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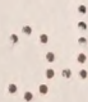
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BETWEEN BOER AND BRITON.

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PREFACE

“BETWEEN BOER AND BRITON” relates, primarily, the adventures of two boys, one an American and the other English, before and during the first eight months of the war between Great Britain and the two South African Republics.

In the tale are followed out the movements of both sides in and around Ladysmith, at Kimberley, in the vicinity of Mafeking, and during the victorious march of Lord Roberts on Pretoria, with side pictures of General Cronje’s plucky stand at Paardeberg Drift, and General Joubert’s fierce repulses of the repeated advances of General Buller.

But the tale is not all of war, nor was it meant to be, and in it I have tried to give my young readers a true picture of life, as it is to-day, on the ostrich and cattle farms and at the immense mines at Johannesburg. The Boer has been pictured as he is, with all his goodness and all his failings, and it is my hope that the picture of the South African Englishman is equally true to life.

In the writing of the historical portions of this work, the best military authorities on both sides have been consulted, as well as the reports of some of the American experts who were at the various scenes of battle. It is hoped, therefore, that the story is free from errors of a sufficient magnitude to hurt its general usefulness.

What the outcome will be of this war, which has already cost the Boers nearly all they possess, and which has taxed Great Britain's resources as they have never been taxed before, is still a question of the future. Should the Boers bow to the inevitable, it is to be hoped that our Anglo-Saxon cousins across the sea will remember that it is the height of chivalry to be generous to a fallen foe, especially when that foe has proved himself so worthy of one's steel.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N.J.,

July 1, 1900.

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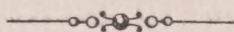
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BETWEEN BOER AND BRITON



CHAPTER I

THE RANCH ON THE BRAZOS

“WELL, that settles it. There is no longer any money in buying and selling cattle on the hoof in this part of the state, and I might rather go out of business on my own account now than be forced out by the Combination later on.”

The speaker was Mr. Martin Nelson, a tall, well-built man of forty-five years of age, with a ruddy face and a closely cropped brown beard. He sat at the little desk in the sitting room of his ranch home, on the north bank of the Brazos River. Before him lay several sheets of paper well filled with figures, which he had been studying with much dissatisfaction.

“Something wrong again, father?” came the question, from a sturdy youth of sixteen, who sat

on a bench near the wide open window, reading a late issue of a Galveston newspaper.

“Yes, Dave, something is very much wrong. Here are my balance sheets for the past year’s business. We have run behind something like two thousand dollars, not to mention our loss through that prairie fire in June.”

The youth threw down the newspaper and came over to his father’s side. “That’s too bad, — especially after the way we have worked. Why, we bought and sold more cattle than ever this year.”

“So we did; but you know how that Darnell Combination cut prices. I had to meet them or go out of business, and here is the result,” and Mr. Nelson heaved a long sigh.

“And what do you think the prospects are for next season?” asked Dave, as he began to study the sheets his father shoved toward him.

“The prospects are worse. The Combination announces another cut of one-quarter cent per pound.”

“Another cut! And they are already selling at cost!” cried the boy.

“They are bound to drive me out of the business, Dave, — that is the long and short of it. They drove

Gladby out over in Stonewall County, and Mueller in Saltville, and now they are after me. The Combination's policy seems to be one of rule or ruin."

"It's a shame, father, a gross shame! And after you have spent nearly fifteen years in building up the business! Can't you fight them in the courts for cutting in on that grazing land contract? That wasn't exactly legal."

"I might, but it would take more money than I can spare, and the case might drag along for years. The main thing is they can sell their cattle for what they please, and buy for what they please. After they have me out of the way, you can rest assured they will fix prices to suit themselves."

"Cannot we get our old customers to stay by us, — I mean by letting them know exactly how matters stand?"

Mr. Nelson shook his head. "No, I tried that with Willowell and with Umbler, but both of them said they must look out for their own interests, and buy and sell as cheaply as possible. The whole thing is here in a nutshell: I can't fight the Combination because it is too powerful for me, and so" — the cattle dealer's voice dropped — "I've got to give up business."

Dave Nelson banged his foot savagely against the side of the black walnut desk, thus bestowing a mental kick upon the obnoxious Combination. "If you give up the business, what will you do, — give up the ranch too?"

"I presume so — for the ranch won't pay without the cattle. I felt this was coming when first the Combination opened up in this territory, but I did not imagine they would press me so fast."

"How Hendrik Kneip will chuckle when he hears we have been forced out," muttered Dave, after an awkward pause. "He is as much responsible as anybody for the Combination's coming here — and that, too, after you taught him the business and gave him a position for years at a good salary. If ever a man was ungrateful it is that Dutchman."

"Yes, Dutch Henry has been the wolf to bite the hand that fed him," answered Mr. Nelson, with increased bitterness of tone. "I took him in as a poor emigrant boy and made a man of him, and this is my reward." The cattle dealer began to walk the uncovered sitting room floor. "But as he has been dishonest with me, so will he be some day with the Combination, and instead of letting him go, as I did, they will probably put him in prison."

“If you give up the business and sell the ranch, have you any idea what you will do next?” asked Dave, after another pause, during which Mr. Nelson kicked off his slippers and slipped on his riding boots.

“Not the slightest, Dave. In the past, and especially since your mother’s death, I have given the cattle business my entire attention. It was my dream to make it the largest in this section of the state, and to take you in as an equal partner as soon as you became of age. Now that dream is shattered, and I don’t know what I shall do,” and Mr. Nelson bit his lip and turned away to the door to hide his emotion.

“Don’t you worry about me, father,” came quickly from the son. “I’ll land on my feet right enough. But it’s a shame for a man of your age to be knocked out, as the saying goes. I’d just like to give Dutch Henry a piece of my mind. He deserves it.”

“Perhaps; but quarrelling won’t help the situation, Dave. If I give up I shall do so peaceably, and with as little loss as possible,” concluded Mr. Nelson, as he walked through the kitchen of the ranch home to the grassy dooryard beyond. Here

a coal-black mare stood tethered beside a chaparral hedge. Freeing the animal, he mounted her, and was soon disappearing in the direction of the cattle ranges up the river.

Left to himself, Dave continued to study the balance sheets for some time, and even put down a few figures of his own. Since the departure of Hendrik Kneip from the place he had been his father's chief business assistant, both around the ranch and on the ranges. He knew as much about cattle as the average cow puncher, and could ride with any of them. Although but sixteen, he looked older, and his frame and constitution were as hardy as outdoor life could make them. From his sixth to his fourteenth years he had attended school regularly, and had graduated at one of the leading academies of Austin, the state capital. But though he loved to read, and occasionally to study, he had no desire for anything which smacked of a commercial or professional life. "I hate anything that boxes a fellow up inside of four walls," he had said more than once.

Mr. Martin Nelson was one of two brothers. He was of English parentage, his folks having emigrated from Surrey to New York some ten

years after their marriage, and when Martin's brother Ralph was seven years of age. Martin Nelson had been born three years later, so that there was exactly ten years' difference between the two brothers' ages.

From New York the Nelsons had gone West to Missouri, and here Martin Nelson had grown up on his parents' farm, and had married a pretty German-American girl named Mina Orbutt. In the meantime Ralph, of a roving, happy-go-lucky disposition, had gone, first to sea, and then to Cape Town, Africa, where he had settled down and married among some English friends of his parents.

In the same year that Dave was born his two grandparents on his father's side died. At this time there was a great boom in Texas land and cattle, and as soon as affairs could be settled up, Mr. Martin Nelson emigrated thither, taking his wife, her aged father, and his little son with him. His money was invested in a tract of several thousand acres and a fine herd of cattle, and the family were soon on the highroad to prosperity.

Those sunshiny days of his early boyhood were ones which Dave was destined never to forget.

He had the whole range of the ranch home, the big barns and cattle sheds, all to himself, and when he was not getting into mischief at one place or another, then he could be found sitting on his grandfather's knee, learning German in his own childish fashion, or listening with wide-open eyes to wonderful stories of the Fatherland over the ocean. To please his father-in-law, Mr. Nelson also learned something of the German's tongue, and it became a common thing, at the dinner table and elsewhere, to hear one member of the family speak in English and another answer in German, or *vice versa*.

Then came a day of gloom, when Mrs. Nelson contracted a high fever, for which the two doctors who were hastily summoned from miles away could do nothing. The beloved wife and mother lingered but three weeks in sickness and then died. She was buried in a pretty little cemetery by the river side, and two years later her aged father was placed beside her, and Mr. Nelson and Dave were left alone in the world.

The grief of husband and son had been keen, but hard outdoor work had gradually taken away much of the bitterness. Yet every spring the

twin graves by the river were fixed up with fresh flowers, and the trailing vines were rearranged with tenderest care. To those whose hearts are big the loved ones gone before are not easily forgotten.

CHAPTER II

DUTCH HENDRIK IS OUTWITTED

“MASSAH DABE! Massah Dabe! Wot’s de mattah? Yo’ don’t generally go to sleep in de middle ob de day like dis.”

Dave raised his head slowly from his arms on the desk, where he had had his face hidden for the best part of quarter of an hour. “I’m not asleep, Guffy; I was thinking, that’s all.”

“Yo’ dun been t’inkin’ mighty sober-like, Massah Dabe,” said the stalwart colored man, who had just come in from one of the outer sheds with a mess of sweet potatoes in a dish-pan. “I dun hopes wid all my heart dar ain’t nuffin gone wrong.”

“Nothing very unusual, Guffy. I was thinking of how that Combination is pushing father to the wall.”

“Dat dar Combination ought to be sunk in de middle ob de Gulf ob Mexico!” cried the colored

cook, wrathfully. "And it ought to be sunk right on top ob dat dar Dutch Henry, too."

"I quite agree with you. But as we can't sink either the Combination or that ungrateful Dutchman, we must do something else."

"If yo' pap war some men, he'd go huntin' dat Dutchman wid his rifle. De skunk desarbs it."

"Father doesn't believe in violence or in lynch law,—and neither do I, for that matter. But it's a pity he didn't have Dutch Henry arrested instead of letting him go, when that cattle was missed two years ago. By the way, what of the cattle that wandered down the creek; did Pepper round them up?"

"No, his horse dun went lame, and he had to let them go."

"We can't afford to lose any heads just now. I'll go after them myself, and at once," and Dave started for the door.

"Won't you stay fo' dinnah? I'll hab it ready in half an hour."

"No, I'll take a cold bite and be off," responded the boy.

In less than ten minutes he was on his way, astride of a wiry mustang he had nicknamed

Lightning. The animal had been broken by himself, and he felt as safe in the saddle as he would have felt in a parlor chair.

Over the range they flew, past the long chaparral hedge and bit of prairie, down to where the low-drooping pecan and cottonwood trees lined the high river bank. The day was a perfect one, the sun shining down from a cloudless sky. It had showered less than twenty-four hours before, laying low the dust of the bare spots, and giving a new lustre to all that was green.

The cattle that Dave was after were four good-sized cows which Mr. Nelson had purchased from a poor farmer who had wished very much to sell them. They had not yet been branded with their familiar N and two stars, and the boy knew that if they once got beyond the Nelson range, they might never be recovered.

“If we’ve got to get out of the business, we might as well get out with as much money as we can,” mused Dave, as he sped along, taking to a trail which led along the river bank, back of the fringe of trees. “Even with the price away down those cows are worth fifty or sixty dollars. Oh, dear! I suppose if father is forced to sell at a

sacrifice he won't realize ten thousand dollars, although the ranch and stock are worth more than double."

Dave had covered a distance of half a mile when, on reaching a bend where a second trail crossed the first, he heard a well-known whistle, and looking up, saw a neighbor riding toward him, holding up several letters and newspapers.

"Was just over to town and thought I'd bring your mail for you," said Mr. Crosby, and as he came closer he handed over the packet.

"Thank you, Mr. Crosby. By the way, did you see anything of four stray cows as you came along?"

"Four stray cows? No, but I saw Dutch Henry driving four cows up to the Forks."

"What!" cried Dave, excitedly. "Four short horns, with white patches?"

"Exactly. I kind o' thought they might be the cows your father bought from old Ned Buckley."

"They must be the same. They got away from Pepper, and now Dutch Henry is trying to drive them over to the Combination's range."

"Ain't they branded, Dave?"

"No, we haven't had time to do it—we were

so busy fixing up the shed that blew down in that wind storm last week. Which way was he bound?"

The neighbor pointed out the direction, and without loss of time Dave plunged off once more, urging his mustang along at topmost speed. For the time being the letters and newspapers were forgotten, and he jammed them into his jacket pocket for inspection later on. It was bad enough to have Hendrik Kneip working against them in a business way; it was still worse to suffer the loss of so many live stock at his hands.

On and on went the youth, around the bend of the river, and then up a small hill, the top of which was fringed with rocks and cacti. Beyond the hill was another valley, and almost in the centre of this he beheld the man he was after, astride of a bronco, and driving the four cows with all the speed the tired creatures could command.

Dutch Henry, as he had been commonly called from childhood, was attending strictly to business, and did not, therefore, discover Dave until the youth was less than a hundred yards behind him. He was a burly fellow, weighing all of two hun-

dred pounds, with a pudgy face, squinting blue eyes and red hair, and a tangled red beard. As Dave came closer he saw that the Dutchman was armed with both a shotgun and a bowie-knife.

“What business have you to drive off our cows?” demanded Dave, who, unlike his milder-tempered father, believed in coming directly to the point upon all occasions.

“Your cows?” said Kneip, slowly, and with a strong Dutch accent. “Who say dese vos your cows?”

“I say so. They are the cows father bought from old Ned Buckley, and you know it.”

“Look here, ton’t you talk mit me like dot,” growled Dutch Henry, as he swung his shotgun around to the front. “I find dese cows town by der rifer, und I dink da vos our cows.”

“You know better than that, Henry,” replied Dave, undaunted by the handling of the gun. “You know this stock as well as I do. They haven’t your brand on them.”

“Vell, da haven’t your prand neider. How you going to brove da vos your cows, hey?”

“I can prove it by Ned Buckley, and by Mr. Crosby, as well as by Pepper and half a dozen

others. You just stop driving them right now, or I'll make it warm for you."

At these words the Dutchman scowled ominously. He felt that now he had been discovered he was cornered. "If you vos sure da been your cows you can haf dem," he muttered. "Put you needn't git so mad apout it."

"I reckon I have a right to get mad, Hendrik Kneip. For over a year you have been doing your best to ruin my father and drive him out of business."

"It ain't so !"

"It is so. The Darnell Combination would never have come into this section if it hadn't been for you. It was you who went down to Galveston and got Mr. Darnell to come here and look over the ground personally and filled him with stories about the enormous profits my father was making out of his holdings, and so he came here instead of going farther to the southwest. And you did that, too, after my father had raised you and taught you the business, and paid you all that you were worth to him, and more."

"Your fader discharged me."

"Only after he found that you were dishonest —

that you had reported eight cows drowned in the river and then had sold them in secret to some Oklahoma boomers."

"Dot ain't so — dem cows vos drowned," snapped the burly ranchman.

"It is so, and father can prove it, now. If you are not careful of your doings here, we'll lay the whole case before Mr. Darnell, and then I reckon he won't want you much longer in his service."

The words were spoken before Dave had calculated their possible effect. Scarcely had he finished when Hendrik Kneip caught his shotgun by the barrel and raised the stock threateningly over the youth's head.

"So dot is vot you vill do, hey?" he roared. "I vill show you vot I can do. Dare!"

The gun was swung around, and the end of the stock grazed Dave's right ear. But now the bronco reared up, nearly unseating the Dutchman. Dave's mustang closed in, and in a twinkling the youth had jerked the gun from his enemy's grasp.

"Gif be dot gun pack, Dafe Nelson!"

"I will not — and you had better keep your distance," returned the youth, as he urged his mustang in the direction the cows had wandered.

“I can shoot as straight as you can, and perhaps straighter.”

The Dutchman muttered something in his native tongue which was far from complimentary to the boy who had thus outwitted him. “Vos you going to steal mine gun?” he asked presently.

“No, I’ll not steal it, but I’ll take it home with me, and you can get it any time you have a mind to call. After this I shall go armed myself, so you had better beware of what you do.”

There was a pause, during which each looked the other squarely in the eyes. The Dutchman was the first to drop his gaze. He grated his snaggy, yellow teeth.

“You haf der trop on me, so I will leaf you,” he snarled. “Put I ain’t tone mit you yet, remember dot. I vill get more as square some tay!” And shaking his fist at Dave, he wheeled around his bronco and galloped away, the crest of the next hill soon hiding him from view.

CHAPTER III

A LETTER FROM THE TRANSVAAL

LEFT to himself, Dave slung the newly acquired shotgun over his shoulder and proceeded without loss of time to round up the four cows and start them on the back trail for the corral. "They shan't get away again, at least not until they are well branded," he muttered to himself. He kept a sharp lookout for a possible reappearance of Hendrik Kneip, but that unworthy individual did not show himself.

As he neared home the youth brought forth the letters and newspapers Mr. Crosby had given him. The papers were such as they were in the habit of getting regularly. The letters were three in number, two for his father, evidently business communications, and one for Dave himself. The latter bore a curious foreign stamp, and was post-marked Pretoria, Cape Town, New York, and Seymour, the latter being the county seat and nearest post-office.

"Hullo, what can this be?" he mused. "Can it

be a letter from Uncle Ralph? It certainly looks like it. And yet it's queer he should write to me instead of to father."

Dave was as curious as most boys, but his father had drilled him in to follow the maxim of "business first and pleasure afterward," and so, before opening the letter, he saw to it that the cattle were properly corralled and that Lightning received the meal that was coming to him.

"Why, Dabe, whar you dun git dat shotgun?" came from the negro cook, as soon as the youth neared the ranch kitchen.

"I took it away from Dutch Henry," was the quiet reply, but there was a twinkle in Dave's eye as he spoke.

"Tuk it away from dat man! Wot yo' mean, chile? Did yo' hab a fight?"

"It was hardly a fight, Guffy. He started to hit me with the stock and I pulled the gun away from him."

"Good fo' yo'! An' den —?"

"Then I told him to keep his distance, — and he did."

"Good! good!" The big negro slapped his thigh with his broad palm. "By golly, but I

would hab like to see yo' do it! Tell me all about it, won't yo'?"

Dave's story was a short one. "And now, has father returned?" he said, after he had finished.

"No, sah,—an' I don't expect him till sundown."

"Then I'll take dinner alone. The ride has made me tremendously hungry, in spite of the bite I took before I left," said the boy, and he was soon seated at the long dining room table, where, during busy times, ten to twelve ranchmen and cow punchers were wont to congregate. The table was covered with nothing more elaborate than white oilcloth, but this Guffy prided himself upon keeping as clean as the finest of linen. Of china there was very little, the crockeryware being of the substantial kind meant for rough usage.

While the negro cook was bringing in the mid-day meal of beef stew, boiled sweet potatoes, custard pie, and coffee, Dave tore open the letter addressed to himself. As was natural he turned first to the signature, to make sure that it was from his Uncle Ralph. He was very much surprised to read instead, "From your Cousin, Will Nelson."

"Cousin Will!" he murmured. "Why, I had

almost forgotten that Uncle Ralph had a son. And yet, come to think of it, he must be just about my age, for father said he and I were born in the same year. It's a wonder he never wrote to me before; but perhaps he's as poor a hand at writing letters as I am."

"Bettah eat yo' dinner, Dabe, befo' it gits cold," remonstrated the colored cook; but the youth hardly heard him, so interested was he in the communication, which ran as follows:—

"PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC,
"August 15, 1897.

"DEAR COUSIN DAVID: I rather imagine you will be surprised to receive this from me, as neither of us has ever written to the other. But I think it is a beastly shame that two cousins can't keep up a correspondence, even if, as in our case, one is an American and the other a son of old England. So I am going to pen you a long letter, and I want to tell you right now that I shall expect just as long a letter in return.

"I think father wrote to your father that we had left Cape Town and gone up to Johannesburg. There was a great rush up into the Trans-

vaal, as most folks call this republic, on account of the opening of some new gold mines just outside of Johannesburg. Our whole family went with the crowd, taking the railway as far as it ran at that time, which was Kroonstad, in the Orange Free State, and finishing the journey by trekking, as we call it (which simply means pulling, in Dutch), to Johannesburg in a big wagon drawn by ten pairs of oxen. We took some furniture and all of our clothing, and the party consisted of father and mother, myself and little sister Alice, who is six years younger than I. A Boer driver managed the turnout, assisted by two of the laziest Hottentots you can possibly imagine.

“When we arrived father found the new mines even better than had been anticipated, and he has now a responsible position with one company and owns a small share in another company just starting. At first we settled down in Johannesburg, but the town is far from being either clean or healthy (the Boer government will pay for no improvements), so that on account of mother’s delicate health, we had to take a place outside. There was a Dutchman who wished to sell out his ostrich farm, located near Pretoria, and as the

price was right, father bought it up; and here we are and likely to stay for a long time to come.

“Pretoria, which is the capital of the Transvaal, as no doubt you already know by studying your geography (of course you have geography lessons even in far-away Texas), is about thirty-four miles from Johannesburg, but our farm is less than eighteen miles away from the new mines, so that father rides the distance over the veldt on horseback night and morning. The veldt is a good bit like what I imagine your western prairies to be, only it is broken up by what we call kopjes, little stony hills that stick up like whitecaps on a stormy sea.

“Our farm is not a large one for this country, as it contains less than a thousand morgen,—a morgen being two acres,—but it is very prettily situated, and has running water,—something you do not readily find in some parts out here. Big and little, we have one hundred and sixty ostriches, and as the price of feathers is going up we hope to do very well during the coming season. We also keep some cattle and a small flock of sheep. I do the overseeing and have a Hottentot man and two Kafir boys to help me. The Hottentot is

married, and his wife and daughter do the most of our housework. The man isn't as heavy as I am, but his wife, Suma, and his daughter, Lola, are as fat as butter, and each weighs fourteen stone — nearly two hundred pounds.

“I attended school until we left Cape Town, and now I am studying all I can on my own hook. I have taken up mineralogy and hope some day to go into the mining business with father. In the school out here they teach nothing but Dutch, although there are fully as many English and Americans as natives here, and by natives I mean the Boers, for the Kafirs and Hottentots don't count, although they outnumber all the others put together. The Boers are awfully jealous of the English, although they hardly say so openly. They act the part of a regular dog in the manger — not caring to develop the country themselves, and not wanting foreigners to do it either. Father thinks that some day the march of progress will wipe out the Boer government altogether.

“I think I have written about enough for the present, so will bring this letter to a close. Please answer soon, and when you write tell me all about yourself and your cattle ranch. I wish we were

not so far apart, so that we could visit one another. Or, better yet, I wish your cattle ranch was located out here, then we might be chums. I had several first-rate chums down in Cape Town, but they were all left behind, and the nearest English boy to me now lives two miles away.

“Mother, father, Alice, and myself all send our love to you and to Uncle Martin. Father will write soon to your father, and would like to get a letter himself when your father feels like writing it.

“With best wishes,

“From your cousin,

“WILL NELSON.

“P. S. Address letters to Pretoria, as that is the only reliable post-office we have in this neighborhood, and we go over to the capital several times a week for supplies. W. N.”

CHAPTER IV

TWO CHANCES TO SELL OUT

DAVE read the letter through twice before he laid it down, and even then he placed it where he could glance over the pages while eating the dinner, which was now more than half cold. It was like a glimpse from another world.

“Why didn’t we start to write to each other before?” he half muttered, as he began to make away with the stew. “I’ll wager Cousin Will is a bang-up fellow,—his letter proves it. And so he has settled down on an ostrich farm. I wonder if that is anything like a Texas cattle ranch? It must be, for he says they keep cattle, and sheep, too. I’d like to see those Hottentots and Kafirs. But I wouldn’t like those Boers—not if they were like Dutch Henry,” he concluded, his face darkening suddenly. “But they can’t be all like him,” he added.

Dave placed the letter on the desk, along with the other letters and the newspapers. “I’ll answer that to-morrow,” he thought. “Will is too inter-

esting a writer to let drop. I'll tell him all about cow punching and what fun we have at a round-up, and about breaking in the mustangs and broncos, and about that big wind storm, and the grass fire. I guess I can make as long a letter as he made, if I set out to do it."

But just now there was plenty of work to do, and leaving the ranch the youth strode down to the immense cattle sheds, where in winter hundreds of heads were quartered. A wind storm which had been little less than a tornado had almost unroofed one of the buildings, and several of the ranch hands were at work putting the finishing touches to the repairs. Getting a hammer and some nails for himself, Dave joined in, and kept at the task until some time after sundown.

When Mr. Nelson returned he was so tired he could scarcely get off of his mare, and Dave ran forward to take charge of the animal. "I had to go after some of the cattle that got in the marsh land on the upper range," he said. "The mare got stuck in a hole, and both of us came near to spending the night out there. I wish that sink was on somebody else's range."

"I've got lots of news to tell," replied Dave.

“But you had better have dinner and supper combined before I begin. I’ll turn the mare over to Jackson.”

“Pepper just told me that you had had a row with Dutch Henry.”

“So I had. But you go and eat first, father, you need it. The news will keep.”

Dave went off with the animal, and Mr. Nelson entered the dining room, there to share his evening repast with several of his men. While he was finishing, the son came back and related the particulars of the encounter with the Dutchman. As may be supposed, Martin Nelson was much disturbed.

“It was a lucky thing that you got the gun away from him,” he said. “I don’t believe the man is any too good to shoot, when in a rage. Once a mustang turned on him and he got a shovel and nearly beat the beast to death. I believe he would have killed the creature only I chanced along and told him if he didn’t stop I would discharge him on the spot. A man who would treat a dumb beast in that fashion has no heart.”

“I left his gun with Guffy. I wonder if he will come for it.”

“It’s not likely. But he may send one of the

men over in a day or two. He always wanted everything that was his — and more. Perhaps all of us had better go armed after this — just as I and my men had to do when the Oklahoma boomers swept through here,” concluded Mr. Nelson.

The ranch owner was greatly interested in the letter from South Africa, and read it over as carefully as had Dave. Years before, he and his brother had corresponded regularly, but of late the writing had dropped off, as each had plunged deeper into the business at hand.

“I am glad to hear from them,” he said. “If I am not mistaken I have been owing Ralph a letter now for a year, and I presume he is tired of waiting for me. I knew he was in Johannesburg and interested in the mining business, but this ostrich farm is something new to me.”

“Will seems to think that ostrich farming is going to pay.”

“I have been told that ostrich farming in South Africa has made many men’s fortunes. They are now doing some ostrich farming in California, but that industry is yet in its infancy.”

“But I thought ostriches ran wild.”

“So they do, like wild turkeys, but like turkeys

they can be raised from the nest and tamed. An old wild ostrich, though, remains wild and unconquerable to the day of his death."

"I'd like to visit an ostrich farm some day," said Dave, wistfully. "It would be a change from this life."

"Are you getting tired of the ranch?"

"Oh, no; but then everybody likes a change now and then, you know."

Mr. Nelson nodded slowly and thoughtfully. "That is true. Well, you may have a decided change before long — if we have to give up the cattle business."

He turned to the two letters addressed to himself. One was of minor importance and was speedily filed away. The second was postmarked Chicago and was typewritten, and Mr. Nelson read it at first with a clouded face and then with something of a smile.

"Here is something of importance," he said at last. "Perhaps it is a way out of our difficulties."

"And what is that, father?"

"A letter from Samuel Hostetter, the general manager of the Anchor Beef Company. He says that they are going to open up in this part of Texas,

and wishes to know if I am in the market to dispose of all of my lands and cattle at a fair price."

"The Anchor Beef Company? Are they in with the Darnell Combination?"

"No, the two concerns are deadly enemies. The Anchor people come from Missouri, and Darnell stepped on their toes in that territory, and now I suppose these people are going to try to get square. It's a game of tiger eat tiger."

"Well, if you can sell out at a fair figure, that will be better than sacrificing what you have," returned Dave, quickly. "And I would like to see Darnell catch it, just on Dutch Henry's account."

"I think the Anchor people have more money than the Darnell Combination. But as for selling out to them, that will depend upon what they will give me."

"To be sure." Dave leaped suddenly to his feet. "Perhaps Darnell would like to buy you out, too."

"More than likely he would — at his own figure."

"I don't know about that. He may be willing to pay a stiff price — if he hears that the Anchor folks are nosing around," and Dave smiled broadly.

"My boy, you've got a long head on your shoulders," cried Mr. Nelson, well pleased at the youth's

cleverness. He rubbed his hands together. "Yes, since both of them wish to get me out of the way, I'll sell out to the one who bids the highest."

For over an hour father and son sat up discussing the situation, and then Dave retired to the bedroom loft, wondering how soon the property would be disposed of, and what he and his father would do after that.

Dave was mending a bit of harness in front of the stable on the following morning, when he saw a tall, thin individual astride of a small Mexican pony riding slowly toward the ranch house. He recognized the rider as Peter Pepps, a ranchero from the "bad lands," who had but recently come to that neighborhood, in the employ of the Darnell Combination. "He has come for Dutch Henry's shotgun," thought the boy, and ran to inform his father of the newcomer's arrival.

But Dave was mistaken, at least in part. Peter Pepps had heard that the boy had his employer's weapon, and had been asked to see if he could get it back, but his errand primarily was to deliver a note from Mr. Darnell to Mr. Nelson.

The note was politely written, but very stiff in tone, and stated that the writer had heard that Mr.

Nelson wished to sell out, and if this was true he would like to have the ranch owner meet him at Gainesville on the afternoon of the next Thursday, mentioning a certain hotel in that city.

“Humph, this is odd,” mused Martin Nelson. “I never intimated to him that I wished to sell out.”

“Perhaps he already knows what the Anchor people are up to,” was Dave’s comment; and his surmise afterward proved correct.

“There can be no harm in meeting him, and I will do it,” and an answer was penned accordingly.

“But I wouldn’t close with him before communicating with the Anchor folks,” said the boy.

“To be sure, Dave. The two millstones shall not grind me without my getting paid handsomely for it.”

It was Dave who gave the answering note to Peter Pepps, and, as was the custom, the ranchero was offered some light refreshments before taking his leave.

Peter Pepps saw the shotgun hanging in the kitchen, but it took several minutes before he could get around to asking for it.

“I reckon ye have got a gun yere belongin’ to

Boss Kneip," he said finally. "Leas'wise he sed sumthin' about it."

