughly wetted us. Our first cross country walk did not justify our previously formed opinions of the rolling veldt. Instead of walking over a dry springy turf covered with luxurious grass.

we sank to our knees in mud at every step. We waded through rivers to our waists, and when night fell we tore our clothes and scratched our hands getting over barbed wire fences. It was scarcely a situation favorable to mirth, yet suppressed laughter ran from end to end of the column. I think it was because the whole thing was so unexpected that we took it as a grim practical joke.

About midnight we were very tired, and it had grown so dark we found it impossible to proceed farther. A halt was ordered, we unrolled our waterproof sheets and blankets, covered our heads as well as we could, and lay down to sleep after about fifty men had been picked out at random for sentries.

And now all our laughter had died and the silence of the dead reigned over our bivouac; not a sound broke the stillness of the African night. Soon the rain clouds began to roll away and one by one the stars peeped out; the southern cross formed itself and looked down on us; then a full and resplendent moon rose

above the horizon and shone with a light that she shows to no other land, throwing the long irregular shadows of rugged hills across broad plains, scintillating on the bayonets of the sentries and outlining the shivering forms around as she sailed majestically across the sky.

"Stand to your arms!" shouted a bell-like voice in front, and the order was passed along to the rear of the column. We had been resting two hours; as we were so very wet it would have been very dangerous to health to stop for a longer time. We got once more on our numbed feet and tried to walk; and South Africa, war, and war makers were criticised and condemned in language more forcible than select.

We marched for an hour at a brisk pace and then stopped to make coffee, which we had taken along with us on mules. We had to search over a wide area for wood, the biscuit boxes which we emptied not being sufficient to boil our camp kettles. By the time we had partaken of our coffee and biscuit the moon

was hanging like a great lamp over the horizon and we were soon again in darkness. It did not last long, however, for presently the sun rose, making the hasty entry with which he always appears in tropical or semi-tropical lands. Then we saw that we were in the centre of a great plain, stretching far out to the horizon on all sides and dotted with very big hills, whose sides were covered with loose stones and boulders, speaking of volcanic origin. There are a great many hills in South Africa, but there are few valleys; rising abruptly from the plains, these hills might be compared to mighty ships on the surface of a tranquil ocean.

The rays of the risen sun had just begun to warm our wet and half frozen limbs when a puff of smoke was observed to rise from the crest of a hill about five miles on our right. Then came the boom of a distant gun, and a shell came shrieking on its way. The Boers had bade us welcome to South Africa. It was a fuse shrapnel, but was badly timed, and did not burst until it had passed over us. We

had no artillery to return the salute, so we got on the move as quickly as possible. The second shot, however, was a better one than the first. It burst right over the heads of the leading files, but shrapnel pitches slightly forward, and its one hundred and sixty pellets of lead and broken casing buried themselves harmlessly in the earth. When the third came we had gained the shelter of an adjacent kopje. We marched till noon under a very hot sun, with halts of about ten minutes every two hours. We waded through one river. I remember our colonel, who was the shortest man in the regiment, stood in the middle of it, the water running over his shoulders. He was a very eccentric man in many things, but we knew him to be a good soldier and believed in him as a capable leader. "Is there any one who wants to go home to his mother?" he shouted as he watched us struggling through the flood. Some one answered by calling him "Funny Bunker," which was his nickname in the regiment, and by which I wish you to recognize him for the future. We halted at a

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place called Reddesburg, where we took off our clothes and dried them in the sun. We had no change of underclothing and were obliged to remain naked till everything was dry, which was about four hours. It seems that all the dirt of the State lies between Edenburg and Reddesburg, for in all our subsequent campaigning through it our way lay over the dry veldt. After dressing we gathered some wood for fires, ran down some sheep and killed, roasted and ate them. The tender conscience of the War Office, whose blundering has caused the taxpayer to pay for so much ammunition to kill the Boers, would not allow a few rounds to be wasted in killing sheep. We were never allowed to shoot them, and to run down sheep on an open plain was no easy task, especially if the runners were fatigued after a long march. When our mutton was cooked the Boer storekeepers of the village brought us bread, which they sold to us at a fourth of the price asked us by Englishmen in Cape Colony. We enjoyed our meal as only men can who know what it is to go hungry,

and when the shadows of night fell, after throwing out an outpost of a hundred men to guard against the approach of the enemy, we lay down to sleep the sleep of the tired. I shall not tell you the names of many of our daily halting places—first, for the very good reason that I do not remember them, and, second, because they are Dutch names, and you might strain your tongue in the effort to pronounce them. But there are a few things I wish you to remember in reading those pages. The first is that a commanding officer may receive orders to move with his men to a given place without any reason being given him by the general for so doing; the second is that in war success is the one object aimed at, and loss of life, however great, must never be considered in the balance against it; and the third that it is the survival of the fittest—the strong never stop to accommodate themselves to the pace of the weak. But I left the battalion sleeping, and now it is dawn of day and the order “Stand to arms!” is being passed down from front to rear of the column.

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CHAPTER VII.

STAND to your arms!" Soldiers of well-disciplined regiments on active service when in touch with the enemy always sleep with their equipment on, ammunition in their pouches, and one arm passed through the slings of their rifles. This is in order to be ready to defend themselves at the first alarm in case of a night attack. But, if the enemy crept up to the outpost line on a dark night without being observed, they might possibly prefer lying low till daybreak before attacking. Hence the order "Stand to your arms!" which is carried out by the men rising and standing silent and motionless where they have slept till the last shadows of night have cleared before the risen sun and the outpost line reported "All's well!"

The order to fall out was followed, as it always is after an African winter night lying in

the open, by running backwards and forwards, stamping of feet, clapping of hands and jumping to start the circulation, which generally stops somewhere above the knees. Next we rolled our sheets and blankets, fastened them to our straps; breakfasted on coffee and a little biscuit, and then waited orders to march, for which we were ready at a moment's notice. We got some wagons at Reddesburg, with spans of sixteen bullocks in each, to take our biscuit, corned beef, tea, coffee, sugar, rum and our cooking utensils. We started about 6 a. m., and marched in fighting formation, with intervals of about one hundred and fifty paces between ranks and twenty paces between each man. This was our invariable mode of advance, when it was possible that the enemy might be anywhere near our route. Its advantages were that it left room for a shell to explode between ranks without necessarily causing loss of life, which would not be possible if we marched in close formation. At noon we halted for three hours, but without closing the ranks. We dined on

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biscuit and corned beef, of which each man carried twenty-four hours' supply in his haversack.

The country over which we travelled day by day requires little description. It is all the same everlasting plain, dotted here and there with hills, without a tree to relieve the monotony of the view. Daily we scanned their stony sides as we marched, wondering from which of them a Boer shell would come on its mission of death.

At three o'clock we moved again and marched till night fell, when we formed into column of companies and halted for the night. The men detailed for cooking made tea after wood had been gathered. To procure wood was always a great difficulty. It was so scarce that sometimes we could get none, and then we learned to imitate the Kaffir drivers of our bullock wagons, who made good fires of ox dung, thoroughly dried by the sun. A couple of black men, armed with sacks, would run for about a hundred yards on either side to gather it off the veldt as we marched. They soon

filled their sacks, and then would return to empty them in the wagons and repeat the process. Every night large fires were lighted, which burned without flame, but gave out great heat. Round these they would sit chatting in their native tongue, which sounds so melodious to the ear. Their bivouac was always apart from ours, and we were not allowed to leave ours to go to theirs; but by me and a good many others this order was disregarded, at the risk, of course, of severe punishment if discovered, but the bright fires looked so tempting on a cold night. I cannot go on without paying a compliment to the civility with which these dusky gentlemen always received us in their bivouac. They made the circle round the bright fire wide for us to sit down, and allowed us to heat our mess tins, even if they had to remove their own pots to make room for us to do so. This civility was the more appreciated by us because they knew we were liable to punishment for quitting our own lines, and were thus powerless to enforce our claims on

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their fires, even if we felt inclined to do so; remember, too, we had nothing to give them in return for their hospitality, not even old clothes to cover their ill clad bodies.

To make fires like the Kaffirs in our own bivouacs was our great ambition; but then we had no sacks and could not deviate so much from our line of march as they could. Necessity, however, is always the mother of invention. We produced our ever-ready housewives. Now, if you are a foreigner, with an imperfect knowledge of the English language, this will require explanation. Understand then that I am not speaking of wives in matrimony, but of a neat little cloth pouch, made to hold needles and thread, and designed for the special use of man when he is far from the benefits of that tender care which makes woman sew on his buttons late on Saturday night if he tells her they are off early on Monday morning. As I said, we produced our ever-ready housewives, sewed our pocket kerchiefs into bags, and in this way managed to carry some of the not very

clean material for fire, but still we only succeeded in gathering what was hardly sufficient to boil a pumpkin or any other vegetable we might pick up on our way. If we succeeded in cooking anything it was only after a great deal of blowing over the smoke (which made our eyes shed tears) and by backing up the dying embers with handfuls of withered grass, which flared up and burned our fingers as we held our tins over the flame. Then followed language which made the moon turn pale. War was condemned as a most absurd way of settling international differences, and Kruger and our English statesmen consigned to where the wicked begin troubling and the good are at rest.

When we had partaken of tea and biscuit my company and another were sent on outpost duty, and, after posting sentries on their flanks, the battalion lay down to sleep.



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CHAPTER VIII.