"Yes, here is the gun," answered Dave, taking it down. "If he wants it, you can take it to him. But you can tell him to be careful how he tries to use it in the future."

Peter Pepps took the shotgun in silence, looked it over to find it unloaded, for Dave had fired off both barrels before turning it over to Guffy, and slung it over his shoulder. "So long," he muttered, and slouched off to his pony. "Hope this yere note proves satisfact'ry to all hands," and then he was off.

"I'll wager he knew what was in that note he brought," said Dave, when he had disappeared. "What a hang-dog look he has! Mr. Darnell can't be very proud of the men who represent him in this territory."

"I don't believe Darnell cares much what sort of men he has so long as they make money for him," returned Mr. Nelson. "I'll send a letter at once to the Anchor people, and then we'll see what we will

CHAPTER V

DAVE HELPS AN ENEMY AND HEARS SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE

THE nearest railroad station to the ranch on the Brazos River was at Wichita Falls, and this town is located about eighty miles west of Gainesville, the city at which Martin Nelson was to meet Alvin Darnell, who was fast becoming known in that section of Texas as the Cattle King.

Feeling that he must hear from the Anchor Beef Company before closing with Darnell, no matter what the figure offered, Mr. Nelson concluded to telegraph to Chicago, instead of losing the time that a letter would require. Accordingly a telegram was written out within an hour after Peter Pepps had left, and Dave took it upon himself to see that it was properly despatched.

The distance from the ranch home to Wichita Falls was nearly fifty miles, a long journey on horseback to anybody not accustomed to it. But Dave had gone over the route many times before, and did

not mind it in the least. He procured an early dinner, and had Guffy put him up a lunch in a saddlebag, and then made off, over the hills and down in the valleys leading northeastward.

About half of the ride was completed without special incident, and then the youth came to a portion of the trail which led across a ford of one of the branches of the Red River. The ford was a bad one, and as he approached it the youth could not help but remember how, two years before, he had slipped on the wet rocks and been almost carried off by the rushing waters.

“Before long they will have to either bridge that creek over or find a new fording place,” he thought. “That gorge just above makes the water leap up so fast that —”

Dave’s mental soliloquy came to a sudden ending as a muffled cry broke upon his ears. Then came a shriek, and the wild snort of a bronco.

“Somebody is in the creek!” he ejaculated, and urged Lightning forward. “Quick, old boy, perhaps we can save a life!”

The mustang seemed to understand, and laying back his ears he bounded forward, and in a few seconds Dave came into sight of the creek. The water

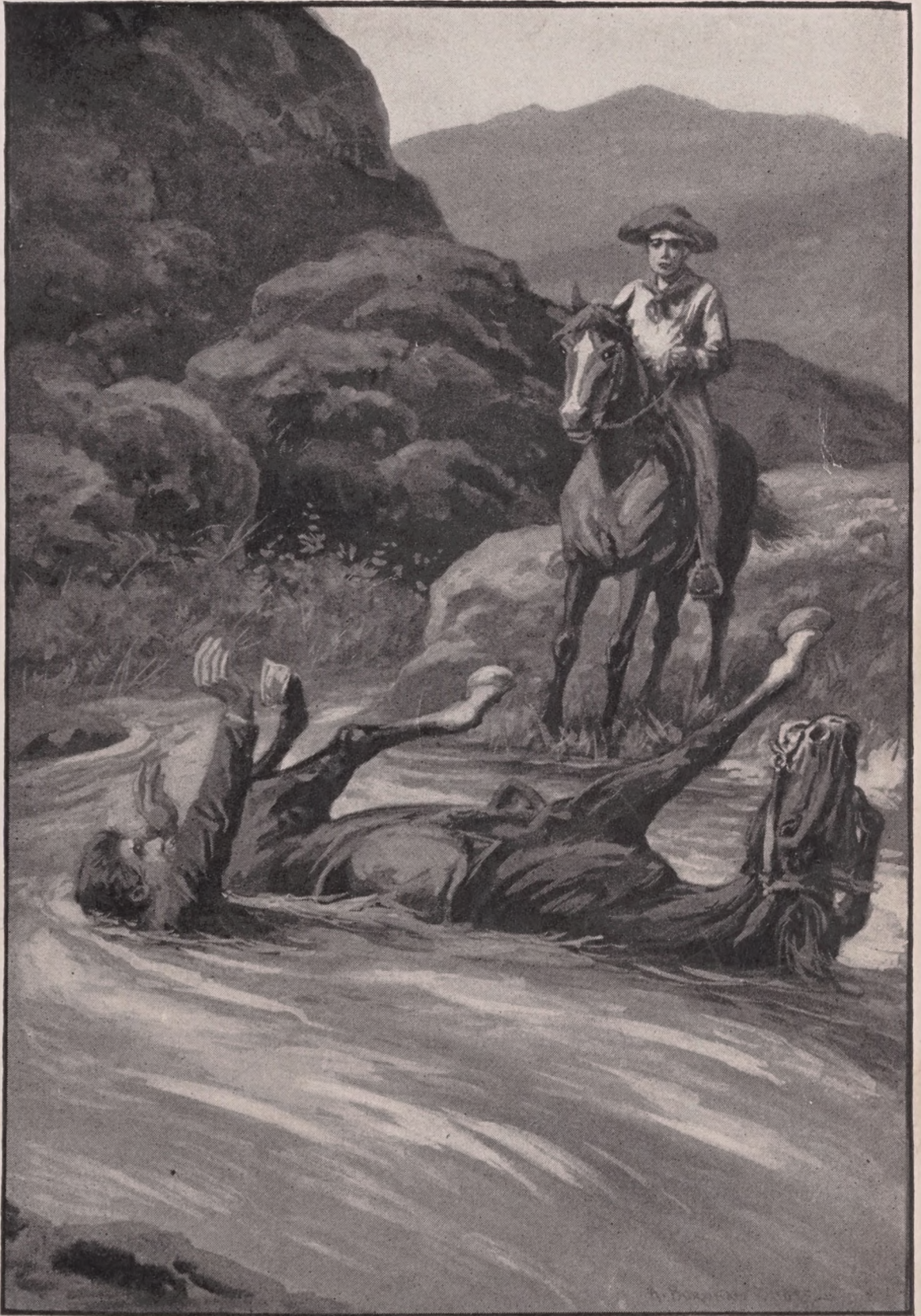
was higher than he had anticipated, and swirled madly as it came tumbling out of the gorge and spread itself over the uneven rocks beyond.

“Help me! help!” came the cry, in a strangely familiar voice. “Ton’t let me die in der vater!”

“Dutch Henry!” burst from Dave’s lips. For one single instant he felt like drawing back, then his naturally noble nature asserted itself, and he urged his mustang close to the edge of the stream.

Even in the darkness which was fast gathering in the valley through which the creek flowed, it was an easy matter to see what was the cause of Dutch Henry’s plight. His bronco had slipped and rolled over and, on account of the strength of the current, seemed unable to get up again. The rider’s foot had become caught in the stirrup strap, and now the leg lay under the fallen beast, holding Dutch Henry a close prisoner. The face of the man bobbed up and down on the surface of the stream, disappearing and reappearing with every move he made to save himself.

“Forward, Lightning,” said Dave, quietly but firmly. The mustang hesitated a second, then did as bidden. Soon the horse was up to his knees in the rushing torrent. He shivered and shook but



“DUTCH HENRY!” BURST FROM DAVE'S LIPS. — Page 38

kept his footing, and Dave continued to urge him onward.

“Safe me!” screamed Dutch Henry again. “I vill gif you a hundred dollar of you safe me!”

“I’ll do what I can; but you must keep quiet,” returned Dave. “You are scaring the bronco to death, and if you are not careful he’ll roll over you. Easy now, Lightning, a little closer, whoa! whoa! That’s it, — now then, git up!”

Dave had come close to the bronco’s head. He leaned from the saddle and caught the beast by the bridle. Lightning pulled forward with all his strength, and Dave held on, and with a tremendous splash the bronco came up and regained his feet. Then he made a dash for the shore, dragging Kneip after him, but the Dutchman managed to catch hold of the animal’s tail and thus saved himself from what might have proved a fatal bumping on the rocks.

“Now I reckon you are all right,” observed Dave, when all were safe in a thicket beside the creek. “But you had a close shave of it.”

“Yah, and I vos all wet bis mine skin,” growled Dutch Henry. “You *klutzkupf!*” (blockhead), he roared, and hit the bronco in the face with his naked fist. “Vy for you dumble town, hey?”

“I guess he tumbled because he couldn't help it,” said Dave, coldly, and then, as he got a whiff of Kneip's breath, he added, “or maybe you were so unsteady on his back he couldn't balance himself.”

“Unsteady? Vot you mean py dot, hey?”

“I mean that you have been drinking, Hendrik Kneip, and if any one deserves a pounding, it is you and not the bronco. I can't exactly say that I am sorry I saved you, but I would just as lief it had been somebody else.” And with this parting shot Dave turned his mustang around, plunged into the stream again, and struck out for the opposite shore.

The unreasonable man glared after the boy for a moment. Then with a lurch he bent down, secured a jagged stone, and flung it with all his might after the youth. But his aim was poor and the stone flew far over Dave's head.

“Don't you do that again,” cried the boy, facing around. “If you do, I may be tempted to use the pistol I am carrying.”

On hearing this, Hendrik Kneip felt for his own weapon, but it had been lost in the stream. The discovery that it was missing alarmed him, and without waiting longer he leaped up on his bronco and pushed into the thicket and out of sight.

Feeling that he must make the most of the daylight while it lasted, Dave, on gaining the north bank of the creek, and seeing that Dutch Henry had disappeared, struck out with renewed speed for his destination. As he advanced he could not help but speculate over the mean manner in which Kneip had treated him after being saved from such a dangerous position.

“Some men are grateful for nothing,” he muttered. “I don’t think he would turn a hand to do any such thing for me,” and he urged Lightning along faster than ever, just by way of relieving his feelings.

It was several hours after sunset when Dave dashed into the bustling little town of Wichita Falls and made his way to the telegraph station. His somewhat long message to Chicago was soon sent, and having paid the charges, he turned away to find accommodations for the night for himself and his horse.

There was one hotel, the Wichita House, at which he had stopped before, and hither he made his way, only, however, to find it full, for a special sale of real estate in the vicinity had attracted a large number of boomers and speculators.

“Try Lawson’s boarding house,” said the hotel clerk, and told him where the resort mentioned was located.

Dave was turning away, when, chancing to look into the reading and smoking room of the hostelry, he saw two men whose faces were familiar to him. The one was that of Alvin Darnell, the president of the Combination, the other that of Josiah Snugg, a shrewd speculator in real estate.

“Darnell here,” thought the youth. “And he wanted father to come all the way to Gainesville to see him. What does this mean?”

At first he thought to walk in and let Mr. Darnell see him, wondering if the Cattle King would have anything to say to him. But then he changed his mind, and hurried outside.

Dave had left Lightning hitched to a tie-post close to one of the side windows of the reading and smoking room. The two men he had recognized sat beside this window, and as the boy came up to get his mustang he could not help but catch something of the talk between the pair.

“Yes, if I can’t get Nelson’s ranch, you must get it for me,” Alvin Darnell was saying.

“That’s all right, but if Nelson won’t sell to me,

what then?" returned Josiah Snugg, after having emptied his mouth of a large quantity of tobacco juice.

"He's got to sell sooner or later. I've about got him on the wall already. He is losing money right along, and I know it."

"What's the upset price on his outfit?"

"I thought I might get his land for six or seven thousand dollars."

"Humph, not much! Why any boomer around here would give him that for it."

"Well, what do you think it is worth?"

"That land is worth every cent of fifteen thousand dollars."

"Kneip says not."

"That Dutchman doesn't know anything about it."

"You must remember the boom is about over."

"I'm not forgetting that. At the height of the boom Nelson could have called for twenty-five thousand and received it. I'll wager a corner lot in Wichita against a new silk hat that even at a forced sale the ranch will fetch nine to ten thousand dollars, and perhaps twelve."

"Very well then, buy it at that, if it comes to the worst."

“Do you suppose he has any idea yet that the Anchor Company is going to open up down here?”

“I rather think not — that is, nothing definite.”

“They might force the price, you know.”

“We must get the ranch before they have the chance to do that, Snugg. We must see to it that we head the Anchor people off,” said Alvin Darnell, with much earnestness. “Come and have something,” and then the two men arose and walked off in the direction of the bar-room attached to the hotel.

Although, generally speaking, Dave detested eavesdropping, he had taken in all that was said, feeling that he had a right so to do. As he unhitched Lightning and led the mustang away, a grim smile broke over his bronzed face.

“That was worth hearing,” he thought. “I’m glad father sent that telegram. Now the Combination and the Anchor people can fight it out between themselves, and if we watch our chances, I don’t believe we’ll come out so very far behind, after all.”

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA, AND AN ATTACK IN THE DARK

IT can well be imagined that Dave did not sleep soundly that night, not because the bed was a strange one,—such a trifle never bothered this young son of the cattle ranges,—but because his head was filled with what he had overheard, and he felt that a crisis was at hand which would alter both his father's and his own future careers.

“I don't believe father will want to remain in Texas after this force-out,” he mused, as he tossed about on his couch. “We may as well make a clean break of it, and go to one of the western states or — or — Africa! Yes, why not?” And then he thought again of his Cousin Will's letter, and began to speculate upon life on a cattle or ostrich farm in the Transvaal or some other district of South Africa, and of the possibilities of the gold and diamond industries of that far-away country. Like everything that is far away, it looked more

alluring than those things which are close at hand.

By sunrise Dave was again in the saddle and speeding home with a heart that was lighter than it had been since his father had told him how they were running behind in their accounts. Arriving at the ranch utterly worn out and as hungry as a wolf, he would neither rest nor eat until he had told his parent of what had happened and of the conversation he had overheard.

Mr. Nelson was deeply interested, and smiled even as had Dave. "It was a lucky happening," he said. "Now we know pretty much how matters stand."

It was decided, after much talking, that Mr. Nelson should leave for Gainesville that very night, stopping at Wichita Falls for any message which might be awaiting him from Chicago. "I want to send the Anchor people another message," he said. "It's rather costly talking over the wires, but it may pay a hundred times over in the end." He left at sundown, stating that it was impossible to say when he would be back, but not before several days, or possibly a week.

After this three days slipped by quietly enough at the ranch. Without his parent Dave felt some-

what lonely, but there were many matters to attend to, and he went about his work as though nothing out of the ordinary was in the wind. As yet he had not answered the letter from South Africa, and now he concluded to leave this until matters concerning the ranch were settled.

“How is dis, am yo’ fadder gwine to sell out?” asked Guffy, one day.

“That will depend,” replied the boy. “Both Darnell and another company want to buy him out.”

“If yo’ fadder gibs up the ranch den I’ll go too. I don’t want to stay under no strange boss.”

“Have you any other place in view, Guffy?” asked Dave, who took considerable interest in the colored cook, who had been with the Nelsons for several years.

“I’se dun got an offer from a gen’men in Virginia, sah. I used to wuk fo’ his fadder, durin’ de wah. He wants me back on de plantation—offers me putty good wages, too.”

“Then you had better accept his offer, if we vacate,” said Dave, and Guffy concluded that this was what he would do.

There was a fairly good atlas among the scanty stock of books of which the ranch home boasted,

and one evening Dave brought this out and turned to the map of South Africa, to find out just where his Uncle Ralph and family were located. Like many another of even older growth, he had a dim knowledge that the Transvaal, or South African Republic, lay somewhere to the northeast of Cape Town, and was a country inhabited by Dutch Boers and natives whom the whites had warred into submission, and this was about all he did know, outside of what his Cousin Will had written to him.

His atlas showed him that the Transvaal (which name was first used to designate the country over the Vaal, or Yellow, River) is located about four hundred miles from the southern coast of Africa, but more than twice that distance from Cape Town, the first port of importance in that section of the globe. Its southern boundary is, as already intimated, the Vaal River, which separates it from the Orange Free State. To the southeast is Natal and Zululand, and to the east Portuguese South Africa, all forming a narrow strip of land between the Transvaal and several fairly good seaports on the Indian Ocean. On the north the Limpopo River flows between the republic and Rhodesia,

and to the westward lies the semi-civilized country called Bechuanaland, a British protectorate.

Roughly speaking, the South African Republic contains about 114,500 square miles of territory. It is a vast table-land, with high mountains to the southeastward and sloping gradually toward the north. The table-land is a mile above sea level, and contains some mountain ranges of its own and many beautiful streams. A few of the mountain peaks rear themselves 10,000 feet above sea level, and are covered with snow for several months every year.

Of the population of the Transvaal it would be hard to speak, for, as Will Nelson had written, there had been a boom in the gold fields, and thousands of fortune seekers were coming and going all the time. The blacks, — Kafirs and Hottentots, with some Zulus and others, — were supposed to number 700,000. The whites could be put down as numbering about 100,000 souls, the Uitlander, that is, the foreigners, outnumbering the native Boers two to one. But these figures were changing every day, and are likely to change for some years to come.

“It’s not such a very large country after all,”

mused Dave, as he closed the book. "About half as large as this state, and contains about one-third as many inhabitants. But the atlas says it is rich in gold, silver, precious stones, and farming lands, and that counts for a good deal. I'd like to go there first-rate—at least for a year or two. Perhaps a fellow wouldn't want to stay there all his life."

Somehow, Dave could not get South Africa out of his head, since receiving that letter from his cousin, and with a longing to see that country came also a longing to meet his relatives. "I wonder how Uncle Ralph looks," he mused. "And Aunt Isabel, and Will, and Alice. What's the use of having such relatives if you can never see them? I declare, I'm going to ask father to go, so there!" And he shook his head with a determination that meant a good deal.

Perhaps, if Dave had had brothers and sisters, he might have felt differently. But he had never had either, and now of a sudden he felt lonely for the want of some relative other than his father, and he made up his mind that Cousin Will and Cousin Alice would "just fill the bill," as he expressed it. Surely, though he was American and

they were English, blood was a good deal thicker than water.

Sunday came and went, and still Mr. Nelson remained away, and now Dave began to grow restless. Evidently the business of selling the ranch had not moved along as rapidly as expected. Whether this was a good sign or not the youth could not determine.

It was late Monday evening, and Guffy had already retired to his bed in the kitchen loft, when a wild cry from one of the cattle sheds made Dave leap to his feet and dash aside the newspaper he had been perusing. The cry was that of a man, and it was followed by a crash as of splintering woodwork and a pistol-shot.

“My gracious, what’s that?” burst from the boy’s lips. “That brown horse must be kicking Pepper to death! Can the beast have him cornered, and is he firing on him? I told him that nag was the most vicious in the whole state of Texas!” And thus speaking, Dave caught up a heavy rawhide whip, threw open the door, and bounded out into the darkness in the direction from whence the sounds had proceeded.

“Drop that gun, you Dutch rascal!” came to

his ears, in Pepper's voice, and then came the noise of a scuffle, followed by another shot, and a groan of agony.

"Pepper, what's up?" cried the youth. "Where are you?"

"Down here, in the new shed," came from the cow puncher. "Help me make this Dutchman a prisoner."

"Los me go!" came in an answering howl. "Los me go, or I vos fire again!"

"What's up thar?" came from the rear portion of the ranch, and now another hand came up on the run,—a tall, brawny man of forty, armed with a knife and a whip.

"It's Dutch Henry," groaned Pepper. "I col-lared him trying to put something in the feed—poison most likely. He has wounded me in the shoulder with his gun."

"Dutch Henry, eh?" came from the big man, whose name was Carwell. "I thought I saw him a-sneakin' around hyer about sundown. He had better —"

"There he goes!" interrupted Dave, as the Dutchman leaped from the shed and brushed past him. He let out with the rawhide, and the end

of the lash nipped Kneip's right ear. Then he started after the fleeing one, and Carwell came behind him, leaving Pepper to care for his wounded shoulder.

The night was dark, and it was with difficulty that the boy and the ranch hand kept Hendrik Kneip in sight. The rascal had not calculated upon being discovered at his nefarious work, and now he felt that if captured, those whom he had plotted against would show him no mercy.

"He's a-makin' fer the mesquite brush," said Carwell, after several minutes' running. "Like ez not he's got his bronco over thar."

"I think we would be justified in firing on him," replied Dave. "But I haven't any gun with me."

"No more have I, Dave. Maybe I kin bluff him though."

Carwell raised his voice, which was loud enough to be heard for quarter of a mile. "Stop whar ye air, or I'll fire at ye!" he cried. "Stop, or ye air a dead man!"

The threat, however, produced no effect, further than to make Dutch Henry crouch down lower than ever, as he loped over the ground. Soon he gained a clump of trees, behind which

he had tethered his bronco. A slash of his knife cut the halter, and leaping into the saddle, he made off on a wild run.

The fact that Pepper had been shot at and wounded made the affair a serious one, and all belonging to the ranch felt that they must catch the guilty one if possible. Dave and Carwell ran to the barn, and were soon in the saddle, followed by two other men. Pepper, whose wound was an ugly one, was left behind in Guffy's care, the latter binding up the shoulder with as much skill as he had used in binding up many such wounds for Confederate soldiers during the great Civil War.

But the chase, although it lasted all night and well into the morning, availed nothing. The trail was lost on one of the creeks flowing into the Red River, and could not be picked up again. A call at the house where Dutch Henry boarded convinced them that he had not been there; and at nine o'clock the party started back home. It may be as well to add here that Kneip, alarmed over the fact that he had shot Pepper, and not knowing how serious the wound might prove, left the state of Texas altogether, and it was a long time before Dave met the man again.

CHAPTER VII

LEAVING THE RANCH

“YES, Dave, the ranch is sold ; and the cash is safe in the bank at Fort Worth. We have just two weeks in which to pack our trunks and vacate.”

Mr. Nelson had come in on Tuesday afternoon, much fatigued by the several long journeys he had taken, but evidently in a happy frame of mind. From Wichita Falls he had gone to Gainesville and thence to the city of Fort Worth, and he had returned home by way of Weatherford, Graham, and Seymour, a distance of one hundred and thirty-five miles, on horseback.

“Sold? And who bought it, father, and what was the price?” demanded the son, eagerly.

“The Anchor Beef Company bought the whole thing, house, ranges, and all the cattle, both on the range and coming in. They are buying up everything they can around here, and indications are that they are going to make it tremendously warm for the Darnell Combination.”

“And the price? I hope you cleared yourself.”

“That’s the best part of the transaction, Dave. When I got to Wichita Falls I found a telegram there stating that I could meet a representative of the Anchor Company at Gainesville. So I went right on, and there, at the hotel, I met the representative, and also Alvin Darnell and, later on, Josiah Snugg. I didn’t let on that I knew what was up—merely said that I would sell out to the highest bidder. Darnell was fairly wild to get the ranch. He ran the price up to thirteen thousand dollars, and then sent Snugg around to bid it up to twenty thousand. But the Anchor Company was game, and gave me exactly five minutes in which to close with their final offer of twenty-five thousand dollars. I closed on the spot, and got a certified check for eighteen thousand and a common check for the balance before I left the room.”

“Oh, father!” Dave’s face broke out into a happy smile. “That was splendid! better than I had dreamed for!”

“Yes, Dave, you don’t know what a weight I have off my shoulders. But that is not all. After I had sold out to the Anchor Company Darnell

came around again, and made a personal offer of twenty-two thousand. 'I've sold out for twenty-five thousand,' said I, and you ought to have seen his jaw drop. 'You've played me false!' he roared, and became as mad as a March hare. He cut up so loudly that the hotel keeper came up to quiet him. I left him and the Anchor Company man to fight it out between themselves, while I saw to it that the checks were all right. The next day the Anchor man and myself arranged about turning over the property, and both of us went to Fort Worth to complete some details. He tells me that the Anchor Company are crowding the Combination out, right and left," concluded Mr. Nelson.

He had much more to tell, matters of minor importance, and went over these while eating the elaborate repast Guffy had served. He was much interested in the story Dave had to tell about Dutch Henry.

"I don't believe he will come back," he said. "From a few words Darnell let fall I think the Combination is almost as tired of the Dutchman as we are."

"If he comes back, Pepper says he will have the sheriff arrest him."

“Then you may be certain he won’t show himself. He knows his character won’t bear investigating.”

The next few days were busy ones for father and son. Martin Nelson had sold his property, subject to a certain inventory, and now he had to see to it that everything on the schedule was there. Dave helped him, and so did all of the others connected with the ranch.

The representative of the Anchor Beef Company had told Mr. Nelson that he would put an old cattle man from Colorado on the place. This man was married and would bring his wife and two daughters with him, so that Guffy would not be needed in the kitchen. But the outdoor hands could remain, if they desired, at the same wages as they had been getting.

“I’m glad it is fixed that way,” said Dave. “Guffy doesn’t care to stay, but I know none of the others would like to lose their situations.”

Now they were to leave the ranch, the question was, Where should they go? As was his usual habit, Dave lost no time in broaching what was in his mind.

“Let us go to South Africa,” said he.

“South Africa!” ejaculated Mr. Nelson, and then he smiled. “You are thinking of your Uncle Ralph and Cousin Will.”

“Yes, and I’m thinking of more. I’ve been studying up about that country, as best I could, and I’m thinking it might pay us to try our luck out there, at least for a year or two.”

The father shook his head doubtfully. “I’m afraid we are not cut out for a life in that hot climate, Dave,” he ventured.

“It’s not so hot on the upper plateaus. If Uncle Ralph and his family can stand it, I don’t see why we couldn’t. We might do very well on an ostrich farm, or at the mines. I’d like to try it, anyway, I really would,” went on Dave, wistfully.

Mr. Nelson gazed out of the window very thoughtfully for several minutes before answering. “Twenty-five thousand dollars is about five thousand pounds in English money,” he said slowly. “We might take a thousand pounds and try our luck, and then, if the trip amounted to nothing, we would still have twenty thousand dollars left.”

“And of course you would like to see Uncle Ralph,” put in Dave, by way of a clincher.

“Yes, I must confess I would like to see my

brother very much, and also his family, who are all strangers to us."

"Then say you'll go, father; and I'll write to Cousin Will that we are coming, and get Uncle Ralph to send us the particulars of how to get there."

Mr. Nelson laughed outright. "What a boy you are, Dave! Everything must go with a rush, if it's to go at all. No, you needn't write just yet," — and then, as he saw his son's face fall, he added, "but I'll think it over, and I'll let you know what I'm willing to do before very long."

During the middle of the second week, Mr. Harleigh, the man who was to take charge for the Anchor Company, put in an appearance, and began to set the ranch home to rights for his family, who arrived two days later. Everything on the place was inspected and found as Martin Nelson had represented, and the new master signed a paper to that effect; and then the Nelsons were told that they could leave as soon as it suited their convenience. At the same time Guffy was paid off, and after a hearty good-by all around, the negro left, in company with Pepper, who took him and his effects as far as the railroad station.

As Martin Nelson had deposited his money in the bank at Fort Worth, he decided, for the time being, to put up in that thriving city, prior to making his next definite move. Father and son left the ranch on the next Monday, the new master of the place seeing them off himself and wishing them the best of luck. "Remember, if you ever come this way again, the latch-string always hangs on the outside for you," he said. All the men came up to say good-by, and it was really an affecting scene, although neither Mr. Nelson nor Dave allowed his emotions to get the better of him. At the railroad station they left the mustang and the coal-black mare with Mr. Harleigh; and then the last tie seemed broken.

"Good-by, Lightning," whispered Dave. "You've been a good fellow and carried me many a mile in safety, and I'll never get a better. I trust with all my heart your next master proves a kind one;" and then he leaped on board of the incoming train, that his father might not see the tears that would come up in his eyes. But Mr. Nelson, through thinking of the black mare, was in no condition to see anything, and after he dropped into the seat beside Dave he did not speak until he had cleared

his throat several times and blew his nose in a most suspicious manner. Even dumb animals sometimes fill large places in the human heart.

The journey to Fort Worth took the remainder of the day, and when they reached the city they found it dark and the main streets ablaze with electric lights. They made their way to the very hotel at which Mr. Nelson had closed his fortunate deal for the ranch, and here the father hired connecting rooms for himself and his son.

Dave felt, as he himself expressed it, "like a fellow out for a holiday." There was absolutely nothing to do but to walk around and see the sights, or read the newspapers. But one day he chanced into the circulating library and ran across several recent works on South Africa, and after looking them over with keen interest, drew his father's attention to the volumes. One book related, in a semi-amusing fashion, a trip of a thousand miles through the Transvaal by wagon; another was a critical study of the mines and mining possibilities, and a third told of the Boers and the negroes, and of the ostrich and other industries.

Father and son spent two days at the library, digesting the books. Dave said but little, feeling

certain that the volumes would have their full effect upon his parent. After returning the third book to the librarian, Mr. Nelson turned slowly to his son.

“Certainly very interesting reading, Dave—about as interesting as anything I ever ran across.”

“And will you go, father?” queried the boy, anxiously. “We might rather go than stay here doing nothing.”

“Do you really wish to go so much?”

“I do. The more I think of it, the more anxious I am to start right away.”

Mr. Nelson smiled at the boyish enthusiasm, and laid his hand on his offspring's shoulder.

“Very well, Dave, you shall go, and that settles it, and I'll go with you.”

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

FOR the next few days Dave felt as though he were walking on air. He was to go to South Africa! What a tremendous trip that would be, and what strange sights were in store for him!

Now that it was settled that they should go, the youth was impatient to be off. But this was almost an impossibility, even if Mr. Nelson had been inclined to rush matters, which he was not. Arrangements for the passage to Cape Town, or some other South African port, had to be made, and very little could be learned in Fort Worth regarding the sailing of vessels.

“I will write to your Uncle Ralph and tell him of what we intend to do,” said the ex-ranch owner. “And I will ask him for advice. He may be able to send us some information which will save us both trouble and expense.”

“Then you will wait until you hear from him?” replied Dave, half disappointedly.

“Weren’t you going to wait?” asked his father, in surprise.

“I suppose so—but it will take so long for a letter to go and the answer to come back,—two months, at least. We might be settled in Africa by that time.”

“Hardly,” laughed Mr. Nelson. “The world doesn’t move so quickly,—especially when you get away from the United States. The Boers, who govern the Transvaal, are as slow as they are strong and sturdy. When we get out there, I am afraid that you will have to forget what impatience means, at least when you are dealing with the Dutch.”

“But we might write, and then follow the letter,” pleaded Dave. “Uncle Ralph could address his reply to us at Cape Town—if we decided to go to that port.”