UN the South African war, as indeed in all modern wars, when a body of troops which has been marching during the day halts for the night a certain proportion of that body is detailed for outpost duty; the object of this being to guard the main body against a possible surprise attack by the enemy during the night. The outpost line generally takes up a position from one to two miles distant from the main body, according to the nature of the ground. A place is generally chosen where sentries may be posted so as to see as far as possible without being themselves visible to a person advancing towards them.

On this night my company took up a position on the side of a hill distant about two miles from the bivouac. About half an hour after midnight I was doing my turn of sentry

go. It was a dark night, and I was a little anxious, as a man naturally will be when the lives of thousands depend on his vigilance. Suddenly I heard a noise in front of me resembling a rotten stick breaking. I strained my eyes for all they were worth in the direction whence it came, and soon saw a form emerge out of the darkness and advance towards me at what I fancied to be a very slow pace. I brought my rifle to the ready and challenged in a loud voice: "Halt! Who comes there?" The figure continued to advance towards me without giving any answer. I waited till it came within fifty yards, and then challenged the second time, with the same result. I did not wait long to challenge the third time, and then brought my rifle to my shoulder. My orders were very explicit, and I could not disobey them even if I felt inclined to do so. I was about to press the trigger, when suddenly the figure stopped, and the moon, shooting out from beneath a cloud at the same time, revealed to me the form of a woman. I had

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heard of the good Boer wives parading with Mauser and bandolier. A sort of hazy recollection of having read of great battles being lost or won through the treachery or the aid of women came back to me. Therefore I requested my nocturnal visitor to hold up her hands, while I advanced to where she stood with rifle pointed at her breast. When I stopped in front of the woman her face was turned upwards and the moon shone full upon it. Female beauty has ever appealed, and will ever appeal, strongly to man, no matter where he sees it; but when you meet a woman alone and unprotected on the wide African veldt beneath the midnight stars, and you are pointing a loaded rifle at her, and, as a consequence of this, see a very frightened look in her eyes, you feel inclined to express your sorrow and assure her of your protection. So I felt as I gazed on that face in the moonlight; a face so noble, so transcendently beautiful I had never seen before, nor do I think I shall ever see again. The struggle within me was

sharp and bitter, but ended in the soldier triumphing over the man. In as stern a tone as I could assume I asked her why she wandered abroad and for what purpose she sought to pass through our lines without the countersign. "I am English," she answered in a broken voice. "My husband, a British subject, has been found fighting with the Republican armies, and is now a prisoner in your camp. For God's sake, take me to your general, that I may plead for his life if it is in danger." I had not time to reply before a bullet sang past my ear, and a sharp report rang out on the stillness of the night and found an echo in some far off valley. Then there followed the crack! crack! of several rifles in quick succession. The first shot struck the woman full in the forehead, and she staggered forward into my arms. "Tell Ernest I—love—him," she murmured, and the beautiful head fell back. Tenderly I lowered her lifeless form to the ground, and, hurrying up, found the outpost hotly engaged with the enemy.



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CHAPTER IX.

E started about 5 a. m., after breakfasting on coffee and biscuit. No trace of the enemy which our outpost had beaten off on the previous night was visible. Our way lay through broad fields of Indian corn, which, owing to the sickle having been turned into a sword, had been left unreaped. It was very high, too, and going through it was much more fatiguing than walking over the grass of the veldt. We stopped about ten a. m. where some sheep were grazing, and after a long chase succeeded in running down forty, which was sufficient for dinner. It was our custom when the owner of any sheep or cattle which we killed was at hand to pay him for his property, the price, however, being named by us.

Our meal cooked and eaten, we started again and, after we marched through about a mile of corn, suddenly came upon a deep donga, in the bottom of which we found three Boers saddling their horses. They were greatly surprised at our appearance, being totally unaware of our approach, but they submitted to be taken prisoners and surrendered their arms with a good grace. When questioned in English, all three shook their heads. A halt was then ordered and an interpreter called, but still our prisoners shook their heads and were dumb. The younger of the three was a tall dark man, with a very striking face and a keen eye. He wore his beard in the Boer fashion, and a long grey cloak covered his form almost to the ground. He stood a little in the background, leaning on his horse's shoulder, and seemed to regard the whole affair as a good joke. Presently I noticed him pat his horse's neck and whisper in the animal's ear. The horse — a big coal black stallion — pricked his ears and looked

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around as if he understood. Then one of the other prisoners attracted everybody's attention to himself by suddenly beginning to speak in French, and the next thing any one was aware of was that the black stallion had darted through the group which surrounded him with his rider on his back. The bolts of a hundred rifles rattled, then above the din a clear voice was heard shouting: "Don't fire at him!" The flying horseman had shouted the command himself, and before the trick was discovered he had turned into another donga, which ran at right angles to the first, and was lost to view. He reappeared on the plain, about five hundred yards ahead, and then a volley was fired after him. He turned in the saddle and waved his hand back at us. Perhaps there were many in the ranks who thought it would be a pity to kill one who could dare so much and may even have forgotten their duty so far as to fire high. The other two prisoners tried to escape in the confusion, but were stopped. When we resumed

our march they soon found their tongues and talked to us fluently in English. I was escort for one, and tried to find out from him who the escaped prisoner was. "Ah!" he replied, "you have no leader like him." What is his name?" then I asked. "His name?" he said, "is De Wet."

During three succeeding days we marched under a continuous shell fire, but it was badly directed from a range of five to seven miles, and with the exception of one man, who had his ear cut off by a piece of shrapnel casing, we had no casualties.



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CHAPTER X.

NEXT day we expected to be with the force to the support of which we were hastening, and which we expected to find in close touch with the enemy. We breakfasted on a few crumbs of biscuit which remained in our haversacks from the previous day — the slow ox-wagons containing our provisions were unable to keep up with us — and began our march at 5 a.m. A battalion of infantry and a company of the Imperial Yeomanry — mounted troops — had joined us in the night. The latter scoured the country for miles on our flanks, and thus rendered safe an advance in close formation, by which we got over the ground much faster than if we proceeded in open lines. We passed many Kaffir kraals on our way, but found those villages inhabited only by women and children,

the men all being employed as drivers, chiefly of the British transport, and a few also with the Boer army. The Kaffir builds his house of stone, the walls of which are generally about ten feet high and roofed with thatch. A kraal or village generally consists of about twenty or thirty houses. At some of them the women gave us signs of welcome, at others they would silently watch our approach, and when we came near would turn their backs and walk away as if to give us an opportunity of admiring the graceful carriage which is so characteristic of the women of eastern nations, and is believed to be the effect produced by carrying loads on the head.

The day was exceptionally hot, and the track very dusty. We were very much weakened by want of food, and toiled along under our heavy loads in gloomy silence.

There was one man, however, who was always cheerful, even in the most trying circumstances. This was our chaplain, who, owing to

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a very patriarchal face, of which he was the possessor, we had irreverently styled "Holy Moses." Now, Moses was always on the alert for signs, and he now observed signals of distress in sections of the files near me, who were so fatigued that they looked very much as if they were walking on their knees instead of on their feet. Consequently, with the idea of cheering some possibly drooping spirits, with three strides of his long lean legs he came up with us and cried: "Boys, I'll tell you a story!" The heat, the hunger and the thirst were becoming so unbearable that nobody paid the least attention to him, and he cried again: "Boys, won't you listen to my story?" Then someone, struck with the admirable and really heroic character of the man, grunted out: "Let's have it then old boy!" and the chaplain, with a few preparatory coughs, cleared the dust out of his thirst parched throat and thus began:—

"I was sitting one night in the saloon of the Grosvenor Hotel, in your city of London, and

wondering where I should procure money to pay for my next meal, when a whispered conversation between two men who sat near me, with their elbows resting on a table and their chins on their hands, attracted my attention. One was an ugly, bullet-headed, repulsive-looking, beetle-browed fellow, with a veritable rob-a-poor-box face; the other and the youngest of the two, was entirely his opposite. With well cut features and pleasing expression, he presented a striking contrast to the appearance of his companion. I was beginning to surmise what it was that brought those two men, so totally dissimilar to each other, into such close confidence, when a man entered at the door, and stopping opposite the two men, as if to look around the saloon, struck three times on the toe of his boot with a light cane, which he carried in his hand, and turning again left the room. That this was a preconcerted signal given to the two men who sat at the table, I had not the slightest doubt, for in about a minute after the

man had left, both rose and went out. What could their little game be I wondered. Should I follow them? My resolution was soon taken. I did not wear a clerical collar then, and I was young and fond of adventure. I crossed the saloon quickly to look, and I was just in time to see them turning to the right into Buckingham Palace Road. The ugly man was about ten paces in front of the other, so it was evident they did not wish to be seen together. I followed them closely through St. James' Park. They passed through the Horse Guards under the clock, turned to the right down Parliament street, and to the left towards Westminster Bridge. Every now and then the ugly man would look behind to see that the other followed, who in turn would look behind also; probably to see that his footsteps were not shadowed. Arrived at the bridge they turned to the left down the Thames Embankment, walking in the shadow of the trees on the lower pavement, next the water. When they came to Cleopatra's