“No, I will wait and see what he has to say,—and in the meantime write to New Orleans, Charleston, and New York, and find out what I can about the ships sailing to Cape Town. I know we can go from New York, but there is no need of our going away up there if we can go from some Southern port,” concluded Mr. Nelson.

He wrote to his brother that afternoon — a letter of twelve closely written pages, telling of how affairs had turned and of what he had in mind to do, and asking his brother's honest opinion on the move. Dave also wrote a letter to his Cousin Will, telling how delighted he was over the prospect, and stating that he felt sure they would have some splendid times together. "Outside of settling down to work and making money," he wrote, "I want to do a little hunting. I know you have some splendid game out there, and more than once I've hit a bird on the wing at a distance of several hundred feet. Once I brought down a fox at three hundred yards, and he was running at full speed across the trail. He was carrying off a spring chicken, after having killed nine others in the chicken-house."

The letters mailed, Mr. Nelson sent to the cities he had mentioned for information of the vessels listed to sail for Cape Town, he deciding that that was the best port to make. It was not many days before replies came back, enclosing not only sailing lists, but also many circulars, describing the vessels, the journey, and likewise South African opportunities.

"I reckon we'll have to take the opportunities

with a grain of salt," was Mr. Nelson's comment, as he and Dave perused the reading matter. "The steamship companies will sometimes say a good deal for the sake of getting a man to give up his passage money."

"But Africa must be a wonderfully fertile country, father."

"It would be, that is, the southern portion of it, if it were not for one drawback, — the drouth. Rain is very uncertain during some parts of the year, and then nearly everything is burnt up by the steady, scorching sun. You know how much we suffered for rain on the range at times."

It was found that passage for Cape Town could be secured direct from New York, although the service was not a frequent one. If a person wished to go "between times," as Dave expressed it, he had to go by way of Liverpool or some other English port. The cost of the passage varied from one hundred and fifty to six hundred dollars, according to the cabin or other accommodations.

It was also learned that a steamer would sail from Charleston in two weeks, and another was calculated to leave in five weeks. From New Orleans there would be a steamer in ten days, and two steamers

and several sailing vessels within the next three months. The fares from these points in the South were all less than those from New York.

“If we go, we may as well go from New Orleans,” said Mr. Nelson. “That is the nearest port, and we will save both on railroad fares and on the ocean trip, and perhaps a little on time, too,” and so the first step in the journey was settled.

As the days and weeks sped by, Dave busied himself in making out a list of the things which it would be necessary to take along, and in gathering all the information he could about South Africa. Little, however, was to be learned outside of the books which the public library afforded. After diligent inquiry he managed to find one man, a rather “tough” German-American, who had spent two years in Cape Town and Natal. On being questioned this individual scowled and shook his head dubiously.

“Don’t you go,” he cried. “It ain’t half as good as right here. Dem Boers is all t’ieves, and dem Englishmans is doing jest as da please. An American ain’t got no chance at all, *nein*, not von chance!” He continued to rail at the people, the country, the climate, everything. Dave was somewhat disheartened, but later on learned that the German-American had

been arrested in Natal as an ox thief, and was a man who was not to be believed under any circumstances.

At last came the time when letters might be expected from the Transvaal, and then Dave began to watch for the mail as a hunter watches for a deer at a salt lick. Yet a week went by with nothing coming in but business communications for his father. "I don't believe they'll write at all," sighed the boy. "I reckon they don't care to have us come out."

But the letters came at last, and Dave snatched them from the hotel clerk with a wild hurrah and sought out his father in a hurry. "At last!" he cried, and tore open that addressed to himself.

A few glances at the closely written pages made his heart bound with enthusiasm. Cousin Will was delighted that he was coming out, he was sure that they would have the best of times together, and that Dave and his father could make as much money as anybody, no matter if they went into mining, or cattle and ostrich farming. As to hunting, Will had been contemplating a trip for a long time, but now he would defer the pleasure until he could have his American cousin for company. Wild beasts had been pretty thoroughly cleaned out of the Transvaal, but there were still remote portions where could be

found elands, gemsboks, hartebeests, hyenas, and other large animals, not to speak of the wild ostriches and the innumerable small birds. "And we may even come across a lion," added Will, "although father says if I do I had better come home and send some old hunter after his majesty. Strange as it may seem to you, I have never yet seen a lion running wild, nor an elephant, nor leopard, although some folks think the whole of Africa is alive with these beasts. The most troublesome things we have here are the insects, and the tsetse-fly, which sometimes stings horses to death."

The letter from Will's father was in a more sober strain, but equally sanguine. "If you were from the city and used only to city ways, I would not advise you to come out," wrote Mr. Ralph Nelson. "But you have roughed it more or less on your ranch I feel certain, and so both of you will be hardened to stand the knocks of a country which is still in the process of development. Your having considerable capital will also help a good bit, as it will enable you to look around thoroughly before settling down. When I came out I had very little money,—about thirty-five pounds all told,—and I had to buckle down to work at whatever I could find, and do my

looking around later on. As to what you go into after getting here will depend altogether on your individual taste, for some farming people (or ranch people, as you would perhaps call them) do not like mining at all. The majority of the Boers are of that order, and many of them would rather eke out a scanty living of mealies and ox-meat than dig the earth, or blast rock, for precious stones or minerals. Not that I discount farming, for I believe there is no surer way to get rich than by raising cattle or ostriches down here, especially now, with the price of ostrich feathers and fresh meat rising steadily.”

There was a good deal more to the letter concerning the accommodations to be found in Cape Town and elsewhere, and about the route from the seaport to Johannesburg and Pretoria. The writer concluded by stating that he expected to make a visit to the Cape shortly, and if the matter could be arranged, he would meet his brother and nephew there upon their arrival.

Although he did not say so, the letter relieved Martin Nelson a good deal. It contained good, sober advice, from a brother ten years older than himself, and from one who was in a position to know just what he was talking about.

There remained now nothing to do but to engage passage for Cape Town, and two days after receiving the letters, Mr. Nelson and Dave left Fort Worth and took the train for New Orleans. Here, a visit to the offices of several transportation companies brought to light the fact that the steamer *Golden Eagle* would sail for Cape Town direct, and other African ports, inside of thirty-six hours.

“That just suits us!” cried Dave. “Let us secure passage by all means.”

As there seemed to be no good reason for delaying, Mr. Nelson followed his son’s advice, and when they left the office of the steamship company they were booked for the trip, assigned to double stateroom number twelve, and the passage money had been paid over. Then they hunted out the levee at which the *Golden Eagle* was loading, and picking their course among thousands of bales of cotton and other merchandise, made their way to the side of the noble ship which was to carry them so many miles across the Atlantic Ocean. Soon they were on board, their stateroom had been pointed out to them, and then Mr. Nelson despatched a drayman for their luggage.

CHAPTER IX

SOMETHING ABOUT THE TRANSVAAL AND ITS PEOPLE

“ OFF at last ! ”

It was Dave who uttered the words, as he hung over the side rail of the *Golden Eagle*, gazing at the vast expanse of shipping unfolded before him. They had cast off quarter of an hour before, and were slowly making their way down the lower Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. The day was clear and bright, and it must be confessed that, though they were leaving the land which had been their home for so many years, father and son felt in the best of spirits. Soon the city was left behind, and a panoramic view of levees, marshlands, and watercourses was stretched out for miles around them, dotted here and there with tiny islands, covered with sea-shells and a species of oak trees. By nightfall the last of the marshlands were left behind, and they stood out boldly into the Gulf,

heading for Key West near the lower coast of Florida.

The prospect of a long ocean voyage filled the youth with delight. Although he had travelled considerably, it had been altogether on land or on the rivers. The voyage on the Atlantic, therefore, promised much in the way of a novelty. The noble ship itself looked as if it were well worth inspection, but just now Dave was too busy viewing the scene from the deck to pay attention to much else.

“Well, my lad, we have a long trip before us,” said a voice at his elbow, and turning, Dave beheld a middle-aged man of rather large build, who had addressed him. The man had a round, bronzed face, bushy black hair and beard, and a pair of black, penetrating eyes. He was dressed in a heavy, loose-fitting suit of gray, and wore a small, plaid cap pulled well down in front.

“Yes, I suppose the trip will be rather long,” answered Dave, as he studied the dark face beside him for a moment; “but I shan’t mind that — unless I get seasick.” And he smiled as if he thought that would not be likely.

“Ever been across the ocean?” went on the man.

“No, sir; this is my first trip away from the States.”

“It’s a trip well worth the taking, my boy,— something everybody ought to take, if he wants to see the world. This will make my sixth trip across the Atlantic.”

“You ought to be used to it by this time, sir.”

“I must confess the novelty is somewhat worn off. But I enjoy it, nevertheless. You see, I travel a good deal. I’ve been West and I’ve been South, and once I went around the world. That last is a trip I shall never forget, for while in China I was mistaken for a foreign spy, and I came pretty close to being executed.”

“You must have a story worth telling,” said Dave, who could not help but like the stranger, in spite of those penetrating eyes, which seemed to look him through and through. “May I ask if you know anything of South Africa? You see my father and I are going there to try our fortunes. I have an uncle there already, up at Johannesburg, in the mines.”

“A booming place—and it would boom more if the Dutch would allow the foreigners to go ahead, and wouldn’t tax the dynamite quite so high. Yes, I know South Africa pretty well,—that is, Cape Town, Natal, the Orange Free State, the Transvaal,

and Matabeleland, — and I have been up the Congo, too, although not very far. But perhaps I had better introduce myself. My name is Barton, Captain Daniel Barton, and I am in the employ of the Morse Museum Supply Company. We make a specialty of supplying museums with stuffed animals and the like, and I am in the business of supplying the skins to stuff.”

“Then you are a hunter!” cried Dave. “I am glad to know you. I like hunting, although I’ve never shot anything more dangerous than a fox or a wolf.” He told his name and where he was from. “I wrote to my cousin that I hoped to do some hunting out there.”

“You won’t find much game left south of the Limpopo, or Crocodile, River. The Boers have cleaned out almost everything — sometimes shooting the best of the animals just for the fun of it.”

“Perhaps they were afraid the animals would hurt something on the farms.”

“A gemsbok or an eland won’t bother you if you don’t bother him, and neither will lots of other animals, for the matter of that. No, the animals have been killed off just as the buffaloes were in the Western states, merely for the fun of it, in nine

instances out of ten. In plenty of cases I have seen a splendid antelope knocked over and then left where he fell, for the vultures to devour. Some of the old-time hunters thought they could kill as much as they pleased and the supply would never run out," continued Captain Daniel Barton, with a savage little jerk of his head. He was a hunter of the right sort, and never believed in bringing down game, large or small, unless it was wanted.

Mr. Nelson now came up from below, where he had been arranging the stateroom, and was introduced to Captain Barton. The captain was glad to learn that they were used to ranch and outdoor life, and said so.

"It doesn't suit me at all to see an out-and-out city chap going to a place like South Africa," he said. "That is, unless he intends to stick right in Cape Town or some other big city. That country needs good, strong men, but dandies are out of place there. Why, on my last trip out, from London, we had two regular dudes on board, one from London and the other from New York. Those fellows spent almost all of their time in talking about — what? The prospects of getting work and that? Not a bit of it! They discussed the styles, and wondered if

their suits would be in the regular Cape Town fashion, or whether they would have to order something new from the tailors! I tell you they made me weary in the bones, as the saying is. After they got to Cape Town and looked around, they were the most disgusted creatures you ever saw, and when I left for the interior they were trying to scrape up money enough with which to get back home."

Mr. Nelson and Dave laughed heartily. "I know the breed," was the ex-ranch owner's comment. "I had a Boston dude on my ranch once. You remember him, Dave, Mortimer LeClair. His folks wanted me to knock some common sense into him, but I couldn't do it, and when Mortimer went home he said he thought outdoor life was 'just too horribly awful for anything!' I believe he is in some department dry-goods store now, measuring off cotton goods and earning about five dollars per week at it, — and the position is a better one than he deserves."

"The trouble with so many folks who go into a comparatively speaking new country," said Captain Barton, reflectively, "is that they are not willing to put up with the hardships which stare them in the face, and some are not even willing to put up with

the changed condition of affairs. On my last trip to South Africa I had with me a bright, whole-souled fellow from Chicago. He wanted to go into ostrich farming, and he had an idea that all he had to do was to hunt down a lot of wild ostriches, corral them, as you call it, and then sit down and let them breed and bring him in a fortune. When he found out that ostrich farming took as much work as any other kind of farming, he was utterly disgusted, and when he learned further that farm life in Africa was altogether different from farm life in Illinois — that neighbors didn't visit as they do here, nor have corn-husking bees and harvest-time frolics, — that the Boers are too sober, and too deadly in earnest about work for anything of that sort, — he said he couldn't stand it another day, and sold out for what he could get and came back home."

"I don't expect to find life out there a frolic," returned Dave, quickly. "I expect to work just as hard there as I did on the ranch — and perhaps harder, at least for a while. But I did look for some fun hunting, during the off time of the year."

"And you will have sport, lad, and plenty of it. But what do you think of going into out there?"

"That will depend largely upon circumstances,"

said Mr. Nelson, and then mentioned the particulars of what his brother had written to him.

“Of course the mines are where the big fortunes are located,” went on the captain. “But they are generally large affairs, owned by English syndicates and leased from the Boer government.”

“Do the Dutch run any of them?” asked Dave, with much interest.

“Very few, and those are not the ones which pay the best. The Dutch Boers are farmers — in fact the word ‘boer’ means a farmer — and they never took any interest in mining until after the English and other foreigners — Uitlanders they call them — came in and showed up the wealth lying under the earth and the mountains. For that reason you will find most of the large cities populated almost entirely by the Uitlander, while to find the Boer you will have to go out on the farms.”

“But the foreigners hold some of the farming lands.”

“Oh, yes, the Germans, Scotch, and a few Americans, — but the Orange Free State and the Transvaal are essentially a Dutch farming territory.”

“I’ve read several books on travel in the Transvaal, but I don’t remember exactly how the state

was established," said Dave, as he and the others betook themselves to comfortable seats on the steamer's deck.

"The first settlement in South Africa was by the Dutch, who established a station at Cape Town, in 1652, where ships might stop on their way from Holland to India. This garrison, as it may be termed, was a small affair and had constant fights with the natives, Hottentots and Bushmen, and also fights with the slaves, which were brought down from the coast of Guinea."

"And what of the English?"

"They first came to the colony in 1795, being authorized to do so by the Prince of Orange, after whom the Orange Free State is named. The prince was the last stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, and was then a fugitive in England. Eleven years later the English became the rulers in the struggling colony, and five years after that both the Dutch and the English went through a terrible war with the Kafirs, a savage body of people, of several tribes, who came down from nobody knows exactly where out of the Dark Continent, to slay all of the white invaders. At first victory was on the side of the blacks, but soon the whites

rallied and the Kafirs were driven back with the loss of thousands killed.

“This war was hardly over when the Dutch and the English got into another quarrel, in 1815, and a number of the former were slain. As I understand it, the Dutch were willing to allow the English to control, but did not wish their local customs interfered with. They resented the use of English in place of Dutch in the courts, and they would not tolerate any interference with their ways of treating the blacks, and especially their slaves. As years went by these difficulties grew worse and worse, both in the Cape Colony and in Natal,—which did not become a separate colony until 1856,—and the climax was reached in 1834, when the slaves were freed.”

“Just as that brought on the war in our states,” put in Dave.

“Exactly, but there was a difference. On the one hand, the Dutch had fought the blacks again and again, and felt that they must keep them slaves if they wished to control them. On the other hand, the British government said it would defend its citizens against the blacks, and voted three million pounds — fifteen million dollars — with which to

pay the Dutch for the loss of their colored help. Slavery had to go—that was all there was to it.”

“As it will have to go all over the world, sooner or later,” remarked Mr. Nelson, gravely.

“The Dutch were angry, and their anger was increased because the money to pay for the slaves was long in coming, and money orders were payable in London instead of Cape Town. Many sold out their claims for a song, and then they began to hold indignation meetings and tried to resolve what was best to be done. They felt that to fight the English would be suicidal, and so with real Dutch courage—not the kind got out of a black bottle—they organized themselves into large emigrating bodies, and between 1834 and 1836 fully ten thousand of them trekked, with wives and children, cattle, wagons, and scanty household furniture, across Basutoland into the wilderness, where they founded the two South African republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.”

“I suppose that was something like some of our old time emigrants going west,” smiled Dave.

“I think it must have been worse, for the Dutch had two terrible enemies to contend with,—the blacks, especially the Zulus, who are fully as blood-

thirsty as any American Indians ever were, and the wild animals, who were so daring that they would frequently come up in the dark and snatch a man, woman, or child right out of the circle around the camp-fire. The history of that great trek reads like a romance, and the stories the old farmers and frontiersmen have to tell, about the battles with the blacks, the encounters with wild animals, and getting lost in the wildernesses or on the dry plains, where the cattle died off like flies for the want of water,—these stories would fill volumes.”

“And is that all of their history?” questioned Dave, as Captain Barton paused.

“Oh, no. After the Dutch had driven away the blacks and killed a large portion of the wild animals, they settled down, each head of a house on a large farm of his own, to raise cattle, sheep, or ostriches, as fancy might indicate. Many of them remained, however, ‘wanderers,’ moving with their families and their stock as our gypsies do, and it was not until 1864 that they formed themselves into a united republic. At first matters ran smoothly, but twelve years later, after the discovery of diamonds and gold had brought many Eng-

lish into the territory, there was an internal trouble because of the public treasury being found practically empty, and in the midst of this a war broke out on the northeast border with Sikukini, a powerful Kafir chief, while on the south, Cettiwayo, of Zulu fame, prepared to join the other blacks in a contest of extermination."

"And what was the outcome of that?" questioned Dave, as the captain paused again. "Excuse me, but I am tremendously interested in what you have to say."

The captain smiled. "I am glad to hear you are interested, for few care for the history of this far-off land. The result of Sikukini's outbreak was that the British annexed the territory, doing so in order to protect the Englishmen who had invested their capital there. The Dutch did not like this annexation, and in 1881 they rebelled. A great battle was fought at Majuba Hill, and the British were forced to retire, and then the Transvaal was once more declared free so far as internal affairs were concerned, but subject, in outside affairs, to the suzerainty of Great Britain."

CHAPTER X

LIFE ON THE "GOLDEN EAGLE"

FOR over a week the weather remained all that could be desired, and during that time the *Golden Eagle* made rapid headway in her long journey to the Cape of Good Hope. She was a broadly built steamship, of about eight thousand tons burden, carrying two masts, and was commanded by Captain Anderson Pettibone, a man who had sailed the ocean for nearly two score years. Her passenger list numbered between twenty-five and thirty, so the Nelsons did not lack for companionship, even though Dave declared to his father that Captain Barton was worth a dozen ordinary acquaintances.

"He's a splendid fellow," said the boy. "I fairly love to hear him tell about the country, and the strange people, and his hunting adventures."

"He has certainly seen a great deal of life," replied Mr. Nelson. "He says he has travelled since he was fourteen years old. It's a wonder he hasn't

written a book or two — most travellers and hunters do."

Key West and the southern coast of Florida had been left behind, and now the *Golden Eagle* was picking her way through the Old Bahama Channel, on the north coast of Cuba. But little could be seen of the shore line but a distant range of mountains, set in a blue haze, with here and there an outlying island, covered with palms. On the day following they passed Hayti and Dominica, and on the day after, Porto Rico, and then the ship stood out past the Little Antilles, straight into the Atlantic Ocean. Although it was the fall of the year, it was by no means cold.

"We are going to leave winter behind us for once," said Mr. Nelson. "From now on we'll have nothing but warm weather."

"That's right," put in Captain Barton. "In South Africa the seasons are turned right around, and Christmas falls in the summer time."

"But don't they have any cold weather at all?" queried Dave.

"They do away up in the mountains. In the valleys they sometimes have a misty rain which is rather penetrating, and at times there are violent

hailstorms which cool off the atmosphere for a short while."

"I imagine the heat is the greatest drawback," said Mr. Nelson.

"You are right, sir. The heat at times is terrible, and I have seen it so bad that to travel across the veldt in the daytime was out of the question. During such periods everybody knocks off from ten in the morning until three or four in the afternoon, and the Dutch farmers do little but drink coffee and sleep."

The Little Antilles left behind, the ship headed straight down the northeast coast of South America for Cape Saint Roque. Dave would have liked it better if they had remained in sight of land, but this would have been dangerous, on account of the many hidden reefs, and was not to be. Once they stood in near Cayenne, in French Guiana, to weather a sudden squall which came up. Yet very little could be seen in the driving rain, and Dave was glad enough to remain in the cabin. The squall cleared off as rapidly as it had come on, and soon they were standing out again as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

Dave had hoped he would not be seasick, but no

sooner was the coast of South America left behind than the *Golden Eagle* struck what Captain Pettibone declared was the "dirtiest streak o' weather" he had experienced in many a trip. The waves not only ran high but were particularly choppy, and more than once the deck was deluged both fore and aft. The passengers were kept in the cabin, and everything that had been loose was secured.

"This is—is awful!" murmured Dave, as his face grew strangely yellow. "Why, I can't stand on my feet at all, and my head spins around like a top!"

"I'm afraid you are going to be sick," said his father, kindly. "Perhaps you had better lie down."

"You don't think I am going to be seasick, do you?" groaned the boy, and then, with a shudder, he ran for the stateroom, and did not again show himself for the balance of the day. After that, he got what he called his "sea legs," and was bothered no more.

"You mustn't mind that," said Captain Barton, when he heard of the incident. "I get seasick every once in a while, and I consider myself as strong and healthy as most men. It's something the very best of us can't conquer at times."

“I want no more of it,” shuddered Dave. “For about two hours I felt as if I would give all I possessed, if only somebody would knock me in the head and end my misery.”

Captain Barton had had rather a droll experience of his own. He had been sitting in the cabin trying to read a book, when an unexpected lurch of the ship had lifted him from his chair, and sent him crashing, feet first, into some panelling of the wall opposite. This panelling separated the cabin from the steward's pantry, and the captain had gone through the thin boards with a mighty crash, smashing glasses innumerable, and scaring one of the steward's assistants into a veritable fit. The man had been flung to the floor, covered with bits of glassware, and had bounced up yelling that the ship was going to pieces, and for somebody to give him a life preserver and put him on a small boat, and it had taken two sailors to hold and quiet him. Fortunately for the captain, he had suffered nothing worse than a lame shoulder and a twisted ankle as the result of the remarkable episode.

“But after this I'll let reading alone, and hold on tight,” he remarked to the Nelsons, in telling of the happening. “I have no desire to play cannon ball again.”

During the storm it was next to impossible to cook any food, or to serve it properly, and nearly all the meals were hand-to-mouth affairs. But the passengers were rather a jolly set, and instead of grumbling, took matters good-naturedly.

"Neffter mind apout getting food ourselves, so long as ve ton't peen food for dem fishes," remarked one old German. "In dis kind of a storm ve can be t'ankful ve vos alife, hey?" and those who heard his words agreed with him.

But the foul weather could not last forever, and one morning the sun shone brightly, and before night the ocean had resumed its long, regular swells, and then all felt better. Dave came up on deck, and he and his father took a constitutional along with the animal hunter.

"That storm puts me in mind of one I experienced once in coming up the South American coast from lower Brazil," said Captain Barton. "The ship was a three-master, bound for New York. I had been down through South America collecting some wild animals and snakes, and we had eight cages full of tapirs, peccaries, ant-eaters, and other animals, and four boxes of serpents, besides several wild llamas and alpaca goats. When the storm came on, the

llamas and the goats started a rumpus, and we found that we were unable to control them. One old buck alpaca was particularly vicious, and what did he do but ram one of the serpent boxes with his horns, and break open the top. I saw him do it, but before I could get him off and repair the damage, out of the box comes a big snake, a regular ten-footer."

"Did he come for you?" queried Dave.

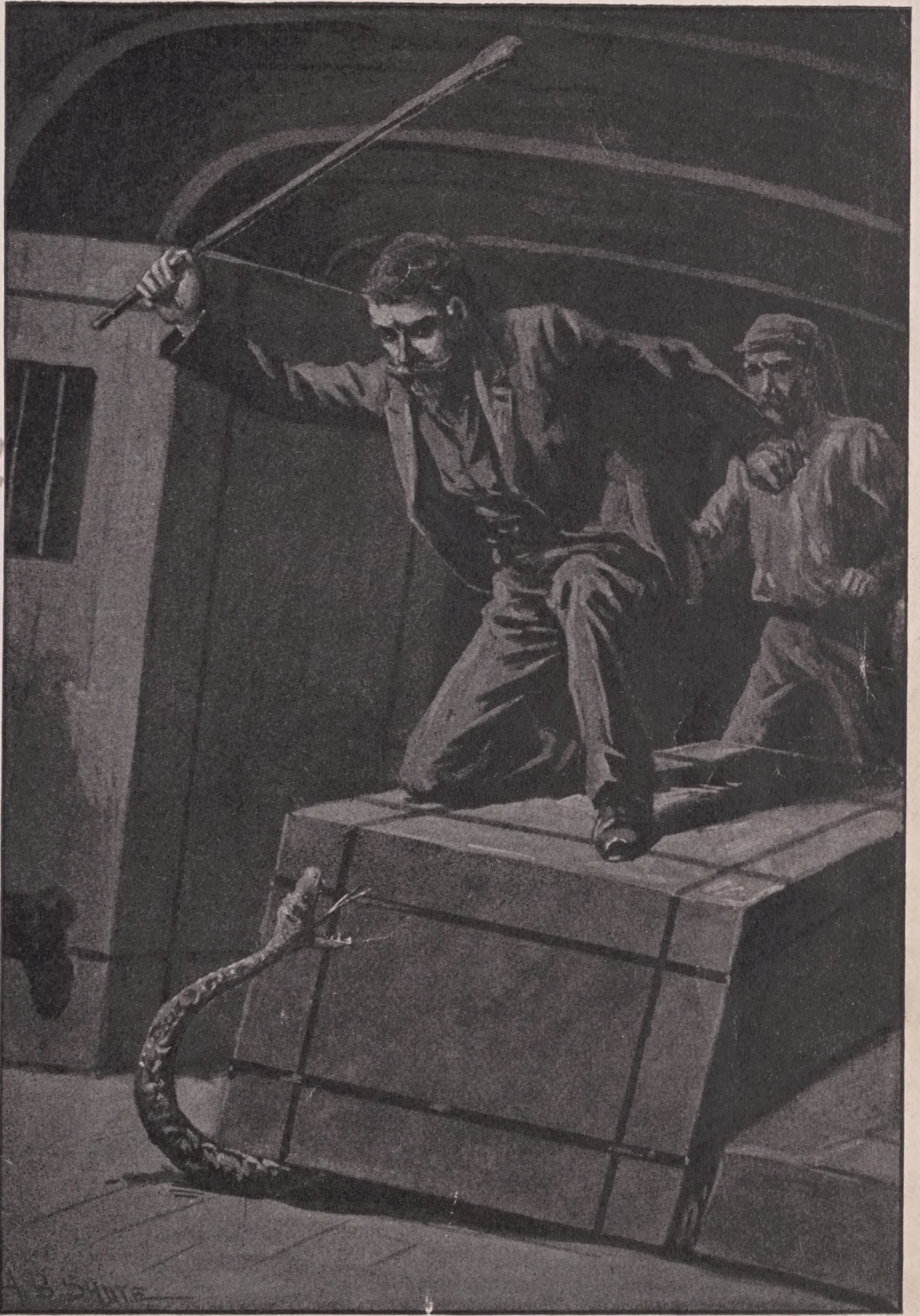
"No, — that is, not at first. His eyes were on the goat, and in a twinkling he had wound himself around the alpaca's body, and was squeezing in his ribs. The goat tried to tear him to pieces with his sharp teeth, but the serpent stung him in the face, and then both of them went down in a heap."

"A trying moment, truly," was Martin Nelson's comment.

"I guess it was, sir, — and one in which a chap had to do a tall amount of thinking right quickly. I saw the goat couldn't be saved, but I didn't want to lose the serpent, for he was of the speckle-headed variety, and valuable, and had cost me a lot of trouble to catch in the first place."

"And what did you do?" asked Dave.

"For the moment I didn't know what to do, but



ONCE HE DID GET HIS HEAD OUT. — Page 93

then my eyes fell upon a big, square trunk-box, which had contained straps and other articles for catching the wild beasts. Jumping for this, I dumped out the things which it still contained, and leaving the lid wide open, turned it over and slammed it right down over both serpent and goat."

"Good for you!" cried the youth. "That was a fine way to fix him."

"Yes, but let me tell you he wasn't fixed yet, by any means. As soon as he found himself thus boxed up, that serpent lost all interest in the alpaca, and though I stood on the box he did all he could to raise me up and get out again. Once he did get his head out, but I gave him a sharp crack with the stick I carried, and he was glad enough to draw back. Then I yelled for some of the others, and they helped me to keep the box down. But in the meantime the ship was rolling frightfully, and all of us were afraid we were going to the bottom."

"But you secured him at last, didn't you?" went on Dave.

"Yes, we got him at last, but it was only after one of the men had saturated a sponge with chloroform, and stuffed it under one edge of the box. That was too much for his snakeship, and soon he

was as limp as a rag, and then we placed him in a brand-new box."

"And what of the other snakes—did they get away?"

"One little fellow got away, and though we looked all around for him afterward, we couldn't spot him. I believe to this day that he got down in the hold, and the rats ate him up. The ship was alive with the biggest rats I ever set eyes on. That storm cost us the alpaca goat and two of my finest llamas, and for forty-eight hours we had such a circus on board that I shall never forget it as long as I live," concluded the old hunter.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARRIVAL AT CAPE TOWN

BY consulting an atlas which Captain Pettibone kindly loaned him, Dave learned that Cape Town is about in the same latitude as Buenos Ayres, South America. This being so, he asked the captain if they would sail down the South American coast and then across the Atlantic or take a straight course for Cape Town direct.

“We’ll do neither, lad,” answered the master of the *Golden Eagle*. “To take advantage of both trade winds and ocean currents we will sail in a southerly direction until we gain about latitude 25° and then we’ll follow the Antarctic current east by south, which will bring us straight into Cape Town harbor, weather permitting.”

“It’s a great thing to know all of the trade winds and ocean currents,” smiled the boy.

“So it is, lad, and let me tell you that even when you think you know the most on it there is something new turning up all the while. And

the half of it ain't in the books neither," added the captain with emphasis.

"I suppose you can sail by the stars — if you are put to it."

"To be sure. But a good compass is safer, — along with a chronometer and a quadrant or a sextant. Ye see, there ain't no guesswork about mathematics."

Dave had now been over the ship from end to end and struck up an acquaintanceship with nearly everybody on board. He was greatly interested in the marine machinery and spent some time inspecting the great compound engines which were driving the *Golden Eagle* ahead with such steady speed. But down in the engine room it was, as he said, "pepperly hot," and he could not stand it for more than half an hour at a time.

"I wouldn't want such a job as that," he said to Captain Barton. "It's enough to stew one alive."

"Then I don't believe you would want to settle down in equatorial Africa," was the old hunter's comment. "It's about as hot there at noonday as it is now in that engine room."

"I don't see how the natives live."

“Oh, they are used to it. But they don't work, I can tell you that. During the heat of the day you will find a whole native village as quiet as a graveyard, not even a child stirring. What they have to do is done either in the early morning or in the evening.”

As the steamer neared the coast of Africa the weather seemed to Dave to become hotter, and the three last nights on board were almost suffocating. The air was heavy, and the black smoke from the *Golden Eagle's* funnels let down a shower of smut which covered everything and caused the few ladies on board to quickly exchange their light-colored dresses for dark ones.

To pass the time the passengers devised several games and even got up some races. On the last Sunday on board quite an impressive religious service was held by a missionary who was going out to a station in Zululand, in which he urged all of his hearers to do what they could for the cause of Christianity in the new walks of life which awaited them. “Remember, it is by example that we can teach best of all,” he said. “Faith without works is a mockery, and among the heathen will do more harm than good. We must show them that Chris-

tianity means something which is real, not ideal." The sermon was followed by the singing of several hymns, including one which was Martin Nelson's favorite: —

"O, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!"

"It strikes the right spot, Dave," whispered the father to his son. "I hope that missionary is successful in all he tries to do." Before the voyage came to an end Mr. Nelson sought out the man of God and unknown to even Dave gave him fifty dollars for the benefit of the good work.

Now that it was known they might sight land at almost any hour, there was a good deal of bustle and excitement on board of the ship. That they were approaching the coast could be told by the flocks of birds which appeared and the floating brushwood. Without delay, Dave began to pack his valise. "I'm not going to be behind any of the others," he told himself.

At last, just at noon on a clear day, came the ever-welcome cry of "Land O!" a cry that brought every passenger to the deck. At first little could

be seen but a dark blue patch along the horizon to the eastward, but as they sailed on, the patch gradually took form until they made out Table Mountain, the Twelve Apostles, and other eminences behind Cape Town. Between these and the ship lay the sparkling waters of Table Bay, alive with shipping, as they could see as they came closer. Not far off they beheld the low-lying sandbank called Robben Island, the home of the South African leper settlement.

“How large a place is Cape Town?” asked Dave of Captain Barton, as the ship pursued its way up Table Bay to the great breakwater and the quays beyond.

“I reckon they have between sixty and seventy thousand people here, lad,” was the answer. “You see, with so many coming and going all the time, it is hard to tell exactly how many there are. Cape Town is the principal port for all South African trade, and it is from here that most of the expeditions to the interior start, although to be sure Port Elizabeth, Durban, and other ports are also looming up.”

“I see all sorts of nationalities represented,” went on the youth, as he surveyed the various flags which

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sprang into view. "There must be a great jumble of population."

"There is, but not more so than you will find right in New York, outside of some of the uncivilized blacks. But don't imagine all of the blacks down here are not civilized. Some of them are well educated and dress better than either you or I. Emancipation for these people has done wonders."

Before sunset Mr. Nelson and Dave found themselves on the quay, accompanied by Captain Barton and many of the other passengers. The old hunter had mentioned a comfortable hotel, located on Adderley Street, the main thoroughfare of the port, and it had been decided that all three should take rooms there for the present, until both men had time to "turn themselves," as Mr. Nelson termed it.

Cape carts, curious affairs on two wheels, sometimes drawn by four horses, were numerous, but the little party decided to walk the distance, which was but short. As they trudged along Dave gazed at the numerous shops and buildings, and his face fell a trifle.

"Not so very different from what we have at

home," he murmured. "Although some of the signs are regular jaw-breakers."

"I thought you understood some German," said the captain.

"So I do, but I am afraid there is a good deal of difference between that and South African Dutch."

"The Dutch here is more like Low German than anything else," put in Mr. Nelson. "It may come hard at first, but I believe we'll master enough of it to get along."

"A good many of the English out here never learn Dutch," said the captain. "They don't leave the large cities, and consequently they have no use for the language. But if you go away into the country districts Dutch is indispensable."

The hotel was soon gained, a substantial three-story stone affair located on a prominent corner, and rooms were readily engaged for the three. Then Mr. Nelson and the captain went off to see about their baggage, leaving Dave to put in the balance of the day as he saw fit.

As it was after dark the youth did not go far. Yet a stroll along the shop fronts proved interesting, and he saw, upon closer examination, that the

variety of goods sold here was somewhat different from that at home. The blacks also interested him, and at one spot he paused to watch several good-natured Hottentots who were chatting gayly in their own language, not one word of which could he understand. There were also Kafirs and Malays, with here and there a Zulu, all mixed in with English, Americans, Germans, Scotch, Irish, Portuguese, and nationalities which he could not name. He saw that Jews were by no means missing.

“I suppose the fortune-seekers come from everywhere,” he mused, as he retraced his steps to the hotel. “That is the way it was in California and in Australia and is in Alaska, and it will be so in every country where they make a rich discovery of diamonds or gold.”

When Dave reached the hotel he found that the baggage had come in, but neither his father nor Captain Barton had returned. For a while the boy stood on the steps waiting for them, and then he strolled into the reading room, where he soon became absorbed in a late issue of one of the local papers which reported some extra large finds of diamonds at the Kimberley mines.

Dave had been reading for perhaps quarter of

an hour, when, on glancing up, he thought he saw his father walking toward him. A second glance showed him, however, that it was not his parent, but a stranger. And yet the newcomer looked so much like his father that the resemblance was really wonderful.

“Can it be Uncle Ralph?” thought the boy, and then, as the eyes of the man and boy met, he leaped forward impulsively.

“Is this Mr. Ralph Nelson?” he asked eagerly.

“Yes,” was the quick answer, and a warm smile shone on the ruddy face of the newly arrived. “And I take it that you are my nephew David Nelson. Am I right?”

CHAPTER XII

THE NELSONS DISCUSS THE SITUATION

As I have said, Mr. Ralph Nelson resembled his brother greatly, excepting that he looked — as he really was — older. His hair was tinged with gray, but his eyes were as bright and his step as brisk as it had ever been. He shook hands warmly, and inside of five minutes uncle and nephew felt perfectly at home with each other.

“I fancied I would find you here,” he said. “I came down to Cape Town three days ago, but I had to take a run over to Port Elizabeth to see about some mining machinery that came in from Philadelphia.”

“And do you really buy mining machinery from us!” cried Dave. “I thought you Englishmen would use nothing but English machinery,” he added, half in jest.

Mr. Ralph Nelson stroked his chin and laughed. “You know better than that, Dave,” he said. “Time was when both Americans and Englishmen were very

much prejudiced in favor of their own country. But that time is passing away swiftly, and I think that now each great branch of the Anglo-Saxon race thinks a good deal of its brother across the ocean."

"You are right there, I am certain of it."

"And why shouldn't we buy machinery of you, seeing that you buy English and Scotch dress-goods, and Irish linen, and plenty of other things, from us? I believe there is enough for all of us, in the shape of work and money too, if it comes to that. But where is your father? Surely he came with you."

"Here comes father now," answered Dave, as he caught sight of his parent at the door of the reading room. Soon the brothers who had been separated for so many years were fairly in each other's arms, and a long and vigorous handshaking followed.

"It's the same Martin!" cried Ralph Nelson. "'Marty' I always called you. I would have known you in a minute. And you are well? David doesn't resemble you much."

"No, he takes after his mother," answered Martin Nelson, and a shadow passed over the ex-ranch owner's face as he thought of that lonely grave on the Brazos River. He had stipulated that that grave should not be disturbed so long as the body rested

there. Some day he would buy a family plot elsewhere. "Yes, I am very well," he went on. "And how is Isabel, and Will, and Alice?"

"Will and little Alice are very well. The wife, though, is rather delicate, as I wrote you, and I am afraid she is getting ready to have the fever." Ralph Nelson turned to his nephew. "Will wanted to come with me — he was almost crazy to come — to bring you up, but I thought it best for one of us to stay at home, in case something unusual turned up. You must know he is my right-hand man at the farm."

"So he wrote me," returned Dave. "I am as anxious to meet him as he is to meet me. We have already arranged for a grand hunt together."

"So I see by the letter. But I fancy your father and you will want to get settled here before that comes off — that is, if you conclude to stay after you have looked the ground over."

"Yes, we will want to settle down first," put in Martin Nelson. "The hunting can wait."

Captain Barton now came in and was introduced, and then the Nelsons betook themselves to the room Dave's father had engaged. Here they sat up until after eleven o'clock, talking over their family affairs and speculating over future prospects.

“Before I left home, Will came in with the news that the Dutchman who owns the farm next to mine wishes to sell out,” said Ralph Nelson. “It seems a rich relative of his in Holland has died, and he wants to go to Amsterdam to care for the estate. I cannot say that this farm is any better than mine, but I think it is just as good. It is a little farther up the hillside, but there is good running water. The Dutchman, whose name is Hans Guelmann, stocked the farm with good cattle less than two years ago, and he has about sixty ostriches besides, and a small herd of sheep. If you concluded to go into farming, I think it might pay you to look into his offer to sell out. Perhaps you can get his place for a good deal less than its real value.”

“I can tell better what I want to do after I have looked around,” returned Martin Nelson. “I do not want to decide on anything too quickly.”

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t either. You must come up to our house and make yourselves at home there until you have looked around to your hearts’ content,” interposed Ralph Nelson, hastily. “I mentioned this only because Will spoke of it. He said it would be so nice to have you near to us.”

“That would be nice,” exclaimed Dave. “What

do you suppose this Hans Guelmann considers his farm worth?"

"Oom Hans told me once he thought the farm worth six hundred pounds — three thousand dollars. But I doubt if anybody will give that for it."

"Why do you call him Oom? Is he an officeholder?"

"No, he's only an ordinary farmer. But, like lots of elderly men who are above the common level, he is called oom, which means literally uncle, and his wife is known as tante, or Tant' Frederica, which means Aunt Frederica. Some of the men around the farm started to call me Oom Rodolphus once, but I soon put a stop to that. You see there is no Dutch in me," and Ralph Nelson laughed.

"How do you get along with your Dutch neighbors?" asked his brother.

"I get along very well, because I mind my own affairs and let them mind theirs. They are rather suspicious of us Englishmen, and they won't allow us to interfere with any of what they consider their natural born rights. The foreigners have more troubles in the towns — especially in Johannesburg — than they do on the farms. In the towns they are taxed

very heavily and get very little for the money they are compelled to give up.”

“Perhaps the Dutch think that those who own the mines ought to pay the most of the taxes,” suggested Dave.

“That’s just it, my lad; but I think the division of the tax rate isn’t a fair one, especially when you consider that a Uitlander, as they call us, must live here fourteen years before he can become a citizen. And not only must he live here fourteen years, but during that time he has, practically, to give up his own country, and even then he can’t become a citizen unless the government voted him such, after a searching examination into his case. To obtain the right of franchise is the worst feature of public affairs in the Transvaal, and some day I am afraid it will cause much trouble.”

“Then perhaps I had better not invest here,” laughed Mr. Nelson. “I didn’t come six thousand miles over the ocean to get into any political wrangle.”

“Oh, I don’t anticipate any great trouble, Martin, at least, not so far as the farms are concerned. The trouble will be over the mining properties.

English capital, you know, will not stand being bulldozed, for it is English capital that has revealed the real wealth of the Transvaal mines."

Ralph Nelson wished to remain in Cape Town for two days longer, to attend to some mining business, and Martin Nelson and Dave were perfectly willing to wait for him until he should be ready to leave for home.

"We can take a look around," said Mr. Nelson; and on the following day, he and Dave visited the House of Parliament, the most prominent building of the town, set in a beautiful garden filled with trees, shrubs, and statuary; the old Town House and the Castle, both reminders of the days of Dutch supremacy; and the Public Museum and Botanical Gardens. They also looked in at the Standard Bank, the greatest banking institution of South Africa, and walked through the really excellent Public Library. The main street of the town was devoid of shade, but many side thoroughfares were lined with eucalyptus trees and oaks, while farther on the outskirts they ran across hedges of aloes, with here and there a stone wall thickly covered with semi-tropical vines.

"What takes my eyes is these great Boer wagons

with their long strings of oxen," remarked Dave. "The wagon that just passed had twelve pairs of oxen attached to it. Such a pulling force ought to be able to go through anything—that is, if the wagon holds out."

"It goes to prove that some of the roads must be something awful," answered Mr. Nelson. "Why, I don't believe the pioneers in the West ever had more than six pairs of beasts hooked up."

"But it must be fun to travel that way," went on Dave. "I think I would rather do it than go in a railroad train."

"For a few hundred miles, maybe," laughed his father. "You would soon tire of it, especially if you were caught in a storm and could get no dry wood for a camp-fire. You know what it is to be out on the ranges in the wet."

On the following day, Ralph Nelson, having a few hours of liberty, hired a cart with four horses attached, and took them for a drive up Table Mountain and to the great reservoir which supplies Cape Town with water. The view from this altitude was magnificent, especially through a powerful field-glass which Captain Barton had loaned them. The captain had been invited to accom-

pany the party, but had declined, stating he must attend to the purchasing of some supplies before going with them as far as Pretoria on the railroad. He himself was going straight through to Pietersburg, the end of the line.

“An ideal spot for a summer home, eh?” said Ralph Nelson, while they were partaking of the lunch they had brought along.

“I don’t know. How about it when the wind blows?” returned his brother.

“Oh, I rather think it would blow you right off into the bay,” was the answer.

The reservoir was not yet completed, and the working men were using an aerial tram for hoisting cement and other building material. The tram ran downward on a heavy wire to a distance of over two thousand feet, and the party was invited to take the journey down and back in a little car. The elder Nelsons declined, but Dave made the trip, along with one of the working foremen, who signalled the engineer to let them go at full speed. Down they went with a rush that fairly took away Dave’s breath, and made him think that the bottom had dropped out of everything. He was sure there would be a final

smash-up, but he was mistaken, for they came to a standstill with the greatest of ease. The journey upward was much slower; and once at the top again, the youth rejoined his father and his uncle, and all drove back as they had come.

CHAPTER XIII

THE START FROM CAPE TOWN

“WELL, this doesn't look much like one of our trains,” remarked Dave, as, on the following morning, the party made their way to the railway station where they were to take the cars for the one thousand miles' journey to Pretoria.

“They are hardly like English trains, either,” laughed his uncle. “This is a mixture of English and Dutch. You will now have an opportunity to see what a really slow train means. They only travel twelve to fourteen miles an hour.”

“Well, they have some pretty stiff hills to get over,” put in Captain Barton. “We have got to climb an elevation of about three thousand feet before we strike the great plain called the Karroo.”

Their train was in, and soon they were seated in the stuffy little coach, the bell rang, the whistle blew, and they were off, up the hills and around the mountains leading to the town of Worcester, the first stopping-place of importance. The coach

was filled with Englishmen, evidently miners, with here and there a stolid looking Dutchman, substantially dressed in a coarse suit of gray, big slouch hat, and heavy shoes or boots. So far all of the Dutchmen Dave had seen wore long, tangled beards, and he discovered that this was the prevailing style throughout the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

Soon Cape Town was left behind, and after climbing several hills the train entered the valley of Paarl, where are situated vast vineyards cultivated by Frenchmen who, in former years, considered the quaint old village of Paarl all their own. Close at hand was Wellington, famous for its corn-growing belt.

“Hullo, this looks something like Kansas,” exclaimed Martin Nelson, as he pointed to the belt. “I don’t know but what I would feel quite at home to settle down here.”

When Worcester, a hundred miles away from Cape Town, was gained, and a ten minutes’ stop made, Dave was glad enough to get down on the platform and stretch his legs. It was a typical country place, and at the public market, but a step away, he saw an abundance of farm products and

fruits. One sign, however, was new to him. It read, "Ostrich eggs for hatching, guaranteed."

"I didn't know they could move ostrich eggs," he said to his uncle.

"They can — with birds that have been brought up in captivity. You can't do anything with the eggs of a wild ostrich. If you disturb the nest, neither the hen nor the cock will go near it again."

"I'm just crazy to get to an ostrich farm," went on the boy, eagerly.

His uncle patted him on the shoulder. "I am glad to find you so enthusiastic," he said. "I trust that you don't get tired after the novelty wears off."

Worcester left behind, the train began to ascend the Hex River Pass, travelling mile after mile of the upward grade, around hills and mountains, with sheer cliffs on one side and giddy valleys on the other, across rushing torrents which looked as if they might sweep away the spidery iron bridges at any instant.

"I always thought this was the finest scenery in South Africa," remarked Captain Barton, as he brought out his pipe for a comfortable smoke. "It reminds me a good bit of the Rocky Mountains."

“An’ it reminds me o’ the Highlands o’ Scotland,” returned a tall Scotchman, who sat close at hand. “An’ there’s nae finer sceneries nor that,” he added emphatically.

There was a relative of Ralph Nelson’s wife living at Matjesfontein, and at his suggestion the entire party decided to stop there over night, Mr. Nelson assuring Captain Barton that he would be as welcome as any of the others. “In his time John Brunker was a great hunter,” he said. “And no doubt he will be glad to ‘swap yarns’ with you, as you Americans put it.”

Matjesfontein is located in the very midst of the plateau of the Great Karroo, a small collection of buildings set down in a wide, desert-like expanse, with here and there a clump of stunted trees or patch of sickly looking grass, dry, and covered with the red dust which circulated everywhere.

“This doesn’t look promising,” whispered Dave to his father.

“No, but let us not judge too hastily,” returned Martin Nelson. “The farms, you see, are not right by the railway station. It may look better farther back in the country.”

Fortunately John Brunker, who was Mrs. Nel-

son's cousin, was in town doing some trading. He greeted Ralph Nelson warmly, and said he would be only too glad to have visitors up to his place, as his wife had said only the day before that it was getting lonely. Inside of a few minutes he brought around his "spider," as the carriage was called, and they all piled in and set off on a trot across the wide veldt in the direction of the Bruncker homestead.

"They tell me you are a hunter," said Captain Barton, as they bowled along. "Any game left here?"

"Not much," answered John Bruncker. "Some quail and partridge and koran is about all—although last summer I went up to the *vley* (spring) and brought down one of the finest springboks I ever set eyes on. Of course, there are still some wild ostriches about."

The evening was a perfect one, but soon it grew dark, and but little could be seen of the spoor, or trail, which they were following. Presently they crossed a small stream, called by the natives a spruit, and then struck a section which seemed to be far more fertile than that just passed.

"Here we are," announced John Bruncker, and

looking ahead Dave made out a long, low building surrounded by several other structures and a hedge of thorns. The long, low building was the dwelling-house, the others the cattle and sheep kraals, and the huts of the Kafir and Hottentot hired hands.

A tall Kafir came out, lantern in hand, to take charge of the turnout. He was an intelligent-looking fellow, and spoke English fluently. "Koje says three of the hens have run away," he announced, meaning three female ostriches.

"You must hunt them up, Wombo," replied John Bruncker. "We cannot afford to lose them, and if they get off too far some of those rascally Hottentots will surely kill them on the sly and make off with the meat and the feathers."

"It was Koje's fault that they ran away," grumbled the Kafir.

"If it was, Koje shall hear from me," went on the owner of the place. "Come in, all of you," he continued, turning to his visitors.

"I'd like to see him round up those ostriches," said Dave. "I suppose it is a good bit different from rounding up cattle in Texas."

"A stranger couldn't round them up very well,"

said John Brunker. "They would run for miles and miles at the sight of you. But they know Wombo, and he'll half coax them and half drive them back to the kraal. It isn't often that any of my flock run away,—they are so thoroughly domesticated,—that is, all but one old cock we call Boxer. I can hardly do a thing with him, and he goes where he pleases, unless we tie him."

Mrs. Brunker was indeed glad to see them, and late as it was, insisted upon having the Hottentot cook prepare a warm supper for them, of fried potatoes, mutton balls, and hot biscuits, with coffee, to which the lady of the house added a dish of delicious sweetmeats of her own making.

The home was a typical one for this neighborhood. The main house was two stories high, the addition, containing the dining room, kitchen, and storeroom, but one story. The windows were broad, and each was fitted with a heavy wooden shutter which could be barred from within. The walls were of plain white plaster, scantily covered with prints and engravings, and all of the floors were bare, with here and there a fancy rug or prepared skin of some wild animal. The furniture had been imported from England, all but an old-

fashioned Dutch sofa, seven feet long and fully three feet broad, and in one corner of the broad parlor stood a tiny melodeon which had been left to Mrs. Brunker by her aunt.

The day's travel had worn Dave out, and that night he slept "like a rock," as he told his father in the morning. But he was up at daybreak, eager to see as much as possible of the farm before starting back for the railroad station.

His first steps took him to the huts of the natives, primitive affairs of rough stone covered with either thatch or galvanized iron. Here several of the farm hands had their families, and Dave could not help but laugh at the little Kafirs and Hottentots, some of them but two or three years old, who were running about with hardly any clothing on them. He tried to make friends with the youngsters, but they were shy and ran for cover as soon as he approached. They were chattering in the Zulu tongue, so that he could not understand a word of what was said.

From the huts he passed to the sheep and cattle kraals. The farm hands were just letting the cattle out to pasture, and to Dave the scene looked very much as such scenes looked at home.

Cattle and sheep wandered off listlessly, as if hardly knowing what to do for the day. "I suppose hunting up a rich pasture is rather difficult around here," thought the boy.

The last of the sheep having departed, Dave strolled over to the ostrich yard. Here were fully two hundred ostriches, young and old, strutting around carefully, their long necks and heads bobbing back and forth as they walked. In one corner of the yard there was a great flutter and rapping of wings, and the boy saw two young cocks having a regular cock-fight all by themselves. But the fight came to a quick end when a large hen bird came rushing up, with outstretched wings, and separated the combatants.

Dave was leaning upon the rough stone wall of the ostrich kraal, thinking what a powerful bird an ostrich was, and now queer it was that the bird did not fly, when suddenly a cry of warning reached his ears, coming from the rear of the dwelling-house. A Hottentot woman was shaking her hand at him.

"America boy run!" shouted the woman. "Run or get hurt! Run quick, America boy."

"Why, what's up?" began Dave, as he looked

at her in bewilderment. "I don't see anything to hurt me."

"You run quick! Look! look! Um bad Boxer come fo' you!" And the Hottentot woman pointed with her hand. Turning in the direction indicated, which was down the path leading to the open veldt behind the house, Dave saw what had caused her to cry out. A monstrous cock ostrich was coming for him full tilt, with wings and neck outstretched, and with a glitter in his eyes which bode the youth much evil. The strides of the angry bird were enormous, fully ten to twelve feet long, and in a few seconds he was almost on top of the boy.

CHAPTER XIV

DAVE AND THE WILD OSTRICH

IT must be confessed that for an instant Dave's heart leaped into his throat. He knew very little about ostriches, but he had read that they were almost as powerful as any wild animal of their size, and had been known to kick or strike a person to death with those drumstick legs or elastic wings.

At first, as the ostrich came closer, he backed up against the stone wall, half of a mind to leap over. But he did not know but what this might be leaping "from the frying-pan into the fire," for beyond were two hundred ostriches, while on the outer side there was only one. And yet that one looked more savage than all of the rest put together. His eyes were as glittering as those of a snake, and as he rushed onward Dave's blood almost froze in his veins.

"Get out of here!" he yelled, but the ostrich paid no attention to his voice further than to let

out a sound which closely resembled a hiss of rage. It was Boxer, the bird John Bruncker had mentioned, and one who took a particular dislike to any new face that showed itself on the farm.

Just as the bird was about to leap upon Dave, the youth dodged and jumped. Down came the ostrich, its mighty foot and leg shooting past the boy's ear with lightning-like rapidity and strength. Had Dave been hit it is likely that his earthly career would have ended then and there, for such a blow is as bad as one from a club.

The ostrich could not stop his flight at once, and covered fully twelve yards before he came to a halt, when he wheeled around and started for another attack. By this time Dave was running for the house at top speed, but it was easy to see that the ostrich would overtake him long before he could reach a place of safety. The boy wished he had a pistol, but unfortunately all of his firearms were packed up in his luggage.

“Drop! drop!” yelled a voice from one of the barns. “Drop, or you will be killed!”

The advice was well meant, but Dave did not accept it, since to him it looked more advisable to run than to lie down and let the bird maul him.

To drop down is a favorite Kafir trick, for an ostrich cannot make a good strike at an object lying flat, and the natives watch their chances to catch the bird by the head and wring his neck.

As the ostrich made another flying leap at the youth, he dodged again. But this second move was not so successful as the first, and Dave received a crack on the shoulder that bowled him over and over in the dust of the dooryard. The blow was but a glancing one, however, and the force of it sent the ostrich rolling on his side.

Swish! There was a strange rushing sound through the air, and suddenly a long rawhide lash encircled the ostrich's neck, depriving the bird of his wind and causing him to flutter about with pain. Wombo the Kafir had thrown his sjambok, a whip very much in use in South Africa, and caught the ostrich fairly and squarely. That the beast's neck was not cut or broken was simply because it was more than usually tough.

"A good strike!" came from John Brunker, as he ran from the dwelling, gun in hand. At the first cry of the Hottentot woman he had snatched up the weapon. He now saw that it would not be necessary to kill the cock, that was really a

valuable breeder, but still he held the firearm ready should matters take a new turn.

But the blow from the sjambok had had its full effect, and when the lash loosened and fell to the ground a good part of the fight had been knocked out of the ostrich. With head hanging down he walked slowly toward the end of the kraal, and then disappeared behind one of the outbuildings. To this place Wombo followed him, and presently the ostrich found himself a close prisoner in a pen which had been constructed especially for his accommodation.

“Are you much hurt?” questioned John Brunker, as he assisted Dave to his feet.

“I—I think not,” panted the youth. “But—but—where is he?”

“He has run away. He shan’t bother you any more—my word on that. Where did he strike you?”

“On the shoulder, and I guess he drew blood, too. I’m mighty glad it wasn’t my head he hit.” And Dave drew a long breath. A good deal of the color was gone from his face. “I had no idea an ostrich could be so vicious—that is, an ostrich around a farm.”

“Some of them are so wild they can never be tamed, while others are as gentle as one would wish. Go in the house and have your shoulder attended to. I’ll go and see that Boxer can get into no more mischief.”

In the house it was found that Dave had suffered two ugly scratches several inches long, and these were immediately washed with brandy as a precaution against blood-poisoning, and then covered with salve and bound up by Mrs. Brunker. Mr. Martin Nelson and his brother, as well as Captain Barton, had just arisen, and consequently knew nothing of the affair until it was over.

“You want to be careful of yourself after this,” said Dave’s father, with a deep shudder. “Supposing that ostrich had killed you? It would have broken my heart, and I would never have forgiven myself for bringing you to South Africa.”

“I will be careful after this,” replied Dave. “In the future I shall carry my pistol with me. If I had had that, I could have put that bird out of the way with ease.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” put in Captain Barton. “I once fired three shots into a wild ostrich — good hits, too — and yet he outran my

horse and got away. They are as tough as sole leather, those critters."

"The tame ones are easy enough to handle," said Ralph Nelson. "It is only when you get an old bird like Boxer that there is trouble. If he was mine I would have cut off his head long ago."

John Bruncker was very sorry that anything had occurred to mar the pleasantness of the visit, and was profuse in his apologies for having allowed the vicious bird his liberty. "When he gets out again I'll hobble him," he said, meaning that he would tie one foot of the ostrich to the other in such a fashion that the creature could walk but not run.

Breakfast was speedily disposed of, and after a short walk around the farm, the travellers were taken down to the railway station. It proved a windy day, and the veldt, especially around the bald spots, was covered with whirlwinds of dust which alternately choked them and caused them to sneeze most vociferously. But soon the train came along which was to take them as far as De Aar, and they got aboard and left Matjesfontein behind.

Although windy, the day proved what Dave

called a "scorcher," and he was glad that he was in a position to get what breeze there was, although even that was as hot as though it came out of a bake oven. As the Great Karroo was left behind the vegetation increased, and presently they came to where immense herds of cattle could be seen, tended by Hottentots or other natives, some affecting a European dress and others wearing little more than their native outfits. At one stopping place they saw a kraal filled with tame antelopes, beautiful creatures who looked as if they were ready to make friends with anybody.

At De Aar there is a connection with Naauwpoort by which the traveller from Cape Town can get on the line running from Port Elizabeth and Port Alfred to Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Pietersburg, and other points in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, the Cape Town road running up to Kimberley, Mafeking, Palapye and other places in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia. The stop at De Aar was but a short one, and also the one at Naauwpoort, and late at night they left the train at Bloemfontein.

"This is the capital of the Orange Free State," said Ralph Nelson to Dave. "It is quite an old

settlement, and does a fair amount of business, I understand. The capital covers a whole block of buildings. There are two banks and a big general market, besides several blocks of stores. If you get up early, we can take a look around."

"There seem to be quite a few Dutchman here," replied Dave. "More than I've seen yet."

"We are coming into the Dutchman's own country now, you know," smiled the uncle. "Although you will find all of the large cities crowded with Englishmen and other Uitlanders."

Despite his lame shoulder, Dave slept well that night, and so long that when he awakened he found that he would hardly have time to get his breakfast before train time. He hurried through his toilet, however, with all speed, and managed, after eating, to "stretch his legs," although not for a considerable distance.

"To-night will see us in Pretoria," said Ralph Nelson. "There is no use of our stopping at Johannesburg, as you can go back to that city with me later on."

"No, we needn't stop—at least for me," put in Captain Barton. "I am going through to the end of the line without further loss of time. It won't be

long before the company which I represent will be wanting to know what I am doing."

"I'll be awfully sorry to part with you, Captain Barton," said Dave. "I trust we meet again before you leave Africa."