Needle they stopped, and the younger man retraced his steps to the Obelisk, and out to the water's edge. Here they waited, and I took up a concealed position in the shadow of the wall and waited too. The policeman, on his beat, passed and repassed and looked suspiciously at me, but did not speak. Presently I heard the splash of oars in the water, and a little later a boat grating against the lower foundations of the Obelisk. I raised my head and peered over the wall. I saw the two men climb down into the boat, but in the dim light I could not be certain how many occupied it as they pushed out from the wall. They pulled quickly out into the centre of the river and I strained my eyes to discover which way the boat turned, but without success. I wished to continue the pursuit, but was fairly puzzled how to act. While I stood gazing at the myriad reflection of the city's lights in the water a smothered cry reached my ears. Then all was quiet for a moment, and again the cry reached me, this time

louder than before, for I distinctly heard the the words: 'Help, I am drowning!' Without waiting to think I started running in the direction of Waterloo Bridge, to the station of the river police. In a very short time two constables had manned a boat and we were pulling hard against the stream to investigate the cause of the cry for help. I felt a strange nervousness come over me as we pulled up and across the river, resting on our oars every few minutes to listen for the cry again." Here our chaplain cleared his throat the second time and moistened his lips with a few drops of the small portion of water which remained in his bottle and then resumed: "We rowed over the river for more than an hour, when, deeming further search would be fruitless, we turned the boat towards the shore. Had some foul crime been committed, or had another victim been added to the number which despair had driven to seek for rest in the river's inky waters. I could not help thinking that it was the former, and that the

two gentlemen I had shadowed were the perpetrators of it. Little did I think, as I walked to my garret lodging through the deserted streets in the small hours of morning, that twenty years after, seven thousand miles from its surroundings, I should solve the mystery. Yet so it was." Here the chaplain emptied the contents of his water bottle down his throat, and again resumed: "I was in Natal before I joined your battalion, at Port Elizabeth. It was the day after the relief of Ladysmith. The garrison and the relieving force were still shaking each other's hands, and, as they looked up at the Union Jack floating in the breeze, men thought how narrowly it had escaped being trailed in the dust. I was thinking myself of the dreadful cost at which it had been saved, when a messenger came to summon me to the death-bed of a dying man who had expressed a wish to see a clergyman. I was conducted through a dirty street to a small bomb proof shelter, which had been constructed at the end

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of it. I was obliged to stoop on hands and knees to enter it, and there alone, lying on a little dirty straw on the floor of an apartment about ten feet square, I saw a man who one look convinced me was soon about to pass the mortal bourne. With an effort he raised himself on one elbow as I entered, and then as if the trial had exhausted his strength, he sank down again and closed his eyes. I crossed the room and kneeling by his side, bent over him. Judging by the appearance of his face, I guessed him to be a man of about fifty years of age. When I caught his wrist to take his pulse, he opened his eyes again and looked steadily at me. Then my memory went back through long years, and his face became strangely familiar to me. I felt convinced that I had seen it before, or it might be that it was his son I had seen, for it was the image of a young face that rose before my mind. 'Put your ear close to — to — my lips,' he began, in a broken voice. 'I want to make a confession.' I sat down on the straw beside his

head, and he began his story, the recital of which he frequently interrupted by coughs and long drawn breaths. 'I am the younger son of an English born Jew. My mother died before I was one year old, and left me to the care of a father who took little interest in the future of his own children. At the age of ten he sent me to a school where I received a liberal education. He visited me once a year, and in the conversations which took place between us he always tried to impress upon me the necessity of getting rich by any and every means that lay in a man's power. This was a lesson he had taught me from my very childhood, so that when I grew to manhood to get rich was my only ambition. My father died when I was twenty-one, leaving all his property to my elder brother, and I found myself penniless. Henceforth my brother became an object of envy to me. Why should he get all and I nothing? I shipped on an ocean tramp, as a sailor before the mast, and took many long voyages, but I failed to acquire

wealth in any of the countries which I visited. I returned to London to find that my brother had added greatly to his wealth by successful speculation, and I became more envious of him than ever. I took to drink and gambling, and felt on bad terms with myself and all the world. About this time I met a woman who came into my life like a messenger of peace from some other sphere. She taught me that there were other things in life besides riches. She inspired me first with reverence, and reverence soon changed itself into love. We soon became engaged. I gave up all my evil ways and was very happy. I went to Scotland to transact some business for a firm with which I had found employment, and we were to be married on my return. One morning the post brought me a letter from my fiancée. Like a love sick school boy I kissed the handwriting on the envelope before I opened it. When I read it my idol fell from its high pedestal and lay shattered — a thing of clay — at my feet. “She was sorry,”

she wrote, "that circumstances had compelled her to break our engagement — she was married to my brother yesterday." I tore the letter into fragments and stamped on them with my foot, then seized my hat and jumped through the open window into the street. A great anger was rising in my heart—not against the woman who had proved faithless to me—but against the brother who, I told myself, had robbed me of her who had made life seem to me worth living. I walked on and on without knowing whither I was going. I came to a church, and acting on a sudden impulse entered it. I was mad — I threw myself on my knees before the altar and swore, before God, that I should never rest till I had killed my brother.

"Soon after I found myself in London. But my story is growing long; I am fast nearing the gates of death, and I will hasten to the end. I hatched an infernal plot, and with the assistance of two hired ruffians, carried it out. I met my brother, by appointment, one night at the Hotel Grosvenor. We supped together and

I found an opportunity of mixing in his cup a drug, the secret of which I had learned on my travels in the east. Its effect is to stupify the understanding and weaken the will power of those who drink it, so that they will rarely refuse to obey the will of another. My brother soon came under its influence, and on receiving a signal that all was ready, I told my brother to come with me. I bade him walk in front, and directed him through St. James' Park, through Parliament street to the Thames Embankment and on to the Obelisk. Here I ordered him to stop and come with me to the water's edge. The two accomplices of my crime here met me with a boat. I ordered my brother to get into it, and stepped in after him—Oh! Oh! What is this darkness that surrounds me? Ah!—It is the river. I see the lights reflected in the water—There he is! There he is! My brother struggling in the tide—Take him away! Take him away!

“His story ended here,” said the chaplain,
“He had raised himself to a sitting position

and thrown his arms wildly about as he uttered his last words. Then he sank back on the straw again, and when I bent over him I found that he had gone."

The chaplain's tragic story served its purpose — it kept his listeners from brooding on the trifling inconvenience of marching under a burning sun, with empty water bottles.

Tragedy and comedy are ever following and jostling each other on the road of life, and so we found it on our march. We were rounding the base of a kopje, when a noise which might be compared to distant thunder or the breaking of the waves of the sea on a rocky shore fell upon our ears. We were at first very much puzzled as to where the noise proceeded from, till on turning the corner we descried, far away on the plain, what appeared to us to be a very large bull. He had wandered far from the herd, for no other of his kind was visible around. As we drew near him he scratched the ground with his feet and bellowed more loudly than before,

giving us unmistakable proof of his desire to resent the presence of the invader. Some person, mischievously inclined, threw a stone which struck him on the head. Injury thus being added to insult, the lord of the veldt could contain himself no longer. He saw the red cross flag, gave one loud roar and with head bent low charged straight for the horses of the hospital wagon. With the quickness acquired by long practice, a square was formed round the wagon, and when the furious bull reached it he was confronted by a line of bristling bayonets. This, however, did not stop his mad rush. From the position in which he held his head it was difficult to strike him in a vital part. He broke the square, but a well directed thrust behind the shoulder reached his heart, and caused him to roll over. It was an opportunity for dining on boiled beef that hungry men could not afford to miss. A dozen hands were soon busy hacking, pulling and cutting at his hide, and in a very few minutes all that remained of him was a

heap of red, bleeding flesh. Waiting for dinner, when you are very hungry, is not a very happy hour of your life, but we, on this occasion, consoled ourselves with the thought that the meat would not be long cooking, for we had lighted very large fires and they burned brightly. Alas, for the vicissitudes of a soldier's life. Far away on a distant hill a puff of smoke was observed to rise and float along on its crest.

Then came a loud report, followed by the long low shriek we knew so well. All eyes were turned upwards in expectation. It dropped among the kettles.

The bull — oh, where was he?
Ask of the shell that far around
With fragments strewed the green.



CHAPTER XI.



COMING nigh the town of De Wet's Dorp we were met by a patrol of Brabant's Horse, who informed us that the enemy had retreated, and that General Rundle was pursuing them with half his force, leaving the other half, which had only recently joined him, behind.

Our orders were to remain with the latter force, which we joined about 4 p. m. We were pleased to find they had some mutton ready for us to cook, and that no Boer shell came to cause confusion among the kettles. We remained here three days, and by walking a few miles to a river we were able to enjoy the luxury of a wash for the first time since we left the trains.

About 3 p. m., on the evening of the third day, we received unexpected orders to advance with all possible speed to Thabanchu, where the Republican forces were about to make another stand. The sunshades we had formed with our blankets and rifles were pulled down and at 3 p. m. the brigade was ready to march. My battalion was detailed to guard the provisions and baggage of the whole division, which formed a train of wagons about three miles in length. About an hour after the division had started, we inspanned, the drivers touched the bullocks with their great long whips, which none but a Kaffir could wield, and one by one the wagons took their places in the long line and went creaking on their way. All went well for the first two miles, until we came to a muddy water course, with high banks on either side, except at one point, where a space wide enough to allow one wagon to pass had been levelled.

The sixteen bullocks in the leading wagon went into it at a brisk trot. It got half way

across and then the wheels sank and stuck fast. The Kaffirs shouted, screamed and cracked their whips, the bullocks swayed to and fro on the opposite bank, but all efforts to drag it forth proved unavailing — it would not come.