"And so do I, lad. I'll come down to Pretoria and hunt you up if I can," answered the old hunter. "But before that time comes I trust to bag lots of game, I can tell you that."

From Bloemfontein the run was straight to Kroonstad, a distance of over a hundred miles. For the most part the railway ran directly over the veldt, and as the roadbed accommodated itself to the lay of the land, the cars were continually bobbing up and down or swinging from side to side. Occasionally they would swing around a hill or across a river, and here would be encountered patches of forest and wild shrubs, some of the latter of a most gorgeous coloring. At the Vaal River there was a short halt, and Dave thus got a good look at the turbulent stream which had given to the Transvaal its name.

"This train doesn't go directly to Johannesburg," explained Ralph Nelson. "To go there one must change on to a short spur coming in at Elandsfontein Junction."

“Well, it is getting too dark to see much, anyway,” put in Martin Nelson. “And I must say my eyes hurt from watching the scenery so closely.”

Lunch was had while the train kept rushing on, trying to make up for the time lost at the Vaal. Then the smoky little lamps were lit and they came into the Junction station where they stopped for several minutes.

“And now for the last stage of the trip!” cried Ralph Nelson. “We will be in Pretoria in less than an hour and a quarter, and I am pretty sure Will, and perhaps some of the others, will be there to meet us.”

CHAPTER XV

PRETORIA AND PRESIDENT KRUEGER

“MY own Cousin Dave! How glad I am to see you at last!”

It was Will Nelson who spoke, as he rushed forward on the railway platform at Pretoria and caught Dave by the hand and shoulder. His face was full of such a warm, brotherly smile that it went straight to Dave's heart, and in less than five minutes the two cousins felt as though they had known each other for years.

“I've been on the lookout for you for two days,” went on the English lad. “If you hadn't shown up on this train, I would have been the most disappointed lad in the Transvaal. How are you, and how did you stand the trip across the ocean? I hope you weren't seasick? And that ride on the railway! I'll wager you laughed at that. Everybody does who comes up here. They say the line is about fifty years behind the times. Come ahead,



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our carriage is over there on the next corner." And thus rattling on Will led Dave out of the station and to where a turnout with four sturdy horses stood in waiting to take the entire party to Ralph Nelson's farm.

Mrs. Nelson and little Alice had remained at home, fearing that the train would be so late that the journey to the farm would take until after midnight. "But they are just as anxious to see all of you as I am," said Will. "Little Alice has got it all planned out what Dave is to do for her—mend her broken dolls, give her rides on his shoulder, and I don't know what all. Oh, but we'll have great times!" He slapped Dave on the back. "You can't understand how I feel, it's so good to have a chum again!"

"But I do understand," answered Dave. "Wasn't I on the ranch for months, with no other boy around? Why, when one of my friends from the academy once paid me a visit I fairly danced a jig for joy, and then—"

"They both got into so much mischief that I had to stop them," finished Martin Nelson. "I'm afraid Uncle Ralph will have to put a curb on both of you."

“Oh, I’m older than I was then,” returned Dave. He leaped into the three-seated carriage. “This is fine! Do you do much driving?”

“Quite some; but I’m out on my horse most of the time,” answered Will, as they started off.

It was too dark to see anything of Pretoria but the few stores which still remained open. Street lamps were few and far between after leaving the centre of the city, and they had to pick their way carefully along the highway which was much the worse for the traffic of heavy ox carts and farm wagons. Soon the last of the city houses were left behind, and they struck a trail leading into a valley and across a limpid stream bordered upon either side with a heavy growth of trees and brush. In the town it had been hot and dusty, here the air was positively cool and remarkably refreshing.

“Yes, I know these woods like a book,” said Will, in reply to a question from Dave. “But game is scarce—only a few birds, with now and then a small animal. Gemsbok and other specie of deer have entirely disappeared, and we will have to go miles and miles away when we take that hunting tour.”

“And we will have to get settled before that

comes off," answered Dave. "You know," he added soberly, "we didn't come out here for sport, we came to make a living."

On and on went the carriage, the horses knowing the road perfectly. There was no moon overhead, but the clear sky was filled with countless stars, and when they emerged upon the open veldt Dave found that he could see farther than expected. At last they approached a stony but wooded kopje which arose from the plain to a height of seventy or eighty feet, presenting a sheer cliff to the north and a sloping patch of stubble to the south. At the foot of the kopje was a small spruit winding in and out over a bed of brown and yellow sand.

"This is the beginning of our farm," announced Will. "When we get around the hill you will see the light in the sitting-room window. Mother always places it there when one of us is away." And soon the light greeted them, and Dave made out half a dozen outbuildings and huts with a square-built house surmounted with a small tower standing behind them. The buildings were enclosed with heavy stone walls, some of which had been plastered with mud which the hot summer sun had baked to clay. The home was of stone, with

a thatched roof, and overrun with vines and creepers.

The coming of the wagon had evidently been heard, for the turnout had not yet entered the dooryard when the wide hall door was flung open and Mrs. Nelson appeared, accompanied by Lola, the Hottentot girl Will had mentioned in his letter, who carried a lamp in her hand.

“All here, mother, safe and sound!” cried Will, and leaped to the ground, followed by the others. Then came a girlish cry and a little figure in white rushed past her mother and down the steps of the broad piazza.

“Where is my Cousin Dave?” piped up an eager voice. “I want to see my Cousin Dave.”

“Here I am,” cried Dave in return, and catching his Cousin Alice in his arms, he gave her a tight hug and half a dozen kisses. “Of course we are awfully glad to see each other, and we are going to have immense times together, aren’t we?” he went on.

“Yes, we are going to have just the bestest times ever was,” answered little Alice, as she kept tight hold of his hand. She was a mere slip of a creature, with big blue eyes and golden hair, which fell

over her shoulders in a shower, and to Dave she seemed a regular fairy.

A few minutes later found them all in the sitting room, one of the Kafir boys having taken charge of the horses and carriage. Mrs. Nelson greeted the newcomers with as much warmth as had her husband and son, and at once ordered Suma, the Hottentot cook, to serve the supper which had been prepared in expectation of their arrival. "I know lunching on the train is not what it might be," she said, "for when Ralph makes a trip to the Cape he generally returns home half starved."

The supper was what Dave put down "as a regular bona-fide spread," and it must be added that all did full justice to what was set before them in the shape of well-cooked meat, vegetables, pastry, and coffee with cream, and preserved fruit. It was served in a long, low dining room filled with furniture which Mrs. Nelson's parents had brought with them from London. The entire house was filled with this furniture, thus giving it quite an English appearance.

It can well be imagined that none of the older persons went to bed until late, there was so much

to talk about and so many questions to be asked and answered. Little Alice went to sleep curled up on Dave's lap, and altogether it looked like the happiest of family gatherings. "I tell you that blood counts for a good bit," said Ralph Nelson, when they parted for the night. "I am exceedingly glad to have those of my own kin near me once more."

"And I am glad to be with you, brother," answered Martin Nelson. "And as for our two boys—I guess they have sworn eternal chumship already."

The days to follow were the busiest Dave had ever put in. There was so much to see, so many places to visit, that he kept on the go from morning to night, and when bedtime came he would find himself so tired that he could scarcely sit up to undress. Will was as eager to show him around as Dave was to go, and sometimes the boys were gone all day, taking their dinners with them and riding on horseback. Once they went over to Pretoria and visited the post-office, several of the largest stores, and peeped in at the capital building, a magnificent structure put up at a cost of two hundred thousand pounds, about a million dollars. The Dutch Volksraad, or Congress, was in session, and they managed to get a view of this legislative body,

which corresponds, in a general way, to the Parliament of England or Congress of the United States. The hall was a large one, painted in red and green, and liberally decorated with national flags and coats of arms of the South African Republic. The chairman was seated on a long platform, along with several others, while the ordinary members of the chamber sat at three long "horseshoe" tables below. The speechmaking was all in Dutch, and Dave had to listen very closely to make out even a small part of what was being discussed.

"The stout gentleman on the right of the chairman — the man with the regalia across his breast — is President Krueger," whispered Will. "They say he is a very easy-going man, but he is mighty shrewd, too."

"He certainly looks like a fine old Dutch gentleman," was Dave's comment, as he gazed at the grave, sober face. "I don't believe he is the kind of a man to do anything in a hurry. Who is that man in full military uniform who just entered and took a seat near him?"

"That is General Joubert, the commandant of all the Boer army in the Transvaal. He was the Chief Executive when President Krueger left the state

to visit England. He's a great fighter, and commanded the Dutch forces at Majuba Hill."

"Is President Krueger married?"

"Oh, yes, and keeps house in regular Dutch style. You can go by his place almost any time and see him out on the piazza smoking his big pipe and taking solid comfort in doing it. His wife started to entertain once, but soon gave it up. Some folks laugh at the Kruegers for living as they do, but I think a man has a right to live as he pleases, and so long as he does his duty as President he ought to be left alone."

"Yes, that is right — as far as it goes, Will. But it wouldn't do in America. There everybody hustles, as the saying is."

"Oh, it wouldn't hurt these Dutchmen to hustle, I can tell you that, Dave. But you can't make them get off their gait any more than you can hurry a team of oxen. They are content to plod along, and do exactly as their great-grandfathers did, and if you try to hurry them, or want to make improvements, ten chances to one they'll get mad because of it, and tell you that if you don't like the way they are doing you can take yourself off," concluded Will, as they left the capital.

CHAPTER XVI

SETTLING DOWN ON THE OSTRICH FARM

As we know, Martin Nelson was not a man to settle a matter hastily. He believed in the old adage, "Make up your mind slowly, and when it is done act quickly." Consequently he was on and around his brother's farm and the farm adjoining three weeks before he finally decided to settle down in that locality and try his fortunes in the South African Republic.

"I shall not invest all of my money at first," he said. "And as this Hans Guelmann is willing to sell out at a very reasonable figure, I do not see how I can lose money on the transaction, even if I want to pull up stakes myself, later on."

Dave found Oom Hans, as everybody called him, quite a delightful old Dutchman with whom to do business. Guelmann felt much relieved to get such a quick customer, especially since he had just received a letter from Holland urging him to come on at the earliest possible moment.

He came down to almost the figure Ralph Nelson advised his brother to offer, and for twenty pounds extra agreed to leave all of his household furniture and many other odds and ends behind, so that Martin Nelson and his son might go to farming without buying a single thing new. The "dicker" was made in a mixture of bad English and equally bad Dutch, and caused more than one laugh on both sides.

As he had made up his mind slowly, now, when the die was cast, Martin Nelson acted with equal promptness. On the day that Hans Guelmann left the farm, the Nelsons took possession with all of their luggage, and before nightfall Dave and his parent had settled themselves in their new home. The house was rather small, consisting of a sitting room, dining hall, and kitchen below, and two sleeping rooms above, but it was large enough for them, and that was enough. Attached to the house was a hut where lived a tall Kafir called Roko and his two daughters, Satoma and Grazel. The Kafir was the head herdsman, and his two daughters did the housework and attended to the dairy, a small stone structure built directly over the stream which ran across the farm. Besides

these Kafirs, there were two Hottentot boys who also did herding. Their native names were so unpronounceable that Dave promptly nicknamed them Guffy and Pepper, after the two hands on the ranch, and these nicknames stuck to them as long as they remained in the Nelsons' employ.

Of cattle there were forty odd heads, all in first-class condition, as Martin Nelson could easily see. The sheep numbered twenty-six, the ostriches sixty-six, and there were also a flock of chickens and another of ducks. Most of the farm was in pasture land, but Oom Hans had raised a fair supply of corn and vegetables.

“We'll increase that garden patch at the next planting,” said Mr. Nelson. “I believe we can easily grow everything that we wish, if we take the trouble to do a little watering during the extra dry spells.”

The stable supported four good horses, “salted beasts,” as Hans Guelmann had been particular to impress upon Martin Nelson's mind. By “salted” is meant that the animal has had either the *din ziekte* or the *dik-kop ziekte*,—meaning the “thin sickness” or the “thick head sickness,” two forms of disease frequent among South African stock,—

and will not, therefore, have the sickness again. The "thick head sickness" is the more deadly of the two, and the horse that recovers from it is considered tough indeed.

One of the animals, although it was larger and not so fast, put Dave very much in mind of his old favorite on the ranch, and was accordingly renamed Lightning. Even if a bit slow, he proved very intelligent, and the boy soon became greatly attached to him.

It was easy enough to learn what little there was that was new about tending the cattle and sheep, and Mr. Nelson and Dave often gave the herdsmen "a pointer or two" concerning how those things were done in the States. At first the Kafir, Roko, was inclined to sneer at the Uitlander, but when some of the cattle got sick and Mr. Nelson and Dave doctored them with much skill, his respect for his new employers vastly increased. Then Dave one day brought out his gun, and, aiming at a vulture which showed itself over one of the fields, fired, and brought the bird down instantly, and from that day Roko became his fast friend.

"America boy big eye," he said, in broken Eng-

lish. "Got good *roor*;" meaning that Dave had a good gun. Roko was a fair shot himself, although for many years he had handled nothing more deadly than an *assegai* (long knife) and a *knob-kerrie* (war club). But he was an expert with a sjambok, and standing off fifteen feet could snap the lash and cut a fly from an ox's back in a twinkle.

It must be confessed that Dave approached the ostriches with great care and a good deal of respect. "I'm not going to run any more risks," he told Roko, after relating the particulars of what had happened at the Bruncker farm. "If we've got any such warlike cocks as that Boxer, I want to know it."

"All ostrich tame here," answered Roko, although so brokenly that Dave understood with difficulty. "Summer go by ostrich bite" — he pointed to his foot. "Roko throw dis way, sit on um and twist neck so, he go dead. No more trouble after dat."

"Not with that ostrich," laughed Dave. "But a fellow might not be so fortunate as to twist a neck just when he wanted to."

"Ostrich know um friend. You friend, no show

you afraid, ostrich be good. You no friend, you shiver, so, ostrich fly at you."

"I'll remember that, Roko, and in the future I'll put on a bold front," replied Dave, and he did, and after that had little or no trouble with the birds, although they would sometimes come up to peck at his straw hat or tear his outside pockets in a hunt for corn. When an ostrich gets to know you he can become terribly familiar at times. Dave often laughed at them, as he watched them strut about, their heavy bodies covered with those beautiful black feathers we know so well, and their thin bare legs sticking out underneath like a pair of stilts.

From his cousin Dave learned a great many things of interest concerning the ostriches. "They are a tough bird when they get old," said Will, "but they are not so easy to raise from the egg as you may think. Like chickens, they suffer from cold and wet, and if they are near a stream they are liable to tumble in and get drowned. Then again, they eat anything that comes to view — berries, melons, seeds, insects, lizards, and even small snakes, as well as shiny stones, bits of glass, and a hundred and one other things. The big ostriches

can stand this, but the little ones can't, and sometimes a young one will tumble over simply because he has filled himself to bursting with what he can't digest."

"And what kind of eating do they make?" asked Dave, who was bound to learn all he could about the birds he had started to raise.

"The meat is rather coarse and so are the eggs. I would never think of raising them for those things. The feathers are what count, as you will find when you go at your first picking. I think you can pick your flock about every ten months."

"That will be something more to learn. I must confess I don't relish the task of pulling feathers from a live bird."

"The best thing to do is to cut the feathers off. The stumps of the quills soon dry up and fall out of themselves, and this process doesn't hurt the bird in the least."

"They can travel so fast, it's a wonder they don't go away for good when they get out."

"Yes, I've heard it said they can travel at the rate of twenty miles an hour. But they soon get to know their home and rarely go over ten or fifteen miles away from it, unless they get badly

frightened. Of course I am talking about the tame ostriches. When we get to hunting the wild ones I rather think we will have lots of sport."

The long, low outbuildings also pleased Dave. They were built in true Dutch fashion, with main timbers eight to twelve inches square, and the boy often wondered how the builders had ever got such a massive frame into position. "They must have had a regular old-fashioned house raising," he thought, and in this he was right. The buildings were so solid that nothing in the way of storms affected them.

In the wagon shed adjoining the horse stable was an ox cart and a "spider," and a tremendously heavy turnout, which had been used by Hans Guelmann's father in the great trek from Natal to the Transvaal in 1836. The latter was fourteen feet long and six feet broad, and sat on axles which were over eight feet long and three feet from the ground. Over the top of the wagon was a bent pole frame covered with coarse canvas, and inside were several lockers which could be used for the storage of clothing and as couches. To this big wagon belonged a heavy *düsselboom* (pole), and a trek-chain all of a hundred feet long, having yokes

attached to it at intervals of nine feet, the yokes being of heavy timber, caught up with reims of rawhide. Dave once tried to lift this ponderous trek-chain by fastening one end to the wagon and pulling upon the other, but found his strength unequal to the task. The turnout was meant to be hauled along by fourteen to eighteen oxen.

“What a parade they must have made, coming across the veldt!” mused the youth. “Exactly like the old pioneers in the Western states. I don’t believe father and I will ever use that wagon, unless we utilize it for what it was meant to be,—a house on wheels.”

Perhaps a boy used to city life would have found work on the ostrich farm hard, but to Dave it was little more than play, for he soon learned that no one on an African farm worked half as hard as he and his father were accustomed to labor on the ranch in Texas. The blacks could not be made to work more than they had been accustomed to, and their Dutch neighbors laughed at them for their extra efforts. “You die quick you work fast,” said Adolf Brucher, their nearest Dutch neighbor, one day to Dave. “Take your time, rest, and drink plenty coffee, and you live so long

as your gran'fadda." The Boer idea of rest is almost always associated with that of coffee drinking, and in every Dutch home the coffee pot is on the fire continually.

Dave often found himself at Oom Adolf's house, for he wished to become acquainted with the Boers among whom he had settled, and wished to pick up more of their language; for he speedily found that there is a vast difference between Dutch and German, especially what is commonly called High German. He was always welcome, and not only the farmer, but also his wife, Tante Johanna, and his two sons, Karl and Conrad, did all in their simple Boerish way to entertain him. Karl and Conrad were but little older than Dave, but they were tall, strapping fellows, and as muscular as the oxen they were in the habit of driving. Both had worked for a time around the mines at Johannesburg, and had there picked up a smattering of English which they tried to ventilate upon every possible occasion. It was easy to see that the whole family did not care particularly for the English people, however, and they liked Martin Nelson and Dave a good deal better than they did Will and his family.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BEGINNING OF A GRAND HUNT

“HURRAH for the hunt, Dave! Father says he will be home for a month or more, and I can go where I please. Won't we have just the most glorious time ever was!”

“I hope so, Will,” answered Dave, with a broad smile overspreading his bronzed face. “I've looked forward to this hunt, expecting lots of fun. I hope we are not disappointed.”

“Oh, we won't be—I am sure of that. I was speaking to a Dutch hunter day before yesterday, and he says there is lots of game on the Crocodile this season. Can you start to-morrow?”

“I can start any time, father says. He says I have worked like a trooper and deserve a little recreation.”

“Yes, both of you are steam engines,—and you have put this farm into elegant shape, I must say. You've got over two hundred ostriches now, haven't you?”

“Two hundred and twenty-two, Will, and at least twenty more hatching.”

“You’ve taken to the business like a duck takes to water. And that vegetable garden is prime—nothing better anywhere around Pretoria. I declare, you’ll soon be giving these old Hollanders a pointer or two on raising peas and beans and lettuce and the like,” went on Will, as he leaned on the stone fence and gazed at the well-kept garden patch, with its straight rows of growing things and its entire absence of weeds. “What a lot of work it must be to keep this cleaned up!”

“I don’t let the work grow over my head. Every time it rains I pull the weeds, so they don’t get a chance to grow. But then I always did love a garden.” And Dave stooped over to lift up several plants which had been beaten down by the last storm.

Nearly a year had passed since Martin Nelson and his son had landed in South Africa, and the months which had gone by had been busy in the extreme. Both father and son had taken hold with a will, and had drilled themselves thoroughly into the new order of things. The result was little short of a revelation to the Boers around them,

who had been largely of the opinion that the Americans would do even worse than the despised English. "What do they know of Transvaal farming and of ostrich raising," they had told one another. "They will spend what money they have and then fall back on us for support." But there had been no falling back; on the contrary, Martin Nelson had assisted several needy Boers, and now had one of them working for him at the regular wages paid for such labor.

Matters over at Ralph Nelson's place were also flourishing, for with Dave's coming a mild sort of rivalry had sprung up between the two boys as to which should make the best showing, and Will had worked early and late that their place might not exhibit any neglect. In the meantime Ralph Nelson's mining venture was turning out very well and looked as if it would soon be worth a small fortune to him. Martin Nelson had purchased a share in the new mine and had also invested in some shares of an old established company located some distance outside of Johannesburg.

It was decided that the two boys should go on horseback, accompanied by Roko, who had been through the hunting territory along the Crocodile

and nearby rivers many times before. All of the horses to be taken were thoroughly salted, so there would be no fear of trouble through the obnoxious tsetse-fly. Roko was to carry the limited camping outfit which was to be taken along, and also some biltong—deer meat salted and dried—and some Dutch rusk, which keeps fresh much longer than ordinary bread. For the rest, the party was to depend upon its guns for supplies. The guns consisted of two smooth bore rifles and a double-barrelled shotgun, as well as a pistol for each. They also carried hunting knives and other necessary paraphernalia.

The start was made from the Martin Nelson home, and Ralph Nelson and his wife and little Alice came over to see the boys off. “Be sure and keep out of danger, Will,” were Mrs. Nelson’s last words; “I would not have anything happen to you for all the game in the world.”

“Don’t fear but what I’ll take good care of myself, mother,” answered the son; and so the two boys parted from their parents, little dreaming of all the strange adventures which were to befall ere the members of the families should come together again.

“It seems strange to think that only a few years ago this wide veldt was covered with elands, gemsboks, springboks, wildebeestes, and other kindred animals,” remarked Will as they rode along. “They tell me that as late as the year 1870 herds of deer to the number of several hundred could be found here. But the Dutch formed large hunting parties and slaughtered them just for the value of the skins, leaving the vultures the meat.”

“I guess you’ll travel a good many miles before you see a herd of several hundred wild animals now,” returned Dave. “It must be a grand sight to see a drove of elephants.”

“Not if they are coming toward you. I wouldn’t mind seeing them if they were passing in another direction.”

For two days they journeyed without anything out of the ordinary happening. At noon of the third day they came to a halt beside a small pool of bluish water, fringed with rushes and small brush. As they had approached this, a flock of quail arose, and Will, who was carrying the shotgun, gave the birds both barrels, bringing down three and wounding several others. Roko promptly made off after the wounded birds and brought them

to a standstill by hitting them with a long stick he carried. In throwing this stick he was as unerring in his aim as he was in cracking his sjambok.

The pool afforded drink for both man and beast and also for cooking purposes, and while the boys built a tiny fire of grass and twigs, Roko prepared the birds for broiling. Thus served, the quail were delicious, and the three ate all there were of them.

“We can’t complain about feed,” laughed Dave. “We’ve had quail on toast almost the first thing. Who would want anything better?”

“Certainly I shan’t complain if we do as well right straight along,” answered his cousin. “But come on. We want to get as close to the hunting country as we can before night;” and soon they were in the saddle again, and passing down a broad valley leading to one of the tributaries of the Crocodile River.

The day was becoming extra warm, and Roko conjectured that they would have a storm inside of the next forty-eight hours. “Big storm too,” he added. “Much water.”

“When it comes we had better seek some sort of shelter,” said Dave. “I have no fancy for getting wet to the skin.”

Daylight was fading when they reached a small creek running into the Limpopo, or Crocodile. Here there was a long, narrow stretch of wood. As they came up to the trees Roko suddenly called upon them to halt, and pointed to their left with his finger.

“A wild animal of some kind!” cried Will, in a whisper. “What is it, Roko?”

“A gemsbok,” answered the Kafir. “Be quick, or he will go!”

As Roko finished, the gemsbok suddenly raised its nose in the air, its long and almost straight horns resting along its back. One sniff was enough, and off it bounded, taking leaps two and three yards in length.

Bang! bang! both boys fired at the same time, but whether or not their shots had taken effect neither could tell. Soon the gemsbok was out on the broad veldt, where the gathering darkness hid it from view.

“My gracious, he skipped like greased lightning!” cried Dave. “I never saw such swiftness.”

“He is swift, but his swiftness is nothing to that of the springbok,” answered Will. “Unless you can get at a springbok head on you might as well try a shot at a streak of electricity.”

“Then there is no use in trying to follow that gemsbok?”

“No, no!” put in Roko, shaking his woolly head. “He go miles and miles and no stop. We go down to river and see if we do better.”

“I fancy this expedition will put me on my mettle,” observed Dave. “I’m a little out of practice, and I’ll try to brace up. It’s a pity we had to let such a fine beast slip us. If we—” he stopped short as a wild, unearthly shriek arose on the air. “What’s that?”

“Him big baboon, dat’s all,” answered Roko, with a broad smile. “Him fight udder baboon all de time, but man people, him no fight dem.”

They entered the woods, and soon came close to the baboons, for there were several of them. But these specimens of the monkey tribe were shy, and scurried off in great haste at their approach, chattering at a great rate as they went. They also stirred up a number of birds and took several random shots, bringing down two bitterns and a partridge.

“This is better than nothing,” said Will, as he picked the birds up. “We have enough here for several meals, and they will be a welcome addition to our larder.”

The bitterns had been shot close to the water, and now Roko went in wading among the reeds and water-grass. "Nest near here," he announced, and soon came upon a bittern's nest, perched in the grass just above the surface of the water. It contained three eggs of a light brown color.

"We can make an omelet of those, provided they are fresh," said Will. "What will be the best spot for a camp, Roko?"

"Up stream good place," answered the Kafir, and, birds in hand, they walked to the spot on foot, their horses following them. Presently they reached a small opening, where the grass was thick and of good quality. The horses were tethered, and they set about putting up the little tent they had brought along. As brush poles were to be had in plenty this was easy, and while the boys erected the tent the Kafir prepared the partridge and the eggs for supper, mixing the omelet with some rusk crumbs to make it go around. A roaring fire made the lads feel quite at home, even though they were a good many miles from the nearest human habitation.

"I suppose it will take us two or three days to get thoroughly broken in to this sort of life," re-

marked Dave, as they sat around after the evening meal. "But it looks as though we were in for lots of sport, doesn't it?"

"If only we hadn't missed that gemsbok," grumbled Will. He hated to lose anything in the way of big game.

As they wished to make an early start along the river in the morning, they retired before nine o'clock, the Kafir beside the fire and the two boys within the shelter. The sky was overcast, but there was as yet neither wind nor rain. The boys rested on a pile of small boughs, which, while not as soft as their beds at home, were still better than the bare ground, and were soon fast asleep.

It was nearly midnight when Will awoke with a start. He could not tell what had aroused him, but instinctively he felt for the shotgun, which had been placed within easy reach. He listened, but only the sound of the rising wind greeted his ears.

"Did I hear a growl, or was I dreaming?" he asked himself, and crept toward the entrance to the shelter. The fire had gone down in a smouldering heap, and Roko lay flat on his back, snoring heavily. "Perhaps that Kafir's wood-sawing woke me," went on the boy mentally.

Then of a sudden his heart leaped into his throat. He had allowed his eyes to wander to the left of the clearing, and something in the brush had caught his attention. A dark object was moving there, an object crouched close to the ground.

CHAPTER XVIII

CAUGHT IN A TROPICAL STORM

FOR the instant Will did not know what to do. The approaching object was so hidden by the shadows of the brush that he could form no idea what it was, saving that it looked like an immense cat. He saw two gleaming eyes, but they were neither fastened upon himself nor upon the sleeping Kafir.

“No shotgun will kill that beast,” thought the boy, and stepped back to get his rifle. At first he thought to call to Roko. But this would have scared the animal away, and he wished, if possible, to bag the game, to make up for the gemsbok that had been lost.

As he felt for the rifle his arm touched Dave, who aroused instantly. “Who—what’s up, Will?” came in a slightly bewildered tone.

“Something is outside—an animal of some sort—watching the camp,” was the low reply. “Get your rifle and keep as quiet as you can.”

“An animal? What is it, a lion?”

“No, nothing as big as that. I’ve something of an idea that it is a leopard, although I’m not sure. Be quick or we will lose him.”

Armed with their rifles, both boys crept to the entrance of the tent, and Will pointed out the spot where the object had been. But it was gone now, nor was it in sight along the whole edge of brush surrounding the camp.

“Slunk off—” began Dave, when one of the horses gave a wild snort. The next moment the animal came into full view, sneaking toward the tree upon which Roko had hung the two dead bitterns. It was a beautifully spotted male leopard, of full size and long, sweeping tail. He came on as stealthily as a cat, to the same general family of which these beasts belong. He had followed the bloody trail of one of the bitterns to the spot, and now wanted to make off with the game.

“Steady now,” whispered Will. “Let us both fire at the same time. Are you ready?”

There was a brief pause.

“Yes.”

“All right. Fire!”

The two rifles spoke up as one, and following

the two flashes of fire in the semi-darkness the leopard was seen to leap into the air and fall back. But the beast was not killed, and with a blood-curdling snarl he switched around in the grass and then leaped toward the boys.

The reports of the firearms, and the snorting of the horses, who were now frantic, brought Roko to his feet at a bound. "What's coming?" he roared, in his native tongue. "A leopard! Shoot him! Shoot! or he will tear you to pieces!"

"The shotgun!" gasped Dave, and dove into the tent for the weapon. At the same time both Will and the Kafir leaped over the smouldering fire, the latter catching up an ember and waving it into a flame. Seeing this, Will did the same, remembering that fire is one of the best protections against wild beasts known.

The leopard had been hit both in the fore and hind quarters, and so he came on with difficulty, snarling and showing his teeth in such a fashion that all three of the horses speedily broke their tethers and galloped out of danger with all possible speed. Had the beast not been hit at all he would doubtless have slunk away, but now he was blind with rage, and ready to wage battle with anything or anybody, regardless of consequences.

The fire, however, he did not fancy, and so turned to the tent into which Dave had just disappeared for the shotgun.

“*Hiyo!*” screamed Roko, and flung his burning brand full at the beast. It landed on the leopard’s neck, causing an added scream of fury. To get rid of the fire the beast was compelled to retreat a few steps, and here he paused as if calculating what move he had best make next.

That pause, slight as it was, was fatal to the leopard’s welfare, for, swinging around in the entrance to the tent, Dave let drive, first with one barrel and then with the other of the shotgun. Each charge struck the beast full in the face, literally peppering his features with shot.

Yet even then he was not dead, but continued to squirm around the ground, emitting snarls and screams which rang in the boys’ ears for many days afterward. Will was about to put a final bullet into his body when Roko interfered and broke the beast’s skull with a club.

It was several minutes before any of the party breathed easier. “Is he dead, or only shamming?” asked Dave, breaking a sudden silence which had fallen.

The Kafir turned the body over with his *knobkerrie*. "Him dead as stone wood," he said, meaning as dead as a tree that has become petrified. Without further ado he knelt down and began to skin the animal, showing the boys just where the first two shots had struck. The skin was in good condition, but saving the riddled head was out of the question, even had the lads wished to do so.

"The horses have run away," said Will. "I wonder if they will know enough to come back? It's a pity we didn't hobble them as the Boers do." He referred to a universal custom among the South African Dutch whereby, when a horse is grazing, one of his fore feet is strapped up in such a fashion that he has to do his standing on three legs only. Thus hobbled, my readers can readily understand that a grazing horse will not wander off very far.

"Well, we didn't hobble them, and we've got to make the best of it," answered Dave. "I think Lightning will come back, after he feels sure that the leopard is out of the way."

Having skinned the beast, the Kafir cut off some of the choicest portions to keep for camp use, and

then dragged the carcass down to the river and shoved it in. "Fine meal for um crocodile," he observed when he came back.

"Are there any crocodiles around here?" asked Dave. "I understood they were all cleaned out."

"Once in a while one turns up," answered his cousin. "Last year a Boer was crossing the river when his oxen got stuck in mid-stream. He jumped into the water to help them out, when all at once some of the other Boers who were around heard him give one yell, and that was the last of the poor chap. A crocodile had carried him off."

"Excuse me from crossing the stream then, unless it's in a boat or by way of a bridge."

"The natives have a funny way of crossing. They take a sharp stick and hold that in front of them, so that if a crocodile should swim up to nab them they can thrust the stick in his mouth and let him run it through his upper and lower jaw. Roko can tell you something about that."

"Him so," answered the Kafir, nodding his head. "Roko do um once, but get caught little," and he showed the back of his hand, which was badly scarred. "No like crocodile—good fo' nothing. Eat babies up in Kafir kraal." Meaning that the

crocodiles had often eaten up small children belonging to his native village.

It was decided that Roko should go after the horses without delay, while the boys remained in camp to secure the tent and make themselves otherwise comfortable against the storm, which was now approaching. As the Kafir disappeared they set about reloading their weapons and replenished the fire, having no desire to spend the remainder of that night in darkness.

“That leopard may have a mate around,” argued Will. “And if that is so, we don’t want to be caught off our guard.”

But the tent soon demanded their attention, and everything else was forgotten in the effort to pin it down so that it would retain its upright position. From a steady wind it began to blow a regular gale, while the first drops of the tropical storm came down as large as two shilling pieces. The fire, too, began to blow in all directions, and when some of the embers got inside of the canvas the lads were sorry that they had not let the blaze die out utterly.

“This is going to be a hummer!” cried Will, as he beat out the sparks. “It’s good it’s raining, or we might have set the whole forest on fire.”

“I think the best we can do is to wrap this canvas right around us,” said Dave, as a puff of wind took the sheet up and then let it fall minus its ridge pole. “Jee-rusalem! just listen to that whistling through the tops of the trees!”

There was no need to listen, for the sound was loud enough for anybody to hear. It was a strange noise, like the letting off of a low pressure of steam, and beneath that force of wind the trees swayed and groaned, while here and there a bough came down with a crack like the report of a pistol. Truly a tropical storm was on them in all of its fury.

“If we are not blown away, we’ll be drowned!” gasped Dave, as the rain began to fall in a sheet. Then came a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder which startled them more than ever. “I can tell you this is going to be no picnic.”

With the tent down they could do little but huddle under the canvas as Dave had suggested. But the wind drove the rain in all directions, and soon they were wet to the skin, in spite of the covering. The deluge put the fire out in short order, leaving them in total darkness excepting when the lightning lit up the scene.

“We are in a hollow, and the water is forming a

pool under us," announced Will, when the rain had been coming down for the best part of half an hour. "I move we try to locate on higher ground."

"I am willing," returned Dave. "But we have got to take all our traps with us, or they'll be washed into the river before morning."

To move was no light task, and even though they loaded themselves down, they had to make three trips before everything they had brought along was transferred to the new camp. Then the wind seemed to let up a bit, but the rain came down as hard as ever, while the thunder and lightning was almost incessant.

"I don't believe Roko will find the horses in this storm," said Will. "The thunder will scare them half to death, and I know Toby will run until he is ready to drop."

"Perhaps they will go home," answered Dave, dubiously. "If they do, we'll have the pleasure of following on foot. But who ever dreamed that we would strike such a downpour as this? It's the worse storm I've seen since I came to Africa."

"We had a storm like this two years ago. It rained for nearly a week, too, and some of the mines got flooded with water, and the farmers lost a lot of

live stock. The veldt was covered in some places for miles, and —”

Will did not finish, for at that moment a blinding flash of lightning seemed to come down directly in front of them. The ear-splitting crash of thunder which came with it was followed by another crash equally alarming. An immense tree near which they had stationed themselves had been struck and was now coming down on top of them!

CHAPTER XIX

WILL AND THE WATER-BUCKS

“JUMP! Jump for your life!”

It was Will who uttered the cry. He understood the meaning of that crashing of timber only too well. The tree was an immense oak of the South African variety, standing high in the air, and so thick at the base that both boys combined could not have encircled it. The English boy knew that if this came down upon them they would be crushed to a veritable jelly.

The sound of the boy's voice was drowned out by the fury of the storm. But it was not necessary that he be understood, for Dave had heard the crash also and now leaped forward, dragging the canvas and Will with him. Then both tripped over and rolled in a heap. As they were rising, the upper half of the tree came down beside them. A branch struck the canvas and they were pinned down as by the arm of some giant of old.

Will was the first to speak. He had been caught

across the back, and though he squirmed with hands and feet he found it impossible, for the time being, to move his body.

“Dave, are you hurt?” he asked.

There was no answer to this question, and Will’s heart leaped into his throat. Was it possible that his cousin had been struck dead? Fervidly he prayed to heaven that this calamity might be spared him. If Dave was dead, how could he ever go back to tell his cousin’s father?

“Dave! Dave!” he went on. “Speak to me! Tell me you are not dead! That you are not seriously hurt!”

He listened attentively, and presently a stifled gasp came to his ears, telling him that his cousin still breathed. The canvas was yet on top of both, and now held down so firmly by branches and leaves that even the lightning was excluded to a great extent. “We’ll be smothered as sure as fate!” gasped the boy, and renewed his struggles so desperately that at last he found himself free, although minus the bottom fringe of his jacket, which was torn off completely.

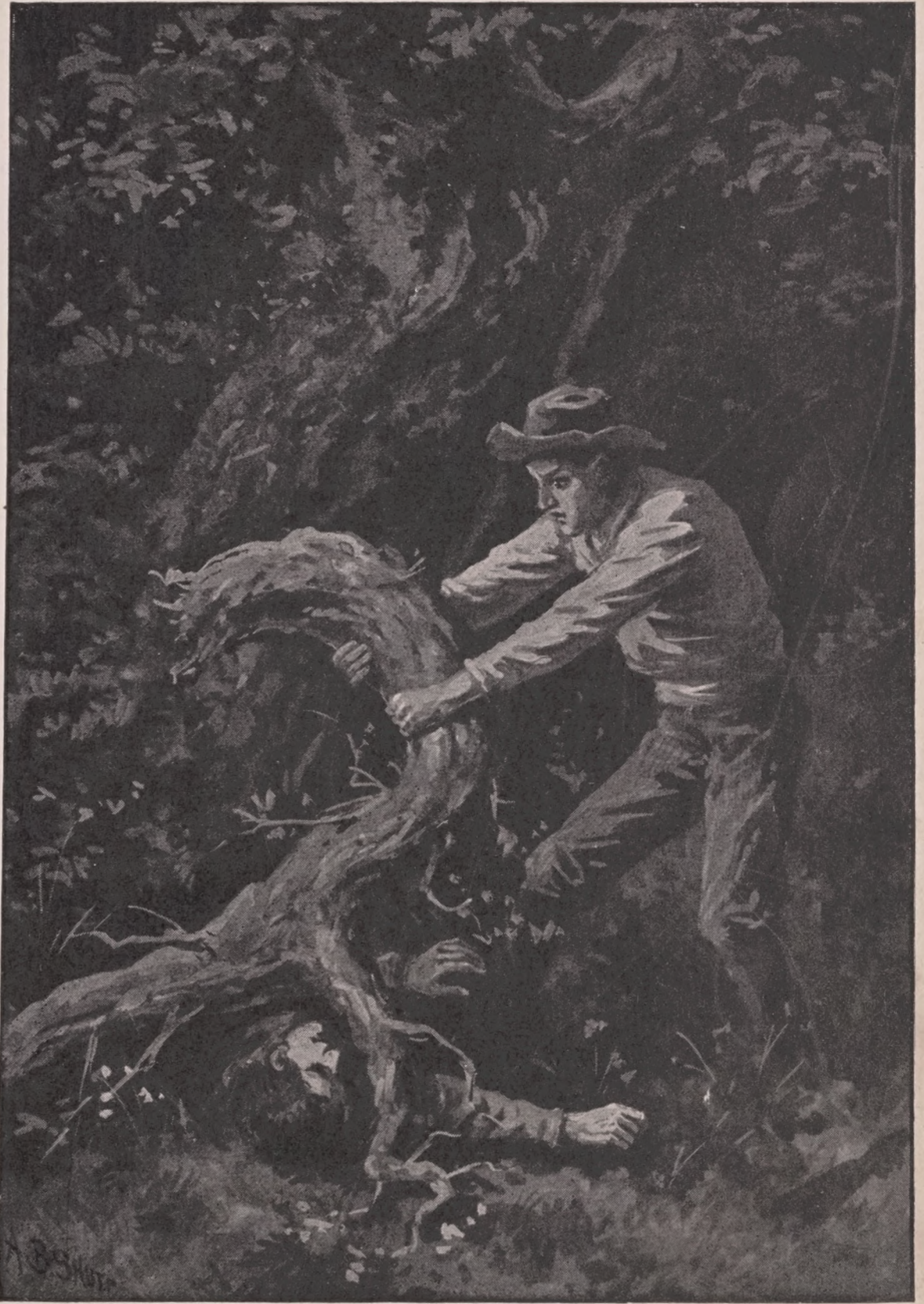
As soon as he could stand erect, Will began hauling on the canvas. One corner could not be got

loose, and this he freed with his knife, determined that Dave should have air, if nothing more. The rain still came down in torrents, but this the youth no longer noticed.

A cry of horror burst from Will's lips when the next flash of lightning revealed the whole situation. A forked tree branch had caught Dave across the back and across the neck, holding him down as if in a vice, and cutting off his breath. He was already growing black in the face, and Will could see that complete strangulation was but a question of a few seconds more.

With frantic haste he pulled at the branch, only to find himself unable to do more than bend back the outer end, which lay several yards away from Dave. "I must get a lever of some sort," he thought, and his eyes fell upon his rifle. Shoving this under the branch, he exerted all of his strength, and thus managed to raise it several inches. But while holding the rifle, he could do nothing toward removing his cousin, and he stood still in perplexity, straining as he had never strained before, to hold the branch back.

"Oh!" The moan came from Dave, and by a lightning flash Will saw his cousin raise one arm in a dazed manner.



“ WITH FRANTIC HASTE HE PULLED AT THE BRANCH.” — Page 176

“Pull yourself out, Dave!” he cried. “Pull yourself out!”

“Oh!” came another groan. But Dave understood, and now crawled forward a short distance. As soon as he was clear of the branch, Will let the rifle drop and leaped to his cousin’s side.

“I hope you are not seriously hurt,” he ventured, his face full of the keen anxiety which filled his heart. “That limb had you right over the throat. If I hadn’t raised it — Oh, dear, he’s fainted!”

Will was right, the fight for life, brief as it was, had been too much for Dave, and now when it was all over his nerves had collapsed, and he lay like a limp rag across Will’s lap, the rain beating down upon both as steadily as ever, and the lightning and thunder coming and going as before.

And so the night passed, — a night which Will declares to this day he will never forget, so filled was it with horror, discomfort, and uncertainty. The boy could do little but haul the remains of the tent over himself and his cousin, and then count the minutes which must elapse before daylight would be at hand.

Just before it was time for the sun to come up, Dave spoke. “Who — what has happened?” he

said, with a gasp. "I—I thought I was being choked to death."

"You came pretty close to it, Dave," answered Will, delighted to see that his cousin had come out of the faint. "A tree limb pinned us both down, but you were the worse off by far. How is it, any bones broken, do you think?"

"I—I don't know—yet. My neck is dreadfully stiff, and my back feels as if somebody had been kicking me."

After considerable trouble Dave managed to sit up, and a little while later said he felt sure no bones were broken. But his back was sadly scratched, and both boys were glad that they had brought along a bottle of ointment for just such a possible emergency.

It was not until noon that the storm ceased and the sun began to struggle through the drifting clouds. As bad as the rain had been, it soon soaked away or ran into the streams, leaving the veldt grass as dry as before. While Dave rested, Will gathered together their scattered stores, hung the canvas and some of their outer clothing on the tree branches to dry, and built an immense fire close by. Then he went back to the old camp to get

the two bitterns, but found that they had disappeared.

“That leopard didn’t get them, but some other animal did,” he observed grimly. “I wonder if I can’t bring down something with the shotgun—I hate biltong so. You had better have a cup of hot coffee while I am gone,” and he strode away in the direction of the river bank.

For a while Will could see nothing of any game excepting some small birds not worth the shooting. But in thrashing along the river bank he stirred up a covey of koran, a bird peculiar to this territory, and, blazing away with both barrels, brought down six of the birds—certainly quite a respectable lot, when one considers the swiftness with which this member of the feathered tribe flies. Then he came across another bittern, and added that to his stock of provender.

“The river is running like a mill race,” he announced when he came back to camp. “There will be no fording the stream for a good forty-eight hours, I’ll wager. I hope Roko didn’t have to go over for the horses.”

“There is no telling where he had to go, nor where he went,” answered Dave, who lay on his

side sipping hot coffee, as his cousin had advised. "I wish he would show up. I am getting anxious about him."

"He won't show up until he finds the horses, you can rest assured of that. The Kafirs think more of horseflesh than anything else. I've heard tell that years ago they used to turn up at the settlements with female slaves from other tribes, and try to trade them off for horses. The thing of it is, what shall we do: wait here for him, or go on hunting?"

"I think we had better wait here, or, at least, keep our camp here. Of course, we can range around to suit ourselves in the meantime. I believe we can stir up some game along the river bank if we go at it in the right way."

So it was agreed to remain where they were, and, this settled, Will prepared the first meal of the day, a sort of dinner and breakfast combined, as he told his cousin. The koran were cleaned, and several of them were then encased in clay taken from the river bank, and roasted like potatoes. The flavor was peculiar, but to the half-starved boys the meal proved a delicious repast.

As Dave's back was still lame, he decided to

remain in camp for the balance of the day, doing what he could toward mending the tent and putting the other things in order. To this task Will left him and made again for the river, this time taking his rifle as well as the shotgun.

The fury of the great storm was everywhere in evidence, broken trees and brushwood lying scattered on every hand. Overhead, the birds lamented the ruin wrought to their nests in shrill cries, which grew louder as he advanced deeper and deeper into the forest. In many places the rain had cut deep gullies into the soft soil, leaving massive tree roots utterly bare. The tropical vines made a tangle through which it was impossible, at times, to pass.

Having moved along the river for the best part of two miles, Will came to another clearing where a small cliff overlooked the Crocodile. With the true instinct of a hunter, he did not emerge into the opening until he had taken a long look around. To his joy he discovered a small herd of water-buck, standing directly upon the brow of the cliff, gazing with lifted heads behind them.

Will's first thought was to let drive with the rifle, aiming at the leader, an old buck with im-

mense horns, and of so strong a scent that the youth could smell him with ease, even though he was fifty yards away. But then the boy remembered that the meat of the water-buck, on account of its obnoxious flavor, is totally unfit for food, and his hand left the trigger of the weapon, and he paused.

“If I fire I may scare away something much better,” he thought. “I wouldn’t want to touch the beast, even if I did manage to lay him low. I wonder what is alarming the old chap?”

For alarm there was, as Will could readily see. Every member of the herd was as motionless as a statue, heads up, ears out, and tails on an upward curve, their nostrils sniffing the air. Their color was brown, with a whitish patch close to the tail.

Suddenly a roar rang out, coming from the foot of the cliff, a roar of rage and pain intermixed. At that sound, the water-bucks gave a snort of terror, and leaping forward, several of them sprang over the cliff into the turbulent stream far below.

The roar likewise surprised Will, for it told him that that monarch of the forest, a lion, was in the vicinity. Gripping his rifle closer, he lost no

time in starting to retreat, having no desire to meet the lion single-handed and on foot.

But the tangle of brush, as we already know, was great, and before he had taken a dozen steps, the boy fell headlong. As he attempted to rise, he heard a rushing of feet behind him, and, looking over his shoulder, he beheld the leader of the water-bucks bearing down upon him at full speed.

CHAPTER XX

THE THREE DUTCH SOLDIERS

LEFT to himself Dave felt more or less lonely, and he was glad to think that there was something with which he could occupy his mind during his cousin's absence from camp.

Having looked to see that his rifle was in proper condition, and likewise his pistol, the lad sat down to mend his coat. Fortunately several spools of thread and a paper of needles had been included in their outfit, so he was not hampered for the want of these. He had used a needle before, both at the ostrich farm and at the ranch in Texas, and though the job of mending took some time, yet when it was finished it would have done credit to somebody far more experienced than himself.

The coat finished, Dave took up the canvas to see if some of the numerous tears it had received could not be sewn up. As he did so he heard a cry out on the veldt, and looking in the direction saw three sturdy Dutchmen approaching on horseback.

One of the Boers had seen the camp, and it was he who announced the fact to his comrades, who were riding at a short distance from him. The three at once closed in and came forward to see whose camp it might be and what the strangers might have to say.

As the Dutchmen came closer he saw that they were dressed in the uniform of Transvaal soldiers, or, rather, mounted police, as they are called in some parts of the South African Republic, and that one of them was an officer. All were well armed, and one carried over his saddle the carcass of a gemsbok but recently shot.

“Uitlander,” muttered the leader of the three, he who carried the gemsbok, as he came closer; “*daats geen Boeren neit*” (that’s not a Boer).

He was a burly man of forty or more years, with thick black hair and heavy beard. His face was stern but not ugly, and his companions were very similar to him. All nodded pleasantly as they came up and brought their beasts to a halt.

“Englees boy, hey?” queried the leader, in very bad English. “All alone here?”

“I am just now,” answered Dave; “I have another young fellow and a Kafir with me.”

“On the hunt?”

“Yes; we came up from Pretoria some days ago. We got caught in that storm, and I hurt my back under that tree. That storm was very bad.”

“You got right,” replied the Boer soldier; “we *slaap in en huis*,” he added, meaning that he and his companions had slept in a house that night.

“*Kan maar saal aff heir?*” questioned one of the other soldiers, asking if he could unsaddle, for his animal was suffering from a sore back. “*Da tsetse flagen het aam baaten*,” he continued, in a mixture of Dutch and Low German, saying that the tsetse-flies had bitten him — meaning, of course, his steed.

“Yes, you can unsaddle if you wish,” answered Dave. “Our horses ran away and the Kafir is after them. But that wouldn’t matter, anyway, as they are thoroughly salted. That’s a fine gemsbok you’ve got; I’ll trade you some koran for a steak.”

To this the soldiers readily agreed, and seeing that Dave’s back hurt him, they told him to take it easy and they would make themselves at home. They listened to the story about the leopard with keen interest, and complimented Dave on having helped to bring the animal down.

“I very glad you American boy,” said the leader,

with a grim smile. "I no like the Englees much — they want too much from the Boers — farms, cattle, gold — everyt'ing."

"But they want it honestly, don't they?" asked Dave, who felt bound to stick up for his uncle and his cousin.

The big Boer shrugged his shoulders. "They say so," he answered in Cape Dutch; "but we cannot believe it. They came in here first just to run the mines — now they want to run the country as well. We were doing well enough before they came. Why did they not leave us alone?"

"But they claim that you invited English capital here, and capital won't come unless it is backed up by men, and that means women and children too, in a case like this; and now that all these people are here, it seems something of a shame not to give them a right to vote. I am an American, but my father has come here with me and invested a good part of his money in a farm, for which he is taxed as heavily as anybody, and yet he hasn't a right to vote for even a constable, if one was to be voted for."

"He can stay here fourteen years and become a citizen."

"He can if he declares his intentions and lives for

fourteen years on probation, so to speak. Even then he can't get his final papers unless the authorities see fit to give them to him."

"Why should he wish to vote?" put in the third soldier, sharply. "Isn't the Dutch form of government good enough for him? We run things as our fathers and our grandfathers did before us. If that is not good enough, then let the Uitlander get out, say I," and he sat back and puffed at his short briar-root pipe as if his argument settled the whole question.

"I do not wish to find fault," went on Dave, cautiously, not caring to make enemies of these newcomers, who in themselves seemed warm-hearted enough. "To me the whole thing seems an unpleasant state of affairs that the leaders on both sides might easily remedy. Perhaps the English ask too much, but, on the other hand, the Dutch seem to be willing to grant nothing. My uncle says the tax on dynamite is so high that every mine owner in the state is kicking about it; and yet, with all the high taxes on mining articles and on city property, there are hardly any improvements; and a big city like Johannesburg suffers for the want of proper street pavements, street lighting, police pro-

tection, sewers, and a court of justice where the English may have equal rights with the Dutch. I do not say these things for myself; my uncle says them, and he has been here a much longer time than I have."

"Your uncle don't understand us Boers," answered the leader of the soldiers. "We may be wrong in some things, but we are right in this. We were driven from Cape Colony and Natal into the Transvaal, and here we stay, and no English, no Germans, no Americans, shall take the ruling power from the Dutch. It is God-given, and we will fight for it, if needs be, to the last drop of our blood!"

"Amen!" responded the other soldiers, promptly, and lifted their broad-brimmed hats. Their love of Dutch institutions was a part of their religion. However much he might differ with them in their opinions, Dave could not help but admire their sincerity.

As if that amen had closed the discussion, the soldiers now changed the subject and questioned the youth about himself and about the hunting expedition and how long he expected to be out, in the meantime fixing themselves some gemsbok

steaks over the fire, and slicing off a generous round in exchange for the koran given them. They had come over from a post in the northeast, and reported meeting an American hunter there who, from their description, Dave rightfully guessed must have been Captain Barton.

“I wish he would come this way,” said the boy. “I know I’d have fine times if he was with our party.” The soldiers reported that the hunter had been loaded down with skins, heads, and horns to the extent of eight mule loads, and was also bringing with him a case of birds and a cage full of rare monkeys. They were not certain, but thought he was bound for Pretoria.

“He said if there was to be any fighting he wanted to get out of the country,” said one of the soldiers. “He was up to Fort Tuli, and I suppose the English there told him how black matters looked.”

“And do you really think it will come to war?” cried Dave, in astonishment.

“When a fire starts there is no telling where it will end,” answered the Boer, gravely. “I have seen a fire on the veldt stop at the first tiny stream it came to, and I have seen another fire leap all streams and burn down the tallest forest. If the

English are wise they will not force the Dutch too far into a corner."

It was on the tip of Dave's tongue to reply to this, but prudence kept him silent, and he went on mending the canvas, while the soldiers finished their meal and then threw themselves down to smoke and to doze in the shade afforded by the branches of the fallen tree. And thus the remainder of the day slipped by until the sun began to sink in the west, when Dave commenced to wonder why Will did not come back.

"And now we must be on our way again," cried the leading soldier, leaping up, followed by his companions. Their horses were quickly caught, unhobbled and saddled, and they leaped upon their backs. "Good-by, boy, may the hunt bring in plenty of meat and skins!" And then they swept off, Dave waving them a parting salute.

The visit of the Boers had broken the loneliness of the situation, but now, with the soldiers gone and night coming on, the camp seemed more desolate than ever. Leaving the brushwood, Dave walked out on the wide veldt. As far as eye could reach, neither human being nor animal was in sight, for the Boers had disappeared around a distant kopje.

The solitude of that vast plain was oppressive, and the boy soon returned to the camp, and then sauntered slowly to the river bank, where the tall trees were casting long shadows down the stream. Close at hand a few birds set up their song notes, and from a distance came the chattering of monkeys and the occasional hoarse cry of a baboon, but otherwise all was silent.

“I wish Will would come back,” he half muttered to himself. “Surely he doesn’t intend to stay away all night. I wonder if he struck the trail of something big, like an eland or hartebeest, for instance. That would be worth bringing down.”

He was about to turn back to camp, when something dark floating on the stream attracted his attention. It looked hairy, and at first he thought it might be a small portion of a hippopotamus’ body, and raised his gun just for a chance shot, well aware that a single bullet would never kill the beast unless, by rare chance, it might plough through his brain. But then the object turned over and came close to the river bank, and he saw that it was a soft hat. Eagerly he reached out with his rifle barrel and drew it in. Then as he recognized the head covering he gave a groan.

“Will’s hat, I would know it out of a thousand! What in the world has happened to him? Has he fallen into the river and been drowned?”

These questions were easy to ask, but impossible for Dave to answer. Filled with increasing alarm he forgot all about his lame back, and began to hunt up and down the river bank, at the same time yelling at the top of his lungs and firing off his pistol. But no reply came back to these signals, and soon the blackness of night settled down and he found himself still alone.

CHAPTER XXI

INTO THE FOREST AND OUT

To go back to poor Will at the time he pitched headlong in the brush and found, on attempting to rise, that the leader of the water-bucks was coming straight for him at full speed.

For one brief instant the heart of the youth seemed to stop beating, and a lightning-like vision swept over his mind, in which he saw himself pierced through and through by those terrible horns now bent low to rend him asunder.

But then the law of self-preservation asserted itself, and swinging around his rifle, he took hasty aim and pulled the trigger. A shrill cry from the water-buck followed, and then with one mighty leap the beast fell before him. By a lucky chance — or was it through an All-wise Providence? — the bullet had entered the animal's left eye, and slanting downward, found its way into the throat.

Yet it was not dead, and tried in a pitiful way to rise, only tumbling back after each effort. In

the meantime, the other water-bucks swept by, leaving their wounded leader and Will to themselves.

In order to put the beast out of its misery Will reloaded his rifle, and then drawing closer with caution, emptied two shots from his pistol into the water-buck. This settled him, and after several tremulous kicks and a mighty gasp, he settled back, stretched himself, and laid still.

“Phew! but that was a narrow escape!” murmured the boy, after it was all over. His forehead was bathed in a cold perspiration, and his hand shook so that he could scarcely refill the chambers of his pistol.

Now that the water-buck was dead, he was sorry it was not some beast that might be of profit to him. He had never brought down such a sturdy member of the antelope family before, and he gazed at the carcass with interest, wondering if the horns might not be of value.

As he leaned over to examine the horns, another mighty roar rent the air, causing him to leap back in new alarm. In the excitement he had forgotten about that first roar, but now he remembered it only too well. Looking toward the end of the

cliff, he saw some brush parting slowly. In another second there appeared the head of a tawny lion, whose fierce eyes were bent directly upon the remains of the water-buck. The beast had suffered from some attack, for his left ear, of a blackish color, was covered with half-dried blood. He was evidently very hungry, for he hardly gave Will any attention.

The sudden appearance of the monarch of the forest caused the youth to beat a hasty retreat, and as the lion moved around, the boy was forced away from the brush and up on the narrow cliff the water-bucks had occupied. Scrambling up to the very top of the rocks, he paused, to find the lion at the dead buck's side, lapping up the blood which was flowing from the wound in the eye.

Will felt that he was in a bad situation, and what made it worse was the fact that in his hasty retreat he had dropped his rifle close to the water-buck, so that he had now only his pistol and the shotgun to rely upon, and the latter was charged only with fine shot put in for bird-shooting purposes.

"Here's a state of things!" he muttered dismally, as he sat on the highest rock he could find and watched the lion. "If ever a boy was in a

box, I guess that boy is yours truly! If I fire the pistol at the beast, I suppose it will only make him mad, and he'll come for me hot-footed. He looks to be in a bad humor already."

Several minutes passed — to Will the time seemed an age — and then the lion slowly dragged the carcass of the water-buck out of sight behind some bushes. A rending of flesh and a cracking of bones followed, and the youth knew by the sounds that the monarch of the forest was making his day's meal then and there, without going to the trouble of dragging his prize to his home. This showed that he was more than ordinarily hungry, or else weak from the wound on his head.

It was a long time before the cracking of bones ceased, and Will began to wonder if the lion would show himself again or skulk off, as is their usual habit after having eaten their fill. He could see nothing from where he sat, and tried to gain another point not quite so high, but farther to the right. This brought him close to the water's edge, and it was here that he dropped his hat into the stream and saw the head covering float off without being able to do anything to recover it.

Try his best, however, he could see nothing of

the lion. Had the beast gone, or was he preparing for a secret attack? That was the question which fairly set Will's nerve on edge, and made him remain on the rocks, pistol in hand and shotgun laid across his knees. If he was attacked, he would fight as best he could, and if the worst came to the worst, he would leap into the river and strike out for the opposite shore. He had no desire to make bait of himself for some wily crocodile that might be lying down there in the muddy reeds, but anything was better than falling into the lion's maw.

Hour after hour went by, and Will was nearly overcome by the terrific heat that poured down on his uncovered head. ~~X~~ But he did not dare to give up his present position, for fear the lion would commence the attack as soon as he got away from the water. He wished for a drink, but none was at hand, and the rusk he had brought almost refused to go down without some artificial moistening.

At last, as the sun began to set, the youth grew desperate. "It won't do to remain here in the dark," he reasoned. "That lion wouldn't like anything better than that. I'll make a break

down the river bank, and if he shows himself, I'll give him all that's in the pistol and the shotgun too, and then trust to the water. This watching for something that isn't coming is enough to knock a chap's backbone all to flinders!"