The pioneers mustered a dozen picks and shovels between them and had to set to work to level in the hard rocky sides of the water course and make a new track. The banks were very high. The work of levelling them occupied about five hours, and by the time the last of the train of wagons had crossed it was past midnight, and there were still thirty-six miles between us and our destination. The track over which we travelled was very rough and stony, and the darkness of the night made progress necessarily so slow that by four o'clock next morning we had only covered about three miles. We then stopped for about an hour, resuming our journey at five, and continuing without any halt till nine, when we stopped for breakfast, and allowed the bullocks to feed on

the veldt for about three hours. When we resumed our journey, about noon, the track over which we travelled was level, but the day was very hot and the cattle consequently lazy. When night fell we were still twelve miles from Thabanchu; the pace of the cattle then improved greatly, and the turn of the men came to grow tired. Another hour's march and nearly all had lagged behind the wagons. Then men dropped out one by one to lie down on the track. Still the majority pushed on. Yet another hour and the lights of the village were visible from an eminence. Those were welcome lights. Far away in the distance they shone like the lights of the harbor to shipwrecked sailors. But as we got down on lower ground we lost sight of those lights again. Two hours went by and they did not reappear. Then we grew impatient. Groups of men began to fall out and stretch themselves at full length on the grass. We had lost sight of all the wagons; our water bottles had been empty for four hours and we had

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nothing to eat. Presently, far away in front, a hoarse shout was heard. It grew louder and louder, as from one straggling group to another the word was passed: "Camp in sight." They had seen some fires far away in front. A good many pushed on, but many were miles behind, and were so utterly exhausted that they were unable to proceed farther. They lay down in twos and threes, and slept. Some were taken prisoners by Boer patrols. Those who escaped came into camp next morning.



CHAPTER XII.



HABANCHU was then a village of about three thousand inhabitants. The British forces—numbering about eight thousand foot and five hundred horse—were lying on its outskirts. A Boer force of about six thousand—all well mounted—was holding the crest of a long ridge of hills about three miles from the village. None of their guns were then in a position to command our camp, but we learned that it was their intention to assume the offensive. We were nightly awaiting their attack, but it never came. On the fourth day, however, one of our mounted patrols discovered that they were moving their guns towards a very high hill, about a mile from the village, and from which, if they gained the top, they could sweep

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the whole surrounding country. Our whole force advanced to intercept this movement, which the Boers observing, retreated again to the hills. The movement, however, brought the opposing forces of artillery into action, and firing continued, without intermission, throughout the day, but without causing much loss to either side. On that night my battalion was ordered on outpost duty. We extended in a line, about a mile long, midway between the opposing forces. A patrol which we sent out captured two Boer scouts, who were reconnoitering, but they refused to give us any information. Next morning we were ordered to ascend the hill, whose top the Boers were desirous of gaining, and told to hold it at all costs.

It was Sunday, and the bells of the little church in the village were pealing forth their message of peace. Sheep and cattle were browsing quietly on the plains below us. In front we heard the booming of the guns, spitting fire and death. The striking incongruity of the

scene seemed to produce its effect on all. "Do you think we are Sabbath breakers?" said someone near me, as we toiled up the steep ascent. "Let us turn back and go to church," said another. "The parson's text for today is, 'Love your neighbor as a brother,'" said a third. "'Remember Majuba,' would suit the occasion better, I think," said a fourth. "Well, I reckon war is a divine institution anyway," said a fifth. "Its nearly as old as the world, You can't deny that." "But I'd like to know what the row is about, and what we are fighting for," said the first speaker. "We are fighting for a part of the rights of the Uitlanders that was not conceded," said one who had not yet spoken.

This remark was followed by silence, which was not broken till we gained the crest of the hill. We found three small lakes on its top, the water being the purest we had yet met in the country. We soon found, also, that we were a target for a small party of Boer sharpshooters,

who occupied a hill about a thousand yards off. Only stray bullets came among our ranks. Yet, strange as it may seem, I, and many others, who have experienced both, can say that men feel much more uncomfortable when exposed to this desultory fire than they do when facing a hail of lead.

When we had taken up a sheltered position behind some rocks, two companies were sent to line a parapet wall—which ran around the crest of the hill—in a position where they could return the enemy's rifle fire. During four days which we held the hill this rifle fire was maintained without intermission, the companies in the firing line being relieved by others in turn. About noon on the second day the enemy succeeded in bringing a gun in a grand position to command the hill, and immediately began a brisk fire on us with shrapnel. At dawn of each succeeding day they commenced, continuing till the sun had set, and this, notwithstanding the untiring efforts of three of our

guns on the plain to silence it. As the Boers used black powder, which should make it easy for our artillery to locate the exact position of their gun, we thought this the more surprising, and consequently condemned our gunners as very bad marksmen. We discovered later that the Boers used smokeless powder, and by exploding a quantity of black powder about two hundred yards away from their gun at the same instant it was fired, drew the shells of our artillery away from them. It was a pretty picture to watch the green wreaths of smoke from the bursting shell ascending in the blue haze as we lay securely sheltered beneath great overhanging rocks. During the three days only one man was wounded by shell fire, the objectionable stray bullets, which kept dropping amongst us, doing much more damage, but after a little we got used to these too, as men will get used to anything and everything. The thoughts of many began to travel back far over the distant leagues of ocean, and these occupied the time they were not actually in the firing

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line in writing letters to their friends on ammunition paper. One day I noticed a very young officer lining the wall, whose levity surprised me and disgusted everybody. He stood, glass in hand — his head and shoulders in full view of the enemy — directing the fire of his men, when there was no necessity of exposing himself so. “Now, then, make sure of this one!” he would shout, when he saw a Boer show himself on the opposite hill. “Ah, that’s got him!” — if he saw him fall. “There’s a brace of them. Good shot, now! Wing the odd one!” Considering his improvement, I was glad to see his arm dropped by a bullet through his shoulder. When he recovered from his wound I hope he understood that the game of war should not be played so lightly. No doubt he may have been brave, but his courage was not of the kind that would sustain the starving garrison of a Mafeking, or lead a forlorn hope to victory.

About noon, on the fourth day, we were

relieved by another battalion of the brigade. We made the descent of the hill in Indian file, and were very much exposed to shell fire on our way, but we had no casualties.

To assist in carrying one of our wounded on a stretcher was a task that fell to my lot. A man could walk down the hill in about twenty minutes, but the descent with this stretcher took exactly five hours. Even at this pace, owing to the ground being so very steep and rugged, the jolts which the wounded man received made him cry aloud from pain.

The diet of dry biscuit, on which we had to subsist during our stay on the hill, made a dinner of fresh mutton very acceptable to us when we reached the bottom, although we did not have such little luxuries as salt, pepper or mustard to tempt our appetites. After this we had a little rum for the first time, and the last also for a good many days after, although a regular allowance of this stimulant is commonly supposed to be necessary to preserve the health of the soldier in the field.



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CHAPTER XIII.



ON the following day we went back to our old camp near the village, and here the general orders were read to us. They were to the effect that, as there were no signs of provisions reaching us from the base, and that, in consequence of our present supply being very limited, the daily allowance of food would be reduced by one-half, making it one biscuit and a quarter pound of corned beef when we had no time to kill sheep. On the following morning, at day-break, our whole force made a desperate effort to drive the Boers out of the hills, but we were once more unsuccessful and returned after a hard fight, which lasted throughout the day and in which we had a considerable number killed and wounded.

In the night half our force made a wide circuit to the enemy's rear, and then extended their flanks on the Boers' right and left, thus enclosing them in a circle of steel, from which, we fondly imagined, their escape was impossible; but we reckoned without taking into account the masterful resourcefulness of the great De Wet, who was the ruling spirit in the hills we had surrounded.

For two days an artillery duel was fought, but without much loss on either side. At day-break on the following day we were surprised at not hearing the enemy's shells whistling reveille as usual. Our artillery fired a few shots by way of challenge, but the echo of their own reports was the only answer they received from the silent hills. We thought we were going to have a holiday, and not to waste time we set to work to wash our only, but not solitary, shirts in a stream.

About noon it was rumored our general picked up a letter in the vicinity of his bivouac,

which read as follows: Sir,— I hope that you will excuse my sudden departure in the night. I would have waited to take leave of you, but for the fact that my food was all eaten up. My men were very hungry, and, hearing that your food was also scarce, did not like to trespass on your hospitality by laying down their arms. That we may soon meet on another field is the earnest wish of one who is sorry that existing circumstances compels him to sign himself your enemy, Christian De Wet.

Whether this report was true or otherwise, we had to pack up, tie the sleeves of our dripping shirts around our necks, letting the tails of them hang down our backs, and thus arrayed go forth to battle. We made a reconnoissance in force towards the hills, firing as we went, but no answer came back. It was clear that the bird had flown. How did De Wet pass through the cordon of steel? Was there some secret underground passage in the hills, or did he spirit away his force in balloons? It is a mystery, I fear, that shall never be solved.

For many long days after he led us a wild race — sometimes on his track and sometimes off it — but we never allowed him to break south, which was his apparent object. Marching on an average twenty miles a day, we had no time for cooking, and had to subsist on one biscuit and a little corned beef. When our biscuit was all consumed we had to live on potatoes (which we stopped to dig), pumpkins or any other vegetables we could pick up, which, if we had not time to cook, we ate raw.

Once we had a brush with the rear guard of the enemy and took fifty prisoners. Many of those fifty Boers spoke English, and, seated around the bivouac fires on that night, they told us many stories of previous fights in which they had been engaged, and a few sang songs in jaw-straining Dutch, till at last an orderly came to us with the information that we were keeping the whole lines awake.

A friendly meeting between individuals of opposing armies might surprise many, but it is

treachery alone that can cause personal enmity to exist between them, and, no matter how many painful incidents of treachery may have been recorded in other parts of South Africa, here I can say there was none.

The want of food, which we had so long suffered, was producing its effect, and signs of sickness in the ranks began to show themselves, when luckily we came to some mills where we found hundreds of tons of flour stored. This we took along on the wagons, and every morning each man received the full of a pint measure, which he could bake or boil in his mess tin, according to his taste. The majority preferred boiling it into paste, as the best baker amongst us generally succeeded in leaving the half of his cake sticking to the tin.

CHAPTER XIV.



AFTER many weary, painful, hungry days we sighted the village of Senekal as the sun was sinking below the horizon. We had been looking for water by which we could bivouac for the night, and our scouts returned and reported that there was none nearer than the town. A company of Imperial Yeomanry, who were ever anxious to be first where there was any possibility of danger, without waiting for any orders from the general, galloped into the town. They found it occupied by a Boer force, numbering about five hundred, and a hot fight took place in the narrow streets, in which about twenty were killed on either side. When the Boers became aware of the approach of our main body, they retreated to the hills, closely followed by the Yeomanry, who continued the pursuit till stopped by the darkness of night.

We occupied the village for a week, scouting the surrounding country by day and returning to sleep in the market place at night. The inhabitants, with the exception of a few families, were entirely Dutch, and consequently the great majority of the men were away in the hills. The women did not seem much alarmed by our presence, and even mixed with us at our service in their church on Sunday.

One afternoon an orderly brought some information to the general which caused us to strap up in a great hurry and march westward out of the village. After traversing about eight miles, over open country, we stopped, as the shadows of night were falling, before a long range of hills, which were occupied by a very strong force of the enemy. We expected a battle on the next day. and, in order to get a good night's sleep, we made our bivouacs as comfortable as we could by pulling the grass, which was very long, and piling it around us, so that at dawn next morning, when we stood to arms, we felt fresh and fit for a fight.

With the advent of quick-firing guns, the ancient magnificence of armies in battle array has disappeared forever. Ireland's national poet could not sing in these days of

“The sight entrancing
When the morning's sun is glancing
O'er files arrayed with helm and blade
And plumes in the gay wind dancing;

“When hearts are all high beating,
And the trumpet's voice repeating
The song whose breath may lead to death,
But never to retreating.”

There is no shining armor; there are no waving plumes; and the blare of the trumpet is unheard. Watch those grey clad figures as they silently scatter over the plain. They are the color of the withered grass of the veldt. No two will walk together lest they should be a more conspicuous mark for those deadly guns. See them as they walk with bent heads. You might compare them to poachers or partridge shooters travelling over a moor, only their advance is more cautious.

It was noon, and my battalion had halted on the plain. Far away for miles on our right the battle was raging, and we, with our grand fighting history, were left to act the inglorious part of lying quietly on the grass, waiting to cut off a possible retreat of the enemy. Bunker stamped and swore and chewed his mustache till he discovered that he had bitten off the last hair. Confusion to the general who crushed the flower of the British infantry so, but it was orders, and soldiers must obey. The Boers, however, were more generous to us than the general, and in the working out of a little plan of their own they were destined to cover us with wounds, if not with glory. While we were lying musing on our fate, and thinking if the news of our being left out of the action should ever reach London, what we might expect at the hands of our enemies, the cab drivers, a force of Boers, of whose presence on a hill about half a mile in front we were blissfully ignorant, were preparing to open fire on us. They began proceedings by killing Bunker's horse with a percussion


shell, which dropped right under him and blew the animal into very small bits, one piece of the meat striking the colonel, who stood near, full in the face and covering him with gore. Our artillery soon limbered up and replied to the shot, keeping up a continuous fire for about an hour, when, as they were unable to silence the gun, we advanced to take it by assault. We moved towards the hill in short rushes, lying down every fifty yards to fire a volley. The Boer shells, which exploded between our extended lines, did little damage, and it looked as if we were going to make an easy capture of the gun. If there were any rifles on the hill, they were certainly very careful about reserving their fire. We had got within five hundred yards of the base of the hill, and had risen to make another rush, when the rattling noise of a thousand rifle bolts together came to our ears. The whole of our front rank went down at the first volley, evidently the marksmen on the hill had taken very careful aim. Then there followed a veritable hail storm of lead, in

the face of which no man could advance and live. We remained lying down and firing in the same position for about five hours. The shadows of night were falling, and still the firing was kept up without intermission, when a new danger was observed to threaten us. A shell had ignited the long grass in our rear, and a light breeze which was blowing, soon turned the spark into a conflagration. The Boers, observing this, extended their flanks on our right, and left, thus completely cutting off our retreat. Then followed a scene of tumult which is hard to describe. Wounded men, who were unable to move, raised themselves on their elbows, and with lips compressed, gazed with wild staring eyes at the flames, which, slowly but surely, crept towards them. Our left wing made one desperate rush to charge the Boers, but had to fall before the leaden hail. When the flames drew near many of our men made heroic efforts to remove our wounded through the blinding smoke and flame. Others thought only of themselves, and, pulling their helmets over their

faces, rushed through the fire. In all this confusion I noticed one man who showed rare presence of mind. He was badly wounded, and, being unable to get out of reach of the flames, he took some matches from his pocket and burned the grass near him. He then crawled on to the black ground and thus secured for himself a comparatively safe position when the fire approached him. The flames were now upon us and fighting had ceased. Two men picked me up where I lay wounded, and, rushing with me through the flames, threw me down on the other side and ran panic stricken off the field. The fire burned itself out at the foot of the hill, and then all was darkness till the moon shining out showed us the blackened bodies of the dead and men writhing in pain on the burned earth.

Now the Boers came amongst us, and, passing from one wounded man to another, gave us water from their bottles. Then we heard a cracking of whips and a rumbling of wheels. The Boers left us and we knew the ambulance wagons were coming.

CHAPTER XV.

N a low tent, lighted by a few candles, which flicker in the breeze, with bared arms, beside a table placed in its centre, the doctors are working. Outside the tent lying on the grass, shivering with cold, hundreds of men are lying waiting their turn to have their wounds attended to. Some have broken legs and arms; some with mangled flesh and limbs shattered by shell; some are lying with closed eyes, which they open at intervals to look half unconsciously around them. These have fought their last battle. They are mortally wounded, and the life is fast leaving them. One of them is being carried to the table now. "Take him away!" shouts the doctor, as he glances at his

face; "there is no hope for him, and I can't waste time. Bring the next." They bear him out of the tent again and set him down on the grass apart, and leave him to run for another. The pain of being carried has hastened the wounded man's end. His limbs stretch out, he draws one long breath, and the struggle is over. This is the deathbed of the soldier. Away at the farthest end of the long line of wounded I can hear a man shouting to the bearers to come to him or he will bleed to death. He is hurriedly borne into the tent and laid on the table. With a scissors the doctor quickly cuts away the clothing around a gaping wound in the man's side; the cloth sticks to the flesh and has to be torn violently off. Then another doctor washes it and puts on a dressing and bandage and the man is carried out to make room for the next. At last all the wounded are dressed and a long line of wagons are waiting to remove them. It is past midnight, and the village of Senekal is more than twenty miles distant. The night is

very cold, and the limbs of the wounded have become frozen while they lay on the grass. Half lifeless, they are lifted up and pushed into the wagons. The Kaffirs crack their whips and the long train moves slowly away. Soon the road becomes very rough. The wheels are jolted in and out of ruts and over large stones. The wounded are thrown violently against the sides of the wagons and against each other. I can hear one shouting at his neighbor not to lie on his broken arm; another is shouting at the driver to go easy — his head is splitting with pain. Here is another whose leg is mangled and broken; the dressing has come off, and the mangled limb is brushing against the end of the wagon. He is begging that some one will throw him out and leave him to die. The small hours of the morning wore away and still the wagons kept on jolting and rolling over the stones. Many had grown insensible to pain when, a few hours after sunrise, we stopped so that the cattle might rest and feed. The wounds were

dressed again during the halt, a little hot refreshment served and some straw procured from a neighboring farm house to make the wagons more comfortable. This little luxury was very much appreciated, but we could not help thinking if a little forethought had provided it on the previous night, what an amount of needless suffering it would have prevented.

It was evening when we reached the village of Senekal, and here we found that the little church was being turned into a hospital to receive us. The seats were all removed outside and mattresses taken, either by persuasion or force, from the villagers were lined on the floor around the walls in their places. The interior of a Dutch church is severely plain, and there was nothing on the walls or windows of this one to interest us during the many weary days we lay in it. Our provisions were very scarce, supplies were cut off, and a quarter ration diet was prescribed as a cure for all care. On the first morning the doctors visited us to report on the

degree of each man's wounds, whether slight, dangerous or severe, so that the information might be despatched to the War Office, and through it to our friends. After this they waited on us daily, working from sunrise to sunset. One morning a number of Boer women came to the door of the church, and asked if they could be of any assistance to us. The doctors allowed them to come in, and, on discovering that we were hungry and had little to eat, they ran away and soon returned with large dishes of pie and cans full of beef tea, which they had prepared for us. We presented a sorry sight — many with their faces burned beyond recognition — and constantly after these women were by our sides. It was a gracious act; one which no man who lay in that church shall ever forget. They could not help remembering that the hands of those to whom they ministered were red from the battle in which their husbands, sons or brothers fell, but with those women compassion for suffering over every other feeling was predominant.