As noiselessly as possible he left the high rock and picked his way down the cliff to where a portion of it overlooked the muddy river bank. Here he took a drop, landing in the mud up to his ankles, but unharmed. Beyond was the tall reed grass and the brush and trees, and hither he made his way, pausing every few steps to survey the situation. Once he fancied he heard the lion coming, and retreated to the water, but the alarm proved a false one.

If it had been dark on the rocks, it was still more so in the brush, and had it not been that he had the river to guide him, Will must have become lost. As it was, he nearly missed his way, and plunged headlong into a gully where he found the water up to his knees. The gully was full of birds, but they all flew away before he could get a shot at them, even if he had wanted to fire, which was doubtful.

Having covered a mile or more, the boy felt himself fairly safe again, and struck out boldly for

camp, wondering what Dave would think of his long absence, and what his cousin would say when he saw him returning empty handed. He knew that the river made a broad turn just above him, and decided now to leave the bank and take a short cut to where he had left Dave.

But, as we all know, short cuts are not always profitable. In plunging into the forest, Will got turned around, and after tramping for two hours through thick brush and over tangled tree roots, he found himself face to face with the knowledge that he was hopelessly lost.

Here was a new cause for alarm, and he bitterly regretted having left the river bank at all. "I'd be in camp by this time," he grumbled. "What a fool's day I am making of it right straight through! I suppose I may as well stay where I am for all the good it will do me to wear myself out moving on to goodness knows where."

Nevertheless, he did not stand still, but, coming to a small stream of water, threw in a twig to ascertain how the current was running. Having learned this, he began to follow the stream, satisfied that sooner or later it must bring him back to the river.

But rivers in South Africa, as elsewhere, do not

run in anything like a straight course. The stream Will followed wound around in the shape of a letter C with the letter S attached, and before it found the Crocodile River, made its way out of the forest and along the edge of the veldt. Finding himself at last in the open once more, the youth felt loath to reënter the forest.

“I’ll camp out right where I am until morning,” he concluded, when from out of the semi-gloom he saw several objects approaching him. At first they looked like giraffes or some other wild beasts, but as they drew closer he saw they were horses, three in number, and that one was being ridden by a tall black.

“Roko!” he yelled at the top of his voice, and ran forward joyfully. It was indeed the Kafir, who was somewhat amazed to see him out on the veldt alone, at a distance of fully a mile from where he had left the two boys.

“I have hard time to get horses,” he explained, after Will had leaped into the saddle and they were riding along. “Storm make dem run an’ run an’ run, and Roko most tired to death following the spoor. Den when I am almost dare hear lion coming up. He go to kill one horse when I shoot

him on top de head. He run off an' I get horses. We get on wrong road and so take lot time get back."

"You hit a lión on the head!" ejaculated Will. "It must have been the very beast I fell in with." And he told his story, to which the Kafir listened with close attention.

"He same lion," he announced. "Bad fellow dat — regular man-eater. Roko like to kill um."

"So would I like to kill him, — but I don't want to give him the chance to chew me up," answered Will.

The journey back to camp lasted until nearly daylight, for they had to make a wide detour to avoid a treacherous *vley*, where a few inches of water covered a morass of the stickiest kind of mud. When they came in they found Dave sitting on the fallen tree, rifle in hand, the picture of despair.

"Will!" he cried, and his face brightened instantly. "I was afraid you had been drowned, or that some wild animal had carried you off. And Roko, too, and the horses! Oh, but I'm glad you are all back!" And he felt very much like dancing a jig for joy, so great was his mental relief.

It took some time for each to tell his story and to

partake of the gemsbok steak which Dave cooked over the camp-fire. But after the stories were told and the early dawn meal disposed of, all were glad enough to lie down and partake of a short but sound sleep, which did much to restore them to themselves, both mentally and physically.

CHAPTER XXII

A LION AND A GEMSBOK HUNT

“YES, I would really like to go after that lion and see if we can’t bring him down.”

It was Will who spoke, as he sat on the tree stirring up the fire with a long stick he had picked up. A sound sleep had done wonders for him, and he was now as eager as ever to continue the grand hunt.

“I am with you,” returned Dave, promptly. “We came out to hunt, and such a chance won’t fall our way again in a hurry. We are three to one, so to speak, and have our horses back, and that lion is more or less wounded. I move we start on the trail, or spoor, as they call it out here, without delay.”

Both boys looked at Roko, who was preparing another meal. The Kafir smiled in his own peculiar manner. “We go — soon as eat,” he said simply. “Um boys bag lion big, big men den!” And he showed his ivories.

It was probably three o’clock in the afternoon

when they left the camp where so much of interest had occurred. They were just starting when the Kafir suddenly raised his hand for silence, and pointed down to the river bank where a fringe of brush partly cut off the view of the stream.

“What is it? I see nothing,” whispered Will, after a pause.

“I see something,” returned Dave. “Is it a crane? No, it must be a secretary bird by the quills back of his ears.”

Roko nodded. “Whole lot comin’,” he whispered. “Good chance fo’ bag, as um call it,” and again he grinned.

Dismounting, the party of three crept forward, using the brush for a screen. But they were still some distance off when the secretary birds caught sight of them, and like a flash all disappeared into the river.

“Well I never!” cried Dave. “How soon will they come up, Roko?”

“Come up udder side,” replied the native. “No good shoot — we no cross to get um,” and he walked back to where their steeds had been left.

“It’s too bad we lost them,” remarked Will, disappointedly. “But then it’s only the story-book

hunter who brings down everything," he added, with a droll smile.

They were soon galloping over the veldt, which, with the exception of the single kopje and the cliff previously mentioned, was as smooth as a barn floor, as far as the eye could reach. As they advanced they kept their guns in readiness for any game that might appear, but the only animals which showed themselves were the frisky little meerkats, and they kept their distance, as if knowing that Roko would like to bring them down only too well, in order to use their soft fur with which to make a Kafir *karosse*, or cloak.

They came upon the lion's spoor quicker than anticipated, and in a manner which almost proved disastrous to Dave. The youth was riding in advance, when suddenly Lightning shied to one side so violently that Dave was unseated and thrown on the soft turf. Had it not been for Roko the horse would have bolted then and there.

"A wild beast spoor," announced the native, and got down on his knees to make an examination. "Lion's spoor," he announced presently. "Leave blood, too. Blood frighten um horse."

All of the steeds were more or less frightened, for

a Transvaal equine knows a lion's trail as soon as he crosses it — or at least he knows that it is a trail that is dangerous for him — and each of the beasts was trembling, and had to be spoken to firmly but kindly before he would settle himself.

“Do you suppose the lion is near at hand?” questioned Will, as he looked at his rifle once more, to make positive that nothing was amiss.

“Lion go off on good run — but leave blood all de way,” returned Roko. “Come, we try ride him quick before sun make dark.”

The Kafir now took the lead, with Will and Dave side by side behind him. It was clear overhead, but by no means hot, and soon the horses were going at their best speed. Presently they came to a tiny spruit where the lion had stopped to drink. They could tell this by the drops of blood on the stones, and also by the fact that the horses refused to partake of the water, even though they were thirsty.

At last they discovered another kopje far ahead, midway between the spoor they were following and the forest that lined the river bank, which in this vicinity made a grand semicircle. The upper end of the kopje was piled high with large rocks and

overgrown with heavy brush, and here Roko said he felt certain the lion must be.

“Um walk down here,” he explained. “Take slow step, too. Dat show him close home. We be careful now or get in big trouble,” he added.

The warning was not necessary, for both boys were already keyed up to the top pitch of excitement and all the guard they could command.

It was decided that they should separate, Roko riding up the slope of the kopje and Will and Dave riding around either side. Of course the boys kept a good distance away from the nearest brush, and the Kafir did not advance a step until he felt that all was fairly safe in front of him.

Dave had covered a distance of less than fifty yards when he heard a shot ring out, and looking up saw that Roko had fired at an opening between the rocks near the very crest of the kopje. A snarl rent the air immediately after, and the boy saw the tawny form of a lion leap down to another hollow a few feet farther back. As soon as the monarch of the forest showed himself Dave blazed away, but whether his shot hit or not he could not tell.

“Where is he? I don't see him!” came in a yell from Will. “Is he coming this way?”

“No, he is retreating toward the woods,” shouted Dave. “There he goes!”

Bang! went Will’s rifle, and then Roko let fly a second bullet. The lion had now disappeared from Dave’s view, but soon he reappeared, his magnificent face filled with savage rage. He had indeed turned toward the woods, but Will’s shot had caught him in the flank, and now he came for Dave, leaping the earth with wide bounds and showing every tooth in his cruel-looking mouth.

For one brief second Dave’s heart seemed to stop beating, and he felt that the lion must surely knock him from his horse and chew him up. Then instinct more than reason told him to aim and fire, and he did so mechanically, catching the monarch of the forest fairly and squarely in the lower jaw, a shot which cracked the bone and sent the beast tumbling back with shrill snarls of pain.

“Good shot!” came from Roko, as he leaped down the rocks on foot, and now he blazed away again, hitting the lion in the stomach. But the monarch of the forest was still game, and rising he shook his great hairy mane and turned to run around the kopje, thus coming head on for Will.

“Cæsar’s ghost!” murmured the lad. “Get out

of here !” and he shook his arm at the lion. Then, recollecting himself, he pulled his pistol and let drive, once, twice, thrice, in rapid succession, the first bullet missing his majesty, but the second and third finding his vitals and causing him to roll over into a ball. Dave and Roko also fired again, and presently the lion lay motionless on the veldt.

“Is he dead?” asked Dave. Now that it was all over he found he could hardly speak.

“I t’ink so,” answered Roko. “Stay here an’ Roko see.”

With his ever trusty *knob-kerrie*, which he had insisted upon bringing along, the Kafir advanced upon the lion’s body and poked the beast suspiciously. Then he nodded for the boys to come on. “Him dead as stone wood,” he said. “You big, big men now — no more boys.”

“I think you did as much as any of us toward killing him,” said Dave. “My, what a tremendous fellow he is! He’s all of eight feet long, and must have stood at least three feet high. Will, this is game worth bringing down.”

“That is true, Dave; but I don’t know as I want the excitement of a lion hunt every day.”

“Nor I. One lion on this trip is enough glory,

eh? Roko, we'll spend the rest of the time looking for elands, gemsbok, and the like."

"Roko like dat best," answered the Kafir. "Lion good if kill lion, no good if lion kill us."

At this the boys laughed. "Roko struck the nail on the head," went on Dave.

It was now growing dark, and no time was lost in fitting up a drag upon which the lion's carcass was rolled and then drawn to a suitable spot by the river. Here the Kafir skinned the beast with care, saving not only the pelt but also the head and mane. Some of the fat was then cut off for the fire and a lively blaze started, "to keep away the lion's mate if she was around," as Dave put it. But no lioness came to disturb them, so they concluded that his majesty must have been a bachelor.

On the day following it was cloudy; but as it did not rain, Roko put it down as an ideal day for hunting, and so it proved. Leaving camp early, they struck the spoor of some gemsbok before noon, and followed the creatures to a pool of sparkling water lying at the foot of a kopje several miles east of the river. They came up against the strong wind that was blowing, and by dismounting

and using the brush for a screen, reached a point within a hundred and twenty yards of their game before the gemsbok took the alarm.

All three of the hunters were fortunate in hitting their quarry in some vital part, and although every gemsbok ran off, the three wounded ones were followed with ease on horseback and brought to earth in less than half an hour.

“That is what I call a nice haul,” said Will, when they came together again. “What a pity we can’t take all of this meat home with us.”

“It is a shame,” answered Dave. “But the horses wouldn’t carry it.”

The run after the gemsbok had tired them, and they were glad enough to rest for the balance of the day. Lying in the shade the boys let Roko attend to the skins and to the next meal.

“Here comes somebody!” suddenly cried Will, and all leaped forward. But the newcomers were only some friendly Kafirs, who had come in on the trail of the dead lion. The natives were given their fill of both lion and gemsbok meat, and went off highly elated.

“Big trouble coming,” said one of the Kafirs to Dave ere he left. “Much talk between de Boers

an' de Englees. Say down to kraal maybe war comin'."

"So we've heard," answered Dave, soberly. "Well, I trust it all ends in talk. I'm sure I don't want to see any war."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

SEVERAL weeks passed and Dave and Will were having what both said was an immense time. On the second day after bringing down the gemsbok they fell in with a herd of elands, and after following the beautiful creatures for several hours managed to bring down one magnificent buck and a small doe. That night the doe was carried off by a hyena, and following the trail of this beast they caught him on the night following, and Roko despatched him with his *knob-kerrie*.

Dave was also fortunate enough to run across a roan antelope and bring him down by a shot straight through the heart. All three of the party also stirred up a fierce-looking South African buffalo, but though Will put a bullet into the beast he got away after a wild rush in which Roko's horse was in imminent danger of being horned to death.

Birds were numerous, and many a quail and partridge was added to their larder when they grew

tired of the other meat. They also went fishing with fair success, but were much bothered with lizards getting on their lines.

One night Will was greatly startled through rousing up from a sound sleep and finding something soft resting on his shoulder. Putting out his hand he touched something hairy, and leaped to his feet with a cry that quickly aroused Dave and the Kafir. For a minute there was great excitement when, by the blaze from the fire, they made out the intruder to be a half-tame meerkat, who had eaten his fill from their stock of meat and had come in to make himself at home. Occasionally these meerkats are tamed, and allowed to run around the Boer homes very much like domestic cats.

“I tell you I could follow hunting for a good while,” remarked Will, as they sat around the camp-fire one night. “I will be sorry when this outing comes to an end.”

“Well, we can't expect to be off for pleasure forever,” replied Dave. “It won't be many days now before both of us are needed on the farms. I suppose your father has already gone back to the mines.”

“More than likely. I'll tell you what, Dave, this talk of war doesn't suit me at all. If it comes to

war, we English will be in hard luck right here among the Boers. They may confiscate all of our property."

"Your government wouldn't allow that, Will. But it would make it mighty unpleasant, no doubt of it," concluded Dave; and there, for the time being, the subject was dropped.

But while the two boys were enjoying themselves shooting game on the veldt and in the forests bordering several of the rivers in the northern section of the Transvaal, public events were shaping themselves for a war which was to test the mettle of Boer and Briton to the utmost.

Of the arguments for and against this war whole chapters might be written. But it is not my intention to go into all of those details here, for what we have to deal with in this book is the haps and mishaps of our heroes, and how the war affected their fortunes. As is usual in all wars, both sides claimed they were perfectly right, and so sure were they of this, that they were willing to fight out the contest to the bitter end.

Briefly put, it was a question of "taxation without representation." The Uitlander refused longer to be taxed by the Dutch Boers unless they were given

some say in public affairs. They outnumbered the Dutch two to one, and paid nine-tenths of the taxes, and they felt that they should no longer be called upon to run Johannesburg and the mines in order to fill the pockets of the Dutch administration with gold. On the other hand the Dutch said: "We trekked to this country to make it our own, the mines from which you get your gold is on our land, if we give you a right to vote equal to our own, you will put nothing but Englishmen into office, and the Dutch Boer will again be put under foot. If you do not like the way we manage things, you can pack up your goods and get out." But to get out was not so easy, for tens of thousands of Englishmen had made the Transvaal and the Orange Free State their permanent home, and had every shilling of their capital invested there. As was but natural they looked to their mother-country for relief; and England responded at once; and the torch of war was lit, not to be extinguished for many heartrending months to come. Possibly cool-headed statesmen upon both sides might have averted this war; but the same can be said of the War of the Revolution, the Crimea, the terrible Civil War, and every other difference of opinion where the appeal has been to arms.

It was on Saturday, the seventh day of October, 1899, that Queen Victoria signed a call for Parliament to meet ten days later, and also issued a call for the Reserves, — the soldiery not on active duty. In the meantime the British troops in South Africa were hurried to the borders of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal without delay. At this time the British regulars in the Cape Colony, Natal, Bechuanaland, and Rhodesia numbered probably fifteen thousand, and soon eight thousand more were on their way to South Africa from India.

As soon as the queen issued her call the Volksraad of the Transvaal met, and also that of the Orange Free State, and an ultimatum was issued, demanding that all of the British forces be withdrawn from the Dutch frontier within twenty-four hours. This ultimatum remained unanswered; the British troops were pushed forward more rapidly than ever, and on Thursday, October 12, the fighting began by an attack on a British armored train near Mafeking. In this attack, the train was derailed and fifteen soldiers in charge of it were captured, after which the Dutch began an advance upon the town itself. This was on the extreme western frontier of the Transvaal. In the south, the Transvaal commandoes

united with a portion of the Free State troops in a march through the Van Reenan Pass of the mountains toward Ladysmith, while some troops passed Laing's Nek and Botha's Pass on their way to Newcastle. Here only a slight resistance could be offered by the British, and two days later the Dutch occupied the town. The march of this section of the Dutch army was now toward Glencoe, a village lying on the railway line to Ladysmith and Durban; and it was at Glencoe Camp that the first real battle of the war occurred.

Two days after the talk about war Will and Dave were journeying along the river in hopes of stirring up some big game when, without warning, they ran into a Dutch commando numbering over three hundred horsemen, all well mounted and equipped. The soldiers were riding at a rapid gait, but when the boys put in an appearance, the leader brought them to a sudden halt.

"You are Englishmen, hey?" demanded the leader, a heavy-set man of fifty, with bushy black beard and long, black eyebrows, from under which shot the light of an equally black pair of stern eyes.

"I am English," replied Will. "He is an American," and he nodded toward Dave.

“But we are cousins,” put in Dave, hastily.

“So? And do you know the news?” went on the Dutch commander, grimly.

“The news?” repeated Will. “What news?”

“The English have brought on a war against us.”

“War!” came from the cousins.

“Yes, war; and it will not be long now before every Englishman is driven from our country, that is, unless he is willing to give up his arms and accept the terms the Boer government has to offer.”

“This is certainly news,” said Will, slowly. He hardly knew what to reply. He was thinking of home — of his mother and little sister, and of his father and the money invested in the farm and the mines. How were his relatives and the farm and mining matters faring now? “Has there been any fighting yet?” he questioned.

“Some, — and the Dutch soldiers have whipped the *rooibaatjes* every time,” continued the Dutch commander, referring, as is usual, to the English soldiery as redcoats, although, as a matter of fact, the army of the queen was attired in the plain, dull-colored uniform of the tropics.

“Well, if you have whipped our soldiers, it is only because they weren’t ready to meet you!”

cried Will, before he had stopped to think twice. "When our troops wake up to the fact that war is really on they will —"

At this point Will caught Dave's eye, and a warning look stopped him short. But grave mischief had been done, as the lowering looks of several nearby Dutchmen testified.

"Ah, so you, too, are a rebellious Uitlander!" cried the Dutch leader, in his native tongue. "It is well that we ran across you, otherwise you might have been left to pop down some of our soldiers on the sly. I will take your gun and your pistol, and also your name and address," and he held out his hand for the weapons.

At these words Will's face paled a trifle. "What, you — you would rob me of my weapons?" he stammered.

"Such a proceeding is not robbery — in time of war, young man. I will take down your name and address, as I said before, and when this war is over you can have your weapons back. But a rebellious Englishman with firearms is too dangerous a person to be loose in the Transvaal in these times. The gun, I say!"

The last words came so curtly that Will saw fur-

ther argument would do no good. "Here you are," he said, and passed over the rifle. "Surely I can keep the pistol, to bring down game enough to keep me alive."

The Dutch commander shook his head. "You can keep nothing, and if you refuse to do as I wish, I shall take you with me as a prisoner. Which do you choose?"

Without answering, Will handed over his pistol, and the shotgun on his back followed. Then the Dutch leader turned to Dave.

"You say you are an American?"

"I am."

"Your name and address?"

"David Nelson. My father bought out the old Guelmann farm between Pretoria and Johannesburg about a year ago."

"And your name?" went on the leader to Will.

It was readily given, and jotted down in a long note-book, and also the lad's address. Then the leader turned once more to Dave.

"You say you are an American. What do you intend to do in this war between us Dutchmen and the English?"

"I'm sure I don't know, captain."

“Probably you will side with your cousin, not so?” and the Boer smiled grimly.

“Well, that would be natural, wouldn't it? Still I can say frankly that I don't like war of any kind.”

“Neither do some of us Dutchmen; but when it is forced upon us we fight to the very end. God will be with us in our just contest. I shall have to take your weapons, too, I am afraid.”

“Mine? That will leave us defenceless in case any wild beasts attack us.”

“The best thing both of you can do is to get home as quickly as you can. You, as an American, can keep your pistol, for you may need it at home, to guard against those who in war times do nothing but loot and plunder. But let me warn you that any treachery on your part against the Dutch will bring about your speedy death.”

Argument was useless, Dave could see that as readily as could Will. The rifle was passed over, and after a few more words, the Dutch leader called to his commando, and away went the Boers over the wide veldt, leaving both of the boys much bewildered over the sudden turn of affairs.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN OLD ENEMY AGAIN TO THE FRONT

“THE war is a reality, Dave! What shall we do now?”

“Take that Dutchman’s advice, Will, and get home as soon as we can. God alone knows what trouble our folks are having. It is easy to see that the Boers mean business, and with so many British around them there may be fighting on every side.”

“If we are forced out of the country, father will lose all he has,” was Will’s sober comment. “But you are right, the sooner we get home the better. Perhaps father has already been made a prisoner, or something like that.”

The two lads were riding for the spot where they had left Roko. They increased their speed, and in less than an hour bore down upon the Kafir like a whirlwind.

“We are going home, Roko,” said Dave. “War

has been declared between the Dutch and the English.”

“War!” came shrilly from the Kafir. “Who told you?”

“A Dutch captain who was in charge of several hundred men, and who relieved us of our rifles. Come, let us pack up and be off, for there is no telling how much we are needed at home.”

The Kafir nodded quickly, to show that he understood thoroughly. All of their traps were at once packed and a hasty meal disposed of, and away they went, taking the shortest cut for Pretoria that was known to the native.

My readers can well imagine how busy were the thoughts of both cousins as they galloped along. War had really started at last! Where would it end, and what would be the consequences?

“I am afraid, from what I have seen of the Dutch, it will be rule or ruin,” observed Dave. “They gave up the Cape Colony and Natal; I don’t think they’ll give up the Transvaal and the Free State.”

“They will have to,” came quickly from his cousin. “The English soldiers will sweep the country from end to end, you mark my words.”

“If they do, it will be one of the greatest pieces of work they ever accomplished, Will. My idea is, if the Dutch here have any success at all, every Dutchman in the southern portion of Africa will join in the war—for those in the Cape Colony and in Natal are not as friendly to the British as some folks at home think.”

“But we will whip them — no doubt of it,” said Will, earnestly. “Old England forever!” he added, with a shout.

At this Dave could not help but smile. “I admire your pluck, cousin,” he observed. “But don’t shout like that when you get to Pretoria, or some grim Boer may put a bullet through your head. My, how black that crowd did look when you began to praise Tommy Atkins, as you call your soldiers. I thought several of them would rush at you then and there.”

“Oh, they were red-hot, I could see that.”

“It would be no nice thing to be made a prisoner, either, Will. It would go hard with you all through the war,” went on Dave, bound to caution his cousin all that was necessary.

“I’ll be careful of my tongue in the future,” answered Will. “I wonder where the first battle will be fought?”

“According to that Dutchman there have been several skirmishes already. I don’t believe England will push things before she has a big army landed. The local troops in Cape Colony and Natal aren’t sufficient to cope with the united troops of the Transvaal and the Free State,” concluded Dave, earnestly.

That night the little party camped near a *vley* of pure cold water overshadowed by a huge kopje of rocks and trailing vines. They did not reach this spot until long after the sun had gone down, and all were then so weary that scant attention was paid to the evening meal. The tent was fastened up against the rocks, and soon all were in the land of dreams, the snoring of the Kafir being loud enough to drive off any small beast that might be prowling around.

“And now straight for home!” cried Will, on arising at five o’clock. “Something seems to tell me that we are wanted.”

“I think we are wanted myself,” answered Dave. “Hurry along the eland steak, Roko, and let us eat the last of the rusk. If all goes well, we’ll dine at home to-morrow night.”

The horses were as fresh as ever, having found

good fodder and a fine resting-place close by the *vley*. The party now advanced along a small spruit, where could be seen the spoor of many a wild animal, but trails were not what they were looking for just then, and no one paid any attention to the hoof-marks.

It was in the middle of the afternoon that the sky began to cloud over, and presently a drizzling rain set in, accompanied by a fog which hid all their surroundings from sight. The fog made Roko utter a grunt of disgust.

“Be werry careful or miss way,” he remarked. “Bad country here—full of nasty holes.” He was right about the holes, for a little later Will’s horse stepped into one up to his knee joint and extricated himself only after great difficulty. Will was thrown off on the veldt, but sustained no further injury than the scratching of one hand and shoulder.

By nightfall it was raining in torrents, and so dark that Roko said they had better seek shelter under the trees lining the Olifants River. “No get home to-morrow,” he added. “We lose road, and somebody get hurt.”

“I believe he is right,” said Will. “I am willing

enough to rest. We can start a big fire, put up the canvas, and try to dry off."

Hungry, and cold to the very marrow of their bones, they tethered their horses and tied up the canvas as best they could. Then Roko went on a hunt for a little dry brush, which was soon lighted, and more brush heaped on top. Soon the twigs and limbs were crackling merrily, and a pot of coffee was sending forth a most appetizing odor. For supper they had a whole partridge and also some potatoes which they had picked up at a small farm-house along the way. They had asked if they might stop at the farm-house all night, but the Dutch owner had protested most vigorously, adding that he wanted nothing to do with "Engleesmans."

The fire was built close up to the canvas shelter, and it was so hot that it did not take long for them to dry their clothing thoroughly. The warmth made them sleepy, and soon they were once again in the land of dreams.

But their slumbers, though profound, did not last long. Feeling a sudden pain over his face, Dave awoke with a start, to find the entire brush in front of the camp in flames. The rain had

ceased and the wind had arisen, and the fire was roaring loudly as it swept from bush to bush, taking in many a tree by the way.

“Fire! fire!” yelled Dave. “Wake up, Will! Wake up, Roko! The whole wood is on fire!”

A second call was not necessary, for Will and the Kafir were already stirring uneasily. Both leaped to their feet in amazement, and the Kafir let out a yell of terror in his native tongue.

“We must get out of here, Dave!” cried Will, as soon as he could collect his senses. “Where are the horses?”

“I don’t know. Broke away, most likely, as soon as the fire got anywhere near them.”

“All run fast,” burst in Roko. “Maybe fire come around in circle, den be burnt up!”

“Not if we know it,” answered Dave. “Come ahead,” and he picked up his horse’s saddle and a few other of the traps. The canvas had to be left behind, and also what was left of the bok and eland meats. But this counted for nothing alongside of the fact that the conflagration was gaining tremendous headway every second, and they must run with all their might if they would save themselves.

And run they did, helter-skelter, over rocks and

tree stumps and through the wood in the direction of the river. Once they heard the shrill neigh of a horse, but could not locate the direction of the sound. "It's Roko's animal," said Dave. "Poor fellow, I reckon he is done for," and Dave was right. The horse had become wedged in between two trees, and being unable to extricate himself, was speedily burnt to a crisp.

The river gained, they lost no time in finding a fording place and moving over to the opposite shore. As the stream was fairly wide at this point, there was little danger of the fire coming across, and they paused on the bank, wondering what they should do next.

"If we had the horses, we might start out for home," remarked Will. "Roko could take turns in riding behind us."

"Our animals may be lost, too," answered Dave, soberly. "On foot it will be a long tramp. I trust the fire burns itself out before daylight. How foolish we were not to tend to it better."

"Roko think it keep on raining," answered the Kafir. "Rain stop worry quick, and um wind come up quicker. Can't help fire now," and he shrugged his huge shoulders.

“No, there is no use in crying over spilt milk, as the saying goes,” put in Will. “Let us stay here till morning, and then learn what we can concerning the horses.”

This was agreed to, and sitting down on the river bank they watched the fire, as it died down in one direction or shot up in another. It was a grand sight, and yet a sad one, when they considered how much valuable timber was being destroyed. The fire was a hot one, especially when it struck a clump of extra heavy gum trees close to the water's edge, and they found it necessary to move back for fifty or sixty yards.

Dawn was breaking, and they were just about to start on a hunt for the horses, when the sound of a small body of men tramping through the woods broke upon their ears.

“Somebody is coming,” exclaimed Will. “If they are Dutchmen, we had better keep out of sight.”

“Right you are,” returned Dave, and motioned Roko to a nearby hollow. The Kafir understood, and soon the three were concealed in the depression, where several bushes and some vines hid them completely from view.

The tramping came closer, and presently six men hove into appearance. They were all Dutchmen, and dressed in the uniform of the day, with cartridge belts slung over one shoulder and strapped around their waists. All carried guns and were talking volubly, the subject of conversation being as to who had started the fire.

“It must have been some good-for-nothing Englishman!” growled one, in his native tongue. “I would like to catch him! I would show him how we can serve the redcoats when we want to! Take my word for it, he’d walk on crutches for the rest of his life!”

“That’s the talk, Hansa,” replied another. “I am glad I came here to live with you. I shall like this war! Fighting just suits me.”

The last voice sounded strangely familiar, and at the risk of being discovered, Dave could not resist looking up to see the speaker. He was nearly dumfounded to behold Hendrik Kneip, the Dutch cattle man he thought he had left behind him in Texas!

CHAPTER XXV

INTO A DUTCH PRISON PEN

FOR the moment Dave could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses. Hendrik Kneip here in the Transvaal, and with the Dutch Boers, who had entered the forest to learn, if possible, who had started the fire that was raging! Surely, this was a fact that outdid fiction.

But then he remembered how Kneip had once told him of some relatives he had in South Africa, —a brother-in-law named Hansa Worll, and others. Probably the man addressed was that brother-in-law.

“He must have found Texas too hot to hold him after all of his trouble there,” thought the youth. “Maybe Pepper started to have the sheriff arrest him. Won’t he be surprised if we ever meet face to face!”

“Get down there!” The guarded whisper came from Will. “What do you mean by exposing yourself in that fashion?”

“I know one of the men,” whispered Dave in return. “It is that Hendrik Kneip of whom I told you.”

“The Dutchman from Texas? Surely you must be mistaken.”

“No, I am positive of it. He must have —”

Dave broke off suddenly, and plunged deeper into the hollow than ever. The Boers had gone on, but now two of them came back, intending to take a short cut to where the river made a bend, several hundred feet farther down the stream.