Among the women who were our daily visitors there was one who bore no resemblance to the typical woman of her race, who is inclined to be dignified of feature and staid in manner. This young lady was gay and thoughtless and possessed a very pretty face. When she was not passing round to speak some cheerful words to the wounded, she was always busy assisting the surgeons at the table. She would wash a wound, or with deft fingers cut dressings and apply them; in short, she would do anything and everything to make herself useful. Now one of our doctors was a bachelor, who, judging from appearances, one would think to be sailing on the wintry side of sixty. It soon became evident that either the many good qualities of the young Boer lady or her beauty, or both together, were making a great impression on the mind of the doctor. No matter what she was doing at the table, he always contrived to be at her side, or bending over her, whispering in her ear.

A young doctor was so uncharitable as to call everyone's attention to this by making grimaces at the old fellow behind his back.

As the days wore on it was evident he was getting more and more interested in the fair lady. Every evening he would accompany her to the door of the church, and a long conversation would take place in the porch before they parted. By consulting an old clock, which hung on the wall, I noticed that the time the doctor was absent on those visits to the porch had gradually increased in arithmetical progression from one minute to half an hour. One evening, as he walked with her across the floor of the church, I noticed a very thoughtful look on his face, and naturally I came to the conclusion that there was something on his mind. When they entered the porch I heard him turn the key in the door.

Presently the young doctor came along and took me by the arm. He led me to a square of glass, and, thus forced to play the part of


cavesdropper, this is what I heard and saw. The foolish old fellow had dropped on one knee before the lady and held his hands stretched towards her in an attitude of supplication. She was looking down on his bald head with the faintest trace of an amused smile lingering on her lips. He was breaking the ice in a very impolitic fashion by trying to impress on her mind what a condescension it was on the part of an "English Gentlemen" to ask a mere Boer woman to be his wife. Then he told her how many pretty women of his own nation he had met in all those years of his life — he did not mention the number of years — and how he had never loved till he met her. I know not how she would have answered his appeal — whether she would have treated him with scorn, or made him happy for the remainder of his days. The interview was interrupted in a very startling manner, and this is how the interruption came:

The cat was sleeping peacefully near the heat of the lamp, which stood on the cornice. A busy fly came buzzing about the cat's ears. The cat awoke, and, after a habit which is

characteristic of cats the world over, went and brushed himself against the lamp. Probably the lamp was too hot for him, for he went purring about for a short time, and then came and brushed himself against a round tin which stood on the cornice also. The tin was full of that thick black fluid known as molasses. It overbalanced and fell straight on the doctor's head below. It fitted him like a bishop's mitre. The thick black fluid covered his face and made dark stripes down his gray uniform till he looked like a Bengal tiger on two legs. The lady was at first alarmed, and sprang back from him, but, when she had time to realize what had happened, her loud peals of laughter filled the whole church. The doctor made for the outer door and rushed into the night. He went to bed and was very ill for three days, and when he came to resume his duties in the church, although the Dutch lady still stuck faithfully to her post and cheered us with her bright smiles, the doctor spoke to her no more.

Thus was his dream of married bliss dispelled by a cat, a tin of molasses and a fly.

CHAPTER XVI.

OON after this the doctors pronounced us all fit to travel across country to one of the base hospitals. Next morning the wagons were ready for us. The women who had treated us with such kindness gathered around the church door to wish us good by. We shook their hands, told them we should remember them always, and then took our seats in the wagons. The Kaffirs whipped up their bullocks. Slowly we went our way through the narrow streets and out on the broad veldt once more. Some miles from the village we met the small remnant of our battalion which the fiery field of Bidolph's Berg had left. There was a great shaking of hands then, for many met who had believed each other dead. We halted for the first night

on a slight eminence. Away on the plain below us a whole division had bivouacked, and it was evident that every man was doing his own cooking, for the plain for miles as far as the eye could reach was dotted with thousands of small fires. The wagons in which we travelled were open, although a very small expenditure would have converted them into covered ones. We had no straw either, and the nights were very cold, so that, on the whole, the conditions of our lives, for invalids, were not very comfortable. Our food consisted of that world famous mixture of doubtful meat and vegetables known as Maconochie's Rations. The sick orderly threw a tin of this at each man every morning, and left him to heat the contents if he had an opportunity of making a fire, or to eat it cold if he had not.

A few of our party, however, had large purses, and, what was better, large hearts. They spent their money freely, and every morning and evening, if we were near a village or hut,

they bought sufficient goat's milk to supply the whole party. The milk was supplied to us by the Kaffir women, who would come out to meet us carrying large pails on their heads. We passed the farm houses of a few English settlers and wished to buy some bread, but the prices they asked were so extravagant that we could not deal with them. We afterwards learned that they were Boer sympathizers, which may have been the cause of their being inclined to deal so hardly with us. On the second day we met a Boer patrol, which opened fire on us, but stopped on us showing them a more conspicuous red cross flag than the one we were already flying. The officer commanding the patrol then galloped up to us and asked from where we came and in what action we were wounded. On hearing that it was Bidolph's Berg, he laughed and said:


“Ye got killed and roasted there as well.” Then, as he turned his horse's head to gallop away: “Well, boys, I wish you a safe

and pleasant journey to the shores of England and Ireland, too, and when you get home tell any of your countrymen who are thinking of coming out here to remain where they are." His English was pure, but, on account of a certain broad, mellow accent with which he spoke it, I concluded that at some time of his life this Boer must have been a resident of Cork.

On the third day, after travelling over very rough ground, we touched the railway, and on the evening of the fourth we arrived at Winberg.



CHAPTER XVII.

T the town hall and other buildings in Winberg a base hospital had been established. It was here that I saw for the first time in South Africa the red cope of the hospital nurse, and her presence was felt no matter where she appeared.

Under her rule there was nothing but order and regularity. The buildings and everything in them were kept scrupulously clean. The wants of every patient were attended to and his wishes constantly consulted by these women, who never seemed to tire of working. Much unfavorable criticism has been passed on the condition of the base hospitals, but in any of them which came under my notice there was nothing which any, except one who had been

accustomed to a life of luxurious ease, could find fault with. We remained a week at Winberg, and then entrained for the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital at Deelfontein. It was here I first made the acquaintance of the amateur nurse — the English society lady — who gave up her town life of idle pleasure to come and nurse the wounded in South Africa. Many hard things have been said of her, some going so far as to assert that it was love of notoriety alone which influenced her action.

The professional nurse hated her and said she was always getting in her way.

It is true she could not anticipate the wants of a sick man so quickly, or attend to him so well, as her professional sister, but she could talk to him in his weary hours of pain, and among all the invalids there was not one to whom her presence was not welcome. If she was not actually useful, it was not for want of a will to try.

See her sitting at midnight, cooling the brow of some fever stricken patient, and he is a

churl who will deny that she deserves well of her country.

The doctors, too, performed their duties with scrupulous exactness, visiting their patients twice daily, and dressing their wounds or prescribing for them when necessary. Except for the over eagerness of a number of medical students to see operations performed when no operations were necessary, there is nothing to be said against them as a body.

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A dozen white covered beds on either side—Deelfontein was a collection of huts and tents. In each bed a man lying or sitting, as he feels inclined. By the head of each bed a small table. In the centre space an oil stove burning; a space at one end screened off for the nurse. This is a convalescent ward at Deelfontein. A curious little figure is standing now by the stove. It is Bill Nowd, of the Kings, otherwise the Third Surrey Militia. With a childlike, beardless

face, one would take him for a very modest lad, but Bill is anything but shy. He is being taunted now about how his regiment volunteered for active service, which was in this manner: The Colonel paraded them in their new pants on a wet day, when the ground was very dirty, and calling the parade to attention, shouted:

“Let any man who does not wish to go to South Africa sit down!” No one would sit down in the wet, so the whole regiment was ordered on service. He was told, too, that all they had done since they came to the country was to keep the monkeys off the railway line. All this chaff Bill took in a very good-humored spirit, and, when it was all over, he volunteered to tell a story.

“When I was doing garrison duty at Cape Town,” he began, “one day I went on a message to an officer to tell him to come to the station to superintend the loading of some provisions on a train for the front. I

found him lying on a sofa in dressing gown and slippers, although it was past noon. He was smoking a large cigar, with his eyes closed. I went up to him timidly, hardly liking to disturb him he looked such a picture of luxurious ease. 'Your wanted at the station, sir,' I said. He opened one eye and looked at me, then slowly closed it again, as if the exertion tired him. I touched him gently on the shoulder, and this time he opened both eyes. 'You're wanted, sir,' I said. 'Confound you,' said he. 'Confound yourself,' said I. 'I'll have you court-martialled for using disrespectful language to your superior officer,' said he. 'Well you'd better come to the station and get the train loaded,' said I. 'Hang the station! Go and leave me in peace, and I'll be there as soon as possible.' At this I went away, thinking he would follow me. I returned in half an hour, and found that he had inserted one leg in his trousers and gone to sleep. Then I had an idea which I thought would rouse him. I went outside and shouted through the open window

at the top of my voice 'Fire! Fire! Number twenty is on fire!' I expected to have the satisfaction of seeing him rush from the house without his boots, but how do you think he came? He rang the bell and got his servant to wheel him into the garden in a perambulator."

Bill having put such a good beginning on story telling, his example was followed by others. The next was an anecdote from Kimberley.

"You know," the narrator began, "we had Mr. Cecil Rhodes in the city during the siege, and a troublesome citizen he proved to be. He had been so used to having things all his own way in Kimberly for so long, that he thought a military occupation should not alter things. He was constantly interfering in the business of the colonel commanding, and trying to direct the defence himself. Now, being a mere civilian, you know, he should have nothing whatever to say in this matter, but he was such a power in the country that the colonel was a

little timid about offending him, and did not know what to do. In this dilemma he sent a message to Kitchener, complaining of Rhodes' interference, and asking what he should do if he persisted in it. The answer broke the record for shortness in despatches, and proved the sender to be no respecter of persons. It consisted of four words: 'Put him in irons!' (Signed) 'Kitchener.'

"When this was shown to Mr. Cecil, he built himself a bomb-proof shelter, retired beneath the ground, and troubled us no more."

The next was a story from Ladysmith. Corporal M——, of the Inniskilling Fusiliers, was very reserved and silent. So much so that he was the last man from whom we would have expected a story. But now he was up to tell one, and we were all expectation. He had a quaint way of speaking, and his manner would have amused us, whether his subject was interesting or not.

"Listen attentively, gentlemen," he began. "My story is of Buller." (As he mentioned

the name he brought his hand to the salute as a mark of respect, and simultaneously all arose and followed his example. Whether he who has been nick-named "The Ferryman of the Tugela" was a great general we cared not. We knew he was a brave soldier, and all would have liked to follow where he led.) "It was the night before we attempted to rush the Boer position on Pieter's Hill," he continued. "I was on guard on the general's tent. About midnight I saw a man approach and heard the sentry challenge.

"The stranger gave the countersign and said he wished to see the general. He wore a hat which partly concealed his face, and I could not recognize the features, but from what transpired afterwards I concluded it must have been some officer of high rank, probably General Lyttleton or Hart. When I stepped inside Buller's tent, I found him sitting on the ground studying a map of the country, which lay spread out before him. He never seemed to want any sleep, and after twelve hours in the

saddle he would spend the night in preparing his plans for the next day.

“After showing the visitor in, I came outside, and, as the wind was blowing a little, I remained to hold down the door of the tent. I tried to keep my head as far as possible from the opening” (the corporal always wished to pose as a man of punctilious honor), “but I could not avoid hearing what passed inside.

“‘The position is too strong to storm it,’ the visitor was saying, ‘and any attempt to do so is doomed to failure.’

“‘No matter how strong it is, it must be taken. I must be in Ladysmith before a week,’ came the reply.

“‘Well, I know the attack will fail, and I wash my hands of it,’ said the other.

“At this Buller arose and said, ‘Sir, I am the commander of this army! I am your superior officer! You have received my orders! Tomorrow you will lead your command to attack Pieter’s Hill! Our interview is at an end and you may go!’

“On the evening of the next day my regiment led the attack. You all know the result—we got half way up the hill and lost one-fourth of our number on the way. Next day (Saturday) from sunrise to sunset an artillery duel was kept up. On Sunday an armistice was declared, and it took us twelve hours to bury the dead. It was one of a long series of defeats that would have discouraged any ordinary commander, but still the spirit of our leader was unbroken. He rallied the decimated ranks of his army once more. He kept his word, and before a week led us into Ladysmith.”

This was followed by a story of O'Donovan's, from Mafeking.

“One dark night,” he began, “I was on duty in the outer trenches, when suddenly I became aware of something pulling at the sleeve of my tunic. I looked down and saw a little mite of a girl about ten years old standing before me. ‘Come and save my father,’ she was saying. ‘He is lying hurt between the lines.’ ‘And who is your father?’ I

asked her, 'and how did you get here?' 'My father is a Boer commandant,' she said, 'and I've just run across from the Boer trenches.' Well, I thought this rather cool, so I stooped down to take a closer view of her face. As far as I could distinguish in the darkness, she looked greatly alarmed, and there was nothing about her to excite my suspicion. 'Well, if your father is a Boer commandant,' said I, 'why cannot the Boers come and save him?' 'They are afraid to come so near your trenches,' she said. 'He is lying more than half way across.' 'Well, I can't leave my post,' I told her. 'So, you'd better, I think, run back again to the Boer lines and be very glad you were not shot or taken prisoner. Your father will be seen to in the morning.' 'He is bleeding to death,' she said, bursting out crying. 'If you do not come now, I shall soon be a little orphan, for I have no mother.' Well, boys, I did not know what to do. To leave my post was a crime punishable by death. All the soldier within me rebelled at the

thought of being so faithless to my trust. Yet to refuse the little one her request was hard, as she stood crying before me. If there ever was an occasion when a soldier might be pardoned for forgetting that he was a soldier, and remembering only that he was a man, this was one. I unfix'd my bayonet, slung my rifle from my shoulder, and told her to lead on. About half way between ours and the Boer trenches I found the wounded man lying. Without waiting to ask him any questions, I picked him up and staggered back with him towards our lines. I got there none too soon, being just in time to get back to my post and report 'all well' as a patrol passed me. I went back to the wounded man, when they had gone, and found that he was bleeding profusely from a wound in his head. I bound it as well as I could with my own field dressing. He thanked me in good English, kissed his little daughter, who was bending over him, gave a long drawn sigh, and went to sleep. Some days after this, being off duty, I was visiting a few comrades of mine at the hospital.

After spending the afternoon talking with them, I was about to leave, when I noticed, lying on a bed near the door, my friend the Boer commandant. His little daughter was with him, and, recognizing me, she ran across the room to kiss me. I went over to him to inquire about his health, and he made room for me on the bed to sit down. After conversing with him for a short time, I discovered that he bore the same name as myself, and was also a countryman of mine. Then he grew confidential, and told me of his parents, and spoke of the days of his childhood; and as he went on I became more and more surprised by his story. 'Here is a likeness of my mother,' he said at last, drawing a small photo from beneath a pillow. 'I carry it with me always.' I, too, carried a photo of my mother. I took it from my pocket now, and held the two pictures together — they were the same — and I stretched out my hands to grasp those of a long lost brother."

The next and last story came from Paardeberg, and the narrator told it of himself.

"I am the son of a wealthy Lancashire iron merchant," he began, "and, being my father's only child, he made me his sole heir. I went to school at Eton, where I remained till my eighteenth year, after which I worked in my father's office in the capacity of clerk.

"When I became twenty-one I was to be made a partner in the firm on condition that I would marry a young lady my father had chosen for me. I had never seen the lady, it is true, but, as all women were then the same to me, that was a matter of no consequence, and I agreed to marry her. She, too, must have been equally as indifferent to all men as I was to women, for she was willing to take the chances without having seen me.

"I was now in my twenty-first year. All preliminaries of the marriage had been arranged, and on the lady's return from travelling on the continent with her mother we were to meet.

"About this time my father engaged the services of a lady clerk. One evening, as I was

sitting alone in the office, I heard a timid knock at the door. I went to open it. How shall I describe the beautiful apparition which stood before me? I will not attempt a description of her person, for, were I to speak in the tongues of all nations, I could find no language to do justice to her beauty. She bowed low before me, and in a musical voice said:

“I am the latest addition to the firm—the new clerk.”

“I led her into the inner office, and placed a chair for her before the fire. For the remainder of the evening I made a fool of myself in my eager desire to dance attendance on this lovely creature.

“If my father had seen his new employe before he engaged her, he certainly must have had a great faith in the good sense or in the obedience of his son.

“That night, alone in my chamber, I felt so much displeas'd with myself that, half unconsciously, I found myself swearing in a general manner at every article of furniture in the

room. Was I, the boasted cynic of Eton, going to fall in love with a woman at first sight merely because she possessed a charming manner and a pretty face? Mentally I vowed that I should not; but that night she filled my dreams and I was in spirit at her feet.

“Next morning she was first in my waking thoughts, and, alas! I mixed her name with my matins. I went to the office with little confidence in my strength to resist her charms. Her name was Katie St. Clair, and she was French, I learned from her after a short conversation with her across the office table. She talked intelligently on many subjects, and told me of her travels, which, when her father was a rich noble of France, had covered a good part of the earth. Then she wrote her name on a silver leaf, which, she said, grew on Table Mountain, and presented it to me.

“I left the office that evening feeling very happy. I had fallen under her spell. I was deeply in love with the beautiful stranger. Henceforth the world to me would be an empty, uninteresting place without her, I thought.

"It has been truly said that the way of love is never straight, and so I found it.

"Next day the manner of my lady had changed. She wished me a cold, polite good morning and replied to any remarks I made in monosyllables. She was even cross at times, so that I began to think that in some way I had unknowingly offended her.

"I puzzled my mind trying to discover in what it was that I had sinned, but without success.

"Day followed day, and still her manner remained unchanged. Once I tried to interest her in a short story, in which the principal character was a rejected lover, but she had no sympathy for the rejected one, and only laughed at him because he was old. At last I despaired of conciliating her, and, thinking she might like to have back the silver leaf on which she had written her name, I left it among her papers where she would find it, and made up my mind to try and live without her. But the sunshine which she had brought into my life went out with her, and I was very unhappy.

“All this time my father had been absent in London. When he returned the lady’s manner towards me, for some unaccountable reason, changed and grew familiar again. Hope came back to me, and one evening in the gathering twilight I overtook her on her way home. We began an interesting conversation, and before I parted from her on that night she promised to be my wife.

“Soon after this the lady of my father’s choice arrived home, and one day he sent for me and asked me at what time of the year I would like my marriage to take place.

“I replied that I would consult the lady about the matter; as for myself, I wished it to take place as soon as possible.

“‘That is good,’ he said ‘I’m sure Clara will like it to take place soon, too.’

“I saw the time had come to undeceive him, and, knowing that his heart was as hard as his own iron, I resolved to put on a bold front.

“‘The name of the lady who is most interested in my wedding day is not Clara, but Katie,’ I said.

“ ‘What do you mean, sir?’ he asked.

“ ‘Only that I’m going to marry your clerk, Miss St. Clair, sir,’ I replied.

“ ‘What! Dare you to disobey my wishes?’ he thundered. ‘As sure as you do, sir, I shall cut you off with a shilling.’

“ ‘Then a shilling let it be,’ I replied, and, turning, I walked out of the room, leaving him alone to fight with his own anger.

“ As I expected, he remained obdurate, and, as I continued firm in my intention, he not only cut me out of his will, but refused to allow me to remain in his office as clerk. But I soon found employment elsewhere and, to my surprise, my father still retained the services of my fiancée. Our marriage was to take place in a few months, and the day had been appointed, when a man who was to become my rival appeared on the scene. He was a rich Frenchman, who was making a tour through England. I know not when he first met Miss St. Clair, but he was handsome, clever and witty, and soon after his appearance I saw that my fiancée

had less of her time to give to me. She blasted my life, but I do not wish to judge her action harshly. Perhaps she could not help loving the stranger and may never have cared for me. She broke our engagement, and soon after married the Frenchman and left with him for his home in France.

"The future for me looked dark. I had lost fortune; I had lost love. I had neither hope nor ambition.

"I felt the only thing for me was a life of adventure, and I joined the army. I saw service with Kitchener in Egypt and the Soudan, and among the quickly changing scenes of a soldier's life I soon began to brood less over my loss. At the outbreak of the present war I came to South Africa and served with my regiment through the campaign to Paardeberg, where the gallant defence of Cronje won the admiration of his enemies and the applause of the world.

"It was there I lost this (and he held up the stump of his right arm, which had been amputated above the elbow).

“I was out on a reconnoitring patrol, and we ran into a trap, where a good many of our number were killed and wounded, the remainder escaping. We made a hard fight and killed a good number of the enemy before we were beaten.

“I was myself among the wounded, and while the victorious Boers, without waiting to pick up their own dead and wounded, were giving chase I was left helpless on the field. I had a bullet in my breast and lay with my arm badly shattered by a Martini. On the ground near to me lay a Boer whom I had bayoneted in the fight.

“I could hear his breath coming in short, quick gasps, and I knew that his end was nigh.

“Now he rolled over on his side, and touched me with his foot to attract my attention.

“‘It was you who killed me,’ he said.

“‘You are not dead yet, are you?’ I replied.

“‘I meant to say it was you who bayoneted me, and the wound is fatal.’

“ ‘Well, and what of it?’ I answered. ‘Was it not a fair fight?’”

“ ‘I am not reproaching you,’ he said. ‘I know it was a fair fight; but, as I am going to die, and as a man should forgive all who injure him, you know, I’d like to shake hands with you before I go as a token.’”

“ I crept a little nearer to him and stretched out my uninjured arm towards him. He took my hand in his, and held it in a firm clasp.

“ The stars were looking down on us, and all around us, by their light, we saw the bodies of the dead.

“ The dying man’s breath came fast. I heard him speak a woman’s name and whisper a prayer; then he gave a low moan, and his lips murmured an ‘Amen.’”

“ His fingers tightened on my hand in a convulsive grasp, and I knew that his spirit had fled.

“ Then the stars grew dim, and I remembered no more.

“ When I regained consciousness, I saw a woman’s form bending over me. Her eyes were

looking into mine, and her low, sweet voice murmuring in my ear brought a strange peace to my soul that I could not understand. She was whispering my name.

“‘Henry—Henry—it is you! Speak to me!’

“My eyes half closed, and I found her breath hot upon my face.

The stars had disappeared. The moon was hidden beneath a cloud. The wounded had crept away, and there remained around us only the dead.

“I opened my eyes again, and the moon came out and revealed her face.

“I clasped her hands. I cried out her name—‘Kate! Kate!’

“I became unconscious again.

“Love, they say, is stronger than death. When I opened my eyes her tears were raining down upon my face. Her dead husband’s hand was still close to mine, and she told me how, when he left France to join the Republican army, she had thought her duty as a wife was

by his side. She had followed his footsteps through the campaign. She had sought for him after the fight, and had found him among the dead. Then she spoke of the past, and told me how she had repented of the wrong she had done me in blighting my life.

“‘How can I undo the past?’ she cried. ‘How can I make amends?’

“‘Kate, I love you still.’

“‘Your arm is very badly mutilated and you will want a nurse,’ she answered.

“Surrounded by those cold and silent witnesses — in the presence of the dead we spoke and sealed our vows again. * * * Here the narrator paused, and for five minutes the silence was unbroken. Then he spoke again :

“This time I know she will not break them. She was stricken with fever. Alas! Alas! that I should live to tell it — she is dead.”

CHAPTER XVIII.



CAPETOWN at the time of our arrival was thrown into confusion by the presence of Boer prisoners, who were daily coming in train loads from the front. There was not sufficient troops to guard them; the ships were not ready to transport them over seas, and the poor officials were at their wits end, which was not a very long distance to travel.

They had changed their infantry slow march step into a kind of cavalry shamble, which is a little quicker, but still the provisions, letters and papers remained stored in the town, while the trains for the front were allowed to go up half empty.

After remaining a week in the town, during which we were quartered at the hospital, we

were allowed to board an invalid ship bound for England. There were fifteen hundred of us, and every regiment in the British service was represented except three. There were few on board, as we left the shore, who did not think of some dead comrade, sleeping in his nameless grave, in the land we were leaving behind us, and this for a while threw a gloom over the ship. We found the conditions of life during the voyage agreeable. The sleeping accommodation might have been better, as it was intended for the sick, but the majority of us felt so little like invalids that we wondered why they did not retain our services longer in South Africa.

* * * * *

“Let go the starboard anchor!” shouts the voice of the captain from the bridge.

There is a rattling of chain, and then we hear it plash into Southampton Water “at last.”

A farewell concert and mild ale drinking is going on behind the mast.

The time for parting has come, and probably few of us shall meet again.

The last song has been sung, and now someone is up to give the last toast.

There is silence as he raises his glass to his lips and speaks:

“ Here’s a toast to be drunk in silence :
The roll of the honored dead;
The price of your country’s glory
The blood that her sons have shed.”



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THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

(IN TWO ACTS.)

ACT I.

Dramatis Personæ. Boers under arms. Scene

— The top of a South African kopje.

Time — The present.

First Boer — Let us end this strife. I don't feel like fighting any more.

Second Boer — What! lay down our arms now that victory is nearly ours? Why only yesterday our commandant told me that a French fleet had sailed up the Thames and was bombarding the City of London. Before a week England will be forced to withdraw her soldiers from South Africa, and then our flag shall float from Cape Town to the Zambesi.

The Irish Boer — Ah, that was the night and day dream of your runaway President, the intriguing old rascal. It's not a yard of Irish frieze I'd give for your commandant's story, and only its my old enemy, the Saxon, you are in arms against, I'd never fire another shot for you; but as it is I'll die in the last ditch.

Third Boer (scanning the ocean with his field glass) — I see a lot of ships upon the sea. I wonder what their burthen is?

The Irish Boer — That's more hay coming from Canada, you stupid son of a Dutchman.

Third Boer — I see another ship far away on the horizon, and what does she carry? Shades of my great Dutch ancestors! it appears to be horses and men.

First Boer — It's the third contingent from Canada. Let's bury our rifles here and go home to our good wives.

The Irish Boer — Don't be alarmed at the Canadian boys, Mr. Backward in Coming Forward. I know they made things hot for Cronje

at Paardeberg, but they'll be crying for their Christmas pudding again this time, and, if they don't get it, they can't fight.

Third Boer — I see another ship upon the sea, and she carries women and children.

Second Boer — It's the wives and families of the British soldiers. Alas! I fear they've come to stay.

The Irish Boer — Cheer up faint hearts.
(Sings)

“ We tread the land that bore us :
The green flag flutters o'er us.
The friends we've tried are by our side,
And the foe we hate before us.”



ACT II.

Dramatis Personæ. Kruger (who has taken orders and returned in the capacity of clergyman to the country in which he ruled). Boers. Scene — The interior of a Dutch church in the Transvaal. Time — The year 1920.

First Boer — I have heard the English are soon going to withdraw the army of occupation and let the whole of South Africa become a self-governing colony.

Second Boer — And are going to let all classes have votes, too.

Third Boer — Perhaps, after all, things might be better than they were under the rule of the Rev. Mr. Kruger.

Kruger (aside) — To think, alas, that this is the country over which I once held despotic

sway and where I was so rich that I could not count all my gold; and now I am so poor — so poor — so miserably poor. (A pause. The congregation take their seats and he ascends the pulpit.) (The Sermon.) My dear friends. Last Sunday I spoke to you of the obligation which rests on you to contribute to the support of your pastors. I wish to impress it on your minds again today. I am your pastor, and, unless you give to me largely of your substance, there is no salvation for you.

I could quote for you many texts to prove this, but you all know them as well as I do. I will, however, quote one which will show you that you are bound to give me even all you possess if I were to ask it of you. You know that you are commanded to love your neighbor as yourself. Now, in order to love your neighbor as yourself, it is necessary that your self-love should never cause you to deny him anything you possess if he were to ask it of you. Because, plainly, that would be loving yourself

better than your neighbor, and, if you love yourself better than your neighbor, it is clear that you do not love neighbor as yourself. Therefore you break the commandment. If, then, at any time I should ask of you to give me all you possess, remember you are bound to do so. Now the question will naturally occur to you: Who is my neighbor? I answer that your neighbor is all mankind of every description, except Englishmen and their descendants. (The service is here interrupted by the sudden illness of the preacher and the scene closes.)