“I think the fire is dying down,” one was saying in Cape Dutch. “If we take a walk to the bend we — Hullo, what’s this? A Kafir, as sure as the sun shines! You black son of unrighteousness, what are you doing here? Answer me, or I’ll flay you alive with my sjambok!”

For stumbling into the hollow, he had tripped over Roko. Ere the Kafir could glide away the Dutchman had him by the arm with one hand, while with the other he raised a cruel-looking lash which he was carrying.

“Don’t cut me, Baas, please don’t!” cried the Kafir, who had a wholesome dread of the sjambok,

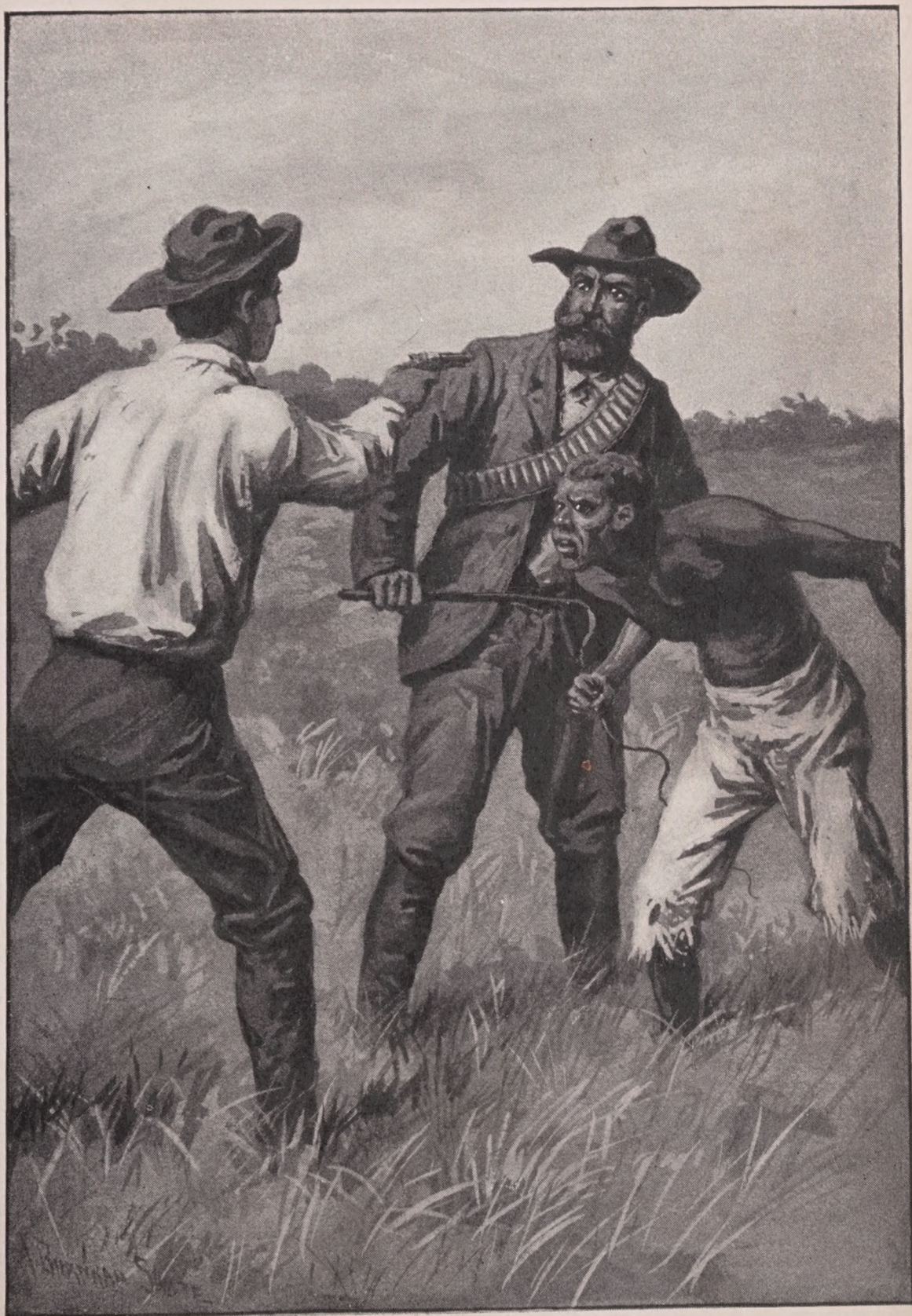
as indeed have all the blacks of South Africa. "I was doing no harm in the bush."

"No harm, you son of the pest! you sneaking baboon! So you will start a fire so that you can gather up the dead rats and mice afterward, and eat them! I know your kind—they burnt up Oom Canrow's kraal, they did so, and ate all the rats afterward, so that they most died with the stomach ache because of so much eating. Take that! and that!"

Down came the sjambok on Roko's bare shoulders, causing the Kafir to shriek with pain. To Will such a sight was no new one—more than once he had seen a Boer whip a native into insensibility—but to Dave the procedure, cruel in the extreme, was more than he could bear. Leaping up, he pointed his pistol at the Dutchman's head.

"Drop that sjambok!" he cried sharply. "Drop it, or I'll fire!"

To say that the Boer was astonished would be to put it very mildly. He had imagined that the Kafir was alone, and to thus find himself confronted by a white boy, and one with a drawn pistol, almost paralyzed him. For an instant the sjambok remained



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poised in mid-air — the next it fell to the ground, and the hand dropped like a lump of lead.

“Now you have certainly put your foot into it,” whispered Will, as he too showed himself. “Those Boers will just about kill us, I feel certain.”

“Who are you?” demanded the second Dutchman, who stood a short distance behind his companion. And then he let out a yell: “Worll! Pradik! Hoelfrood! Come here! We have found them!”

At once the other Dutchmen hurried to the spot, each with his gun ready for use. The trio were speedily surrounded, and then Hendrik Kneip uttered a cry of surprise.

“Dafe Nelson, can dot pe bossible!” he gasped, in his broken English. “Vere yo’ vos come from, hey?”

“That is none of your business, Kneip. I must say though I didn’t expect to meet you here.”

“You know this young man?” demanded Hansa Worll of his brother-in-law, in Cape Dutch.

“I do. It is the young Nelson I have often spoken about. The boy who caused me so much trouble in Texas,” replied Kneip. He shook his long finger at Dave. “Now, maype ve can square accounts, not so, hey?” he added, in English.

“I want nothing to do with you, Hendrik Kneip,” answered Dave, who understood pretty much all that was said. “You can go your way, and I’ll go mine, and let that settle it.”

“But your party has set this wood on fire,” put in Worll, who evidently led the Dutch detachment, for such it really was. “You are traitors to the republic, and would destroy all that belongs to the Boers.”

“The wood caught by accident,” put in Will. “We merely lit a camp-fire, and the rising wind did the rest. As it is, we have lost our horses by the operation.”

“Ha, we believe not such a tale,” burst out one of the other Boers. “I saw two Englishmen sneaking by my kraal last night. More than likely they wanted to steal my sheep to feed their good-for-nothing selves and families. I got my gun, but they ran off. You are of that party, hey?”

“No, we are of no such party, we are alone,” answered Dave. “We were on a hunt up on the Crocodile River when we heard of the breaking out of the war, and started for home immediately. We were caught in the fog and rain, and made a camp in the woods, intending to push on for Pretoria

this morning. We have lost our horses and most of our traps, and were hunting for the horses when you came up."

"A fairy story—a black tale of the night!" roared Hansa Worll. "Did you expect to find your beasts at the bottom of this morass? The truth is not in you. I am of a mind to give you the sjambok, and make you tell what is so, and not what you can make up!"

"Yes, yes, give him the sjambok!" burst in Hendrik Kneip, his dark face glowing with hatred of Dave. "It will do him good, and he deserves it."

"You forget that I have a pistol," said Dave, in a low but convincing tone. "None of you shall touch me without paying the cost."

"Do you threaten us?" demanded Worll, wrathfully.

"I am only stating my position. I have done nothing to warrant this attack."

"You are guilty of burning down yonder wood."

"That was an accident, and nothing has been burnt but some bushes and a few trees which will grow again. I say nothing; I believe one of our horses has been burnt up."

“And your other horses — did they escape?” demanded the leader of the Dutchmen, with sudden interest.

“I don’t know; I hope so.”

“So do I — for I doubt not but what they are more worthy to escape than you,” was Worll’s uncomplimentary return. “Put down that pistol.”

“The pistol is hurting nobody at present.”

“Do you refuse to put it down? You are foolish, since we are six to three, no, two, for the nigger does not count.”

“He counts with us,” put in Will, with a friendly glance toward Roko. “He belongs on my uncle’s farm.”

“Who is your uncle?”

“Mr. Martin Nelson.”

“Ah, you are cousins!” cried Hendrik Kneip. “Then you must be as bad as he!” And he pointed to Dave.

“None of us are cattle thieves!” burst out Dave, losing his temper for once. “If these other men here knew your true character, I doubt if they would have anything to do with you.”

At this outburst Kneip grew livid, and leaped forward as if to strike Dave to the ground. But up

came the pistol barrel and he dropped back in a hurry.

But Dave's movement was a fatal one, for on the instant two of the Boers ran up behind him and threw him down, while two others attacked Will. The enemy likewise sought to attack Roko, but the wily Kafir had mysteriously disappeared.

With six against two the outcome of the struggle is easy to guess. Although both boys succeeded in knocking down one each of their assailants, they were no match for the others. Will received a cruel kick in the side which deprived him of his wind, and Dave was caught by the throat and held until he turned almost black and blue in the face. Then, after both had been well kicked and pounded, they were thrown on their backs and held there while their hands were bound tightly together.

"Now get up!" commanded Hansa Worll. "And mind how you behave yourselves, or it will be the worse for you. We know how to treat the English curs, and to my mind an American is no better, seeing as he has the same blood."

"What are you going to do with us?" demanded Will, as he arose, panting for breath.

"You will see soon enough. Forward march!

Pradik, lead the way to where the horses were left."

At once the sturdy Boer addressed did as commanded, and the whole party began to move up the river in the direction of Culpoot, several keeping in front of the boys and the others behind. It may be as well to add that both Will and Dave were relieved of all of the weapons which had been left to them, the Dutchmen allowing them to keep nothing, not even a penknife the English lad possessed.

On the way a low but earnest conversation took place between Hendrik Kneip and Hansa Worll, but what was said was not intelligible to Dave. But the youth rightfully guessed that Kneip was plotting to "give it to the Yankee boy good," as he expressed it.

Culpoot is but a small village used chiefly as a trading post by wandering Dutch herdsmen. It is located beneath the cliff of a rough kopje overlooking a branch of the Olifants River. At one end of the village is a cattle kraal with a stone and wood shed adjoining. The kraal was now empty, but around the shed stalked several Dutch soldiers, as if on guard duty.

“Some sort of a prison pen,” muttered Will.
“If they put us—”

“Hold your mouth!” interrupted Worll, in Cape Dutch. “If I hear any talk after this, you shall go without both dinner and supper.”

Without further words Dave and Will were marched to the shed. The soldier at the door was told to unbar the barrier, and did so. Then the boys were pushed inside, the door was slammed shut and fastened, and both found themselves close prisoners in the dark.

CHAPTER XXVI

OPENING BATTLES OF THE WAR

“I FANCY we are in for it now,” said Will, with something like a groan. “Those Boers —”

“Hush, Will, not so loud,” whispered Dave. “Remember what he said about dinner and supper. I don’t want to get cut off, for I’m as hungry as a grizzly bear.”

“Do you think they would dare to starve us?” demanded the English lad.

“As they have the might they will dare do everything — especially as one of the crowd is my personal enemy. I wonder what became of Roko?”

“I don’t know. If he got away, I hope he puts our folks on our track. I don’t want to remain a prisoner here for any length of time.”

“Sure an’ neither do I,” came in a rich Irish brogue. “Thim Dutch are afther playin’ a high hand wid us, an’ that’s the thruth.”

“Paddy McCall!” cried Will, recognizing a

miner from Johannesburg. "What in the world brings you to this pen?"

"Sure an' nothin' in the wurruld but thim cut-throats av Doochmen," replied the Irish miner. "It's meself as was afther mindin' me own business whin they comes afther me an' arrists me fer being a spy. 'Sure,' sez I, 'an' who am I spyin' on,' sez I. 'Find out fer yerself,' sez the Doochman, an' claps me in his wagon an' carts me to here, an' me doin' nothin' at all but a-listenin' to how they was planin' to git all av the Uitlander out av Pretoria an' Johannesburg, an' the rist av the places. If a mon can't be a-listenin' to phat's being sed in his hearin', phat's his ears med for, answer me that now?"

"Shut up in dare!" bawled a sturdy Dutch voice. "Does you vonts to go midowit your tinner?"

"Are you alone here, McCall?" asked Will, in a low voice.

"I am that, barrin' yerselves. An' who is this with ye?" questioned the Irishman.

Dave was speedily introduced, and sitting down in a corner of the dark shed each told his story. What the miner had to relate was full of interest to both boys.

“Matthers have reached a high pass,” he said. “The Dooch are afraid av every Uitlander, an’ have given notice that ye must eyther give up yer arms and be under patrol to kape the peace or else git out av the counthry. A good many av the folks won’t go on parole, as they call it, an’ they do be gittin’ out av Pretoria an’ Johannesburg as quick as they can. Down to Johannesburg the rig’lar train couldn’t carry all av thim, an’ a crowd wint off in coal cars an’ baggage coaches. It was a terrible sight to see the folks wid their bags an’ boxes an’ their wives and childer an’ little babies.”

“Can you tell me anything of my folks?” asked Will, with increasing anxiety, for it was swiftly being brought home to him what a terrible thing this war was really going to prove.

“I can’t tell ye much, Master Nelson. The last I see av yer fayther he was at the Police Court in Johannesburg, protestin’ agin some roughs who had broken into his office an’ robbed his safe av some money an’ minin’ certificates. These are harvest times fer rascals, yer know.”

“Yes, the rascals on both sides will pocket all they can out of this,” put in Dave. “I hope there wasn’t much stolen.”

“I can’t say as to that. I know yer uncle was a-havin’ a hot time av it wid the magistrate. Some av the Doochmen in the crowd was a-yellin’ at Mr. Nelson that it served him right, as the English had brought on th’ war,” concluded the Irish miner.

He had never met Dave’s father, and knew nothing of what was going on in the farming territory surrounding Pretoria and Johannesburg. But he had heard of the attack on the armored train near Mafeking, and said that the Dutch Boers hailed it as a great victory. He added that he had heard the Dutch were rising everywhere, and that all boys over fourteen and men under sixty were being drafted into the service.

“If that is true, it will give General Joubert and the other leaders an army of sixty thousand men,” said Will. “Our forces are bound to suffer greatly until the reënforcements can arrive.”

Slowly the day wore away. The boys had expected a visit from Worll and Hendrik Kneip, but none came, for the reason that these men had been called away from Culpoort. No one came in but a guard with their meals, scanty affairs of the coarsest kind of food, in which mealies, made into a sort of corn mush, predominated.

The shed was alive with vermin, and the night was one filled with discomfort. Once the boys thought to escape, but McCall held them back.

“That Doochman outside will blow yer head off wid his gun,” he said. “Betther stay here a bit,” and the lads concluded to take his advice. And so not only the next day slipped by, but also a number of others—a dreary time which Dave and Will never forgot.

During those days spent in the Dutch prison pen history, so far as it concerned the war, was being made with great rapidity. The Dutch generals knew that they must make the most of the time left before England could send reënforcements, and so they did all in their power to push the war out of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into Natal, the Cape Colony, and Bechuanaland, while holding their own along the Limpopo River in the north.

As before mentioned, the Boers had succeeded in occupying Newcastle. But the British gave ground slowly, and on the 18th of October there occurred a skirmish between the outposts on both sides near Ladysmith, and also another brush near Glencoe, in which over twenty soldiers on either side were killed or wounded. This was followed by a day of

comparative quiet, and then came the battle of Glencoe Camp, or Dundee, as some commanders have designated it.

In this contest a force of nine thousand Boers was seen to be advancing upon the town, when the British First Leicester, with the Thirteenth Field Battery, were ordered to stop them, and soon the artillery upon both sides opened. The Dutch guns were poorly managed, and the British silenced the battery at a distance of two thousand yards, using fifteen-pounders for the purpose. By this time the Second Dublin Fusiliers and others had gained the battle-field, and soon a brilliant charge up a steep hill caused the Boers to retreat from the kopje. But the losses on both sides were heavy, and the English general, Sir W. Penn Symons, was mortally wounded.

The hill had been gained, but the Boer force outnumbered the British by several thousands, and after harassing the latter for two days a desperate charge was made by the Dutch, under General Joubert in person, and General Yule, who had replaced Sir Symons, was slowly forced to retire to a safer position, and soon the whole English army in that section was concentrated at Ladysmith.

Elated over their success in forcing the British back, the Boers gathered together more commandoes than ever, and on the morning of October 30 began to shell the town with their heaviest guns, which had been brought through the mountain passes by mule and ox teams eighteen and twenty strong. The feeling of war was now at its height among the Dutch, and every man was eager to have his share in "hurling the redcoats from the face of the earth," as they expressed it in their own tongue. Many predicted that in less than two months the whole of South Africa would arise and unite in one grand Free Republic, with the capital at either Pretoria or Bloemfontein.

To combat the attack by heavy guns, General White took out from Ladysmith a brigade of mounted troops, two brigades of infantry, a large number of the Royal Artillery, and likewise the Natal Field Battery. His force included an Irish and a Gloucester command. At first it seemed easy to clear the way, and the Boers evacuated the position they had held in front. But then it was found that first one British flank and then another was being attacked with an unexpected heavy force, and with guns which were now skilfully managed, and it was

decided to withdraw into the city. But the Irish and Gloucester battalions just mentioned, along with some artillerymen, were caught on a small hill and left to themselves. Here they fought desperately through the night and until the afternoon of the next day, when, being out of ammunition, they had to surrender, and hundreds of them were made prisoners, while hundreds of others had either been killed or wounded. This awful disaster was totally unlooked for, and cast a gloom not alone over the British in Africa, but also over London and the whole of England and Ireland. The soldiers of the queen had done their best, but an enemy superior in numbers and one knowing the lay of the land perfectly had been too much for them. Immediately after this first battle of Ladysmith the Boers began preparations to surround the town, the railroad communications to Durban were cut, and Ladysmith was virtually put in a state of siege.

While these operations were going on in the east, the Boer forces in other districts were not idle. At Spruitfontein, south of Kimberley, another armored train was attacked, but the Dutch were repulsed with a loss of five killed and many wounded, while the British suffered but one man wounded. This

was followed by a sortie from Kimberley, in which the Boers were driven from an intrenched position at Riverton Road Station. At the same time a portion of the Boer army began to concentrate near Mafeking, in Bechuanaland on the Transvaal border, and that town was also put in a state of siege.

England now began to awake to the fact that if the war in South Africa was to be won, reënforcements must be sent to the front immediately, and as soon as possible it was arranged to place in the field an army whose total should reach over two hundred and fifty thousand men. These soldiers came not alone from England, Ireland, and Scotland, but also from Canada, Australia, India, and other colonies. They were made up largely from the Reserves, but there were likewise many thousands of volunteers.

Following the besieging of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking, the Boers, under Piet Cronje, the veteran Dutch commander's son, attacked the last-named place, but were repulsed with a severe loss, including that of the daring young commander. This was on the 7th of November, and on the 9th the Boers attacked Ladysmith again, but small damage was done. Yet the ladies and children

in the town were terror-stricken because of the heavy firing.

The war was now on in deadly earnest, and less than a week later a British armored train was shelled and derailed near Chieveley, and twenty-two soldiers were killed or wounded and sixty-three taken prisoners. The Boers followed this up by destroying the bridge over the Tugela River, and by an attack on Estcourt, where, however, they were repulsed. At the same time a small Dutch commando marched to Kuruman and brought on a number of skirmishes lasting six days.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FIGHT AND AN ESCAPE

“DAVE, I’m getting awfully tired of this prison life.”

“So am I, Will, but what are we to do? The guard is as strict as ever, and I have no desire to run the risk of being shot by trying to break away.”

The words were spoken on a dull, rainy morning immediately after the cousins had disposed of the scant breakfast Nuttstein, the door guard, had brought to them. The food was so coarse they could scarcely swallow it, and the water which went with the bread and meat was foul smelling to the last degree.

The Irish miner had been taken away, and now their only companions were several Hottentots who had gotten intoxicated on “Cape smoke” as it is called, and raised a disturbance in the general store at Culpoort. These Hottentots were filthy in both appearance and manners, and the boys refused to have anything to do with them, compelling them

to remain at one end of the shed while they remained at the other. Once one of the Hottentots had quarrelled with Will, but the English lad floored him instantly, and after that the youths were not troubled.

From outside but scant news of the war drifted in, yet the boys heard enough to cause them much anxiety. They heard that many of the English had abandoned their farms and the mines and were hurrying to cities in Natal and the Cape Colony, and that the Dutch Boers were making free with the property thus left behind.

“I won’t care so much about the property,” said Will. “But I do hope that father and mother and little Alice are safe.”

“I don’t believe father will leave his farm,” answered Dave. “He is an American, and they will not dare to touch him, for he can appeal to our consul for aid, if necessary.”

During the afternoon, much to Dave’s surprise, Hendrik Kneip came in to see him. The Dutchman smiled grimly when he saw how illy the youth was faring.

“I see you vos stay here,” he said sarcastically. “I dink you like heem, hey?”

“Kneip, I think when this trouble is over, you and the others will suffer for keeping us here,” answered Dave, stoutly. “Remember, we have done no wrong.”

“Huh! How you vos dalk, ennahow! Suffer? Who vill make us suffer, answer me dot? Ven der var ist ofer der Englees vill pe so padly licked da vill go home und stay dare an’ der Boers vill have all to say.”

“I am not an Englishman, I am an American.”

“You plotted to do harm — to burn down der voods und der down — Worll can brove dot, und so kin der udders. You ton’t dalk to me!” And Kneip shook his fist in Dave’s face.

“We are not even allowed to send word to our folks,” put in Will. “That isn’t fair, and you and the others know it.”

“You vould only write to do us harm,” was the sullen answer. “I know Dafe Nelson. He is von schneak!”

“I am no sneak, Hendrik Kneip. But I know what you are, and why you had to leave Texas. You shot Pepper, and —”

“Hold your mouth!” yelled Kneip in Dutch. “Of you speak more, I vos tvist your neck off!”

“I am only telling the truth.”

“I tell you to pe sthill!” roared Kneip. “I will not listen to you!” And shaking his fist at Dave again, he turned and left the prison pen as quickly as he had entered it.

“He is boiling mad!” exclaimed Will, after the door had slammed shut and been barred. “He will try to get square if he can.”

Will was right, Hendrik Kneip was in a great rage, and when a man gets that way he is apt to forget himself entirely. As will be remembered, he did not know how seriously he had wounded Pepper on that memorable night when he had tried to poison the horses on Martin Nelson’s ranch. He had a great fear that the cattle man might be dead, and that there might be papers out to extradite him to Texas for trial. He had told nobody where he was going, and to run across Dave in the Transvaal had been very much of a shock.

“I must remove him from my path,” he thought, after leaving the prison pen. “It is not safe to have him around, now that we have met. If only he would join the English army, and be shot down! But he is an American, and I don’t believe he will go into the war.”

That afternoon, for the first time in over a week, Will and Dave were allowed a little fresh air. Chained together like a pair of slaves, the guard marched them out of the shed, and took them for a short walk around the kopje back of Culpoort. The rain had stopped, but it was still raw. The boys enjoyed the fresh air not a little.

As they walked along, Will espied several men on horseback. They were Kneip, Worll, and the Boer called Pradik, and they were leading several horses by the halter. Among the animals, Will recognized his own steed and that belonging to his cousin.

“Our horses!” he cried. “Look, Dave!”

“You are right!” ejaculated Dave. “I wonder what they are going to do with them?”

He tried to question the guard, but the Boer refused to talk, and commanded them to be silent. Soon Kneip and the others passed out of sight, and the boys were marched back to the pen.

“I believe those Dutchmen are going to appropriate those horses,” said Dave. “Kneip isn’t any too good for such work.”

The night that followed was one the boys never forgot. The Hottentots quarrelled among them-

selves, and one almost killed another, with a stone he dug up from the ground flooring of the shed. In the midst of the wrangle, two of the guards came in and fired on the blacks, wounding one in the shoulder and the other in the back. The excitement was intense, and for several minutes the boys thought that they, too, would be shot down.

“We may as well try to escape,” whispered Dave. “I’m not going to stay here to be shot down in cold blood.”

“Right you are,” answered Will. “Come on!” And with a single bound he gained the doorway and ran outside, his cousin at his heels.

They knew not where to go, nor did they care where they went, so long as their escape might prove successful. In front of the prison pen was a small stretch of veldt, while to the left was the river and the wood. They turned for the wood, running as they had never run before, with several Boer soldiers following.

“Stop! stop!” came the order, in Cape Dutch, but instead of paying attention, they tried to run the faster. Then three gunshots rang out, and two bullets sang over their heads, while the third

grazed Will's shoulder, leaving an ugly scratch behind it.

"You are struck?" queried Dave, as he saw his cousin stagger to one side.

"It's only a flea-bite," panted Will. "Hurry! the woods, or we are lost!"

There was no need for urging, for both were leaping forward at topmost speed. Luckily, on returning to the prison from their walk, their chains had been entirely removed, so they were free to use their limbs for all they were worth.

Between the prison and the wood was a narrow ditch, now concealed by the falling shades of night. Into this ditch plunged Will, with Dave almost on top of him.

"Great Cæsar!" groaned Dave. "Will, are you — you hurt?"

"No, but I — I — am mos — most winded!" gasped his cousin.

With nervous haste the two lads scrambled up and out of the ditch. But now the foremost of the Boers was close at hand, and, with a quick leap, he caught Will by the arm, and called upon him once more to stop.

"Let go!" exclaimed Will, and tried to free

himself. At the same instant Dave hit the Boer a stinging blow on the chin, which sent the soldier staggering backward several paces.

“You — you rats of Englees!” he spluttered, and let go his hold. “I will shoot you!” And once more he aimed his gun and pulled the trigger, but his aim was wild, and the bullet merely clipped through the branches of the trees at the edge of the wood.

The alarm had now become general, and a loud voice was calling in Dutch upon a detachment of soldiery to pursue the flying prisoners. At the same time, the Hottentots endeavored to escape from the prison pen, and this brought on a fierce tussle directly in front of the building, in which one black was killed, and a Dutch guard was seriously wounded.

Reaching the outskirts of the forest, Dave and Will lost no time in plunging into the densest thicket they could find. Fortunately, the hunting expedition had acquainted them somewhat with the make-up of a South African jungle, and they proceeded into the pitch-black darkness without serious difficulty. They did not come to a halt until a good hundred yards had been passed.

Then, reaching a fallen tree thickly overgrown with vines, they crawled down beside it, and became as silent as two statues.

For a while, only the cries of the birds and the occasional chatter of a monkey reached their ears, but at last they heard a murmur of voices and the sounds of two men forcing their way through the thickets.

“They came this way — I can tell by the vines,” said one man, in Cape Dutch. “Dogs, but they must be cute to get on so fast!”

“That Dave Nelson is a slippery one,” replied the second man, and Dave recognized Hendrik Kneip’s voice. “I would like to catch him alone.”

“Alone?” questioned the other Dutchman.

“Yes, alone. ’Tis a long account he must settle with me, the Nick’s own that he is!”

So the talk ran on, until the pair were close to the fallen log. Then the second man came to a halt, as if in perplexity.

“The vines have come to an end,” he growled. “Did they go this way or that, who can tell? Ah, those Englees, they are like eel-fish. You go that way, Hendrik, and I will go this. If you see them, shout.”

“I will,” answered Hendrik Kneip, and at once the two separated, the second Boer disappearing almost instantly.

Kneip was slower in his movements, evidently not liking the task before him. He peered forward in the gloom, and held his gun ready for use at an instant's notice. He would have liked only too well to have laid Dave low, but he had no desire to run his own head into danger.

Step by step he came closer to the fallen tree, and there stopped to listen to the sounds of his companion's footsteps as they faded away in the distance. Then he started to walk around the tree, thus coming to the very spot where Will and Dave lay concealed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DESERTED HOMESTEAD

BOTH boys felt that if discovered by Hendrik Kneip their chance of ultimate escape would be very slim. They had run until tired out, and each of the men who had followed them was fully armed, and ready to shoot them down at the slightest provocation.

Slowly Kneip came closer, until he was so near to Dave that the youth could have put out his hand and caught the Dutchman by the foot. The boy tried to hold his breath, but his heart thumped so madly that this was an impossibility.

“There they go!” The cry came from the man who had accompanied Hendrik Kneip to the locality. He had roused up some wild animal, and, catching but a dim view of the game, mistook it for one of the lads speeding along. His gun spoke up and he began to run, and as soon as he could, Hendrik Kneip made after him.

Both boys breathed long sighs of relief as they

heard the Dutchmen's footsteps receding in the distance. Yet it was a long while before either spoke or moved.

"Say, but that was a close shave, eh?" came from Dave, at last. "I thought he had us for certain."

"Well, 'a miss is as good as a mile,' they say," returned his cousin. "Do you imagine they will come back this way?"

"There is no telling. Most likely they will, since we are between the town and the direction they have taken."

"Then we had better seek another location without delay."

"Right you are. I wonder what started that Boer off? He said something about 'There they go!'"

"I'm sure I can't guess. But come on; the farther we get away from this place the better off we will be."

On went the two lads, but taking good care that they should not be surprised by the enemy. Their course was still into the forest, and presently they found themselves in a veritable jungle, from which extrication appeared impossible. Here they roused

up a colony of monkeys, and the shrieking and chattering thus brought on was deafening. To escape the monkeys they crawled to the top of a small kopje close at hand, and here made themselves as comfortable as possible until daylight.

It was not until after seven o'clock that the sun shone down upon the spot where they lay sleeping and aroused them, for it had been late when both had finally dropped off into the land of slumber, and each was exhausted. Will was the first to get up, and he allowed Dave to lie a bit longer. "No use to rouse him when there is next to nothing to do," he muttered disconsolately.

"Now what?" was Dave's first question, on opening his eyes. "See anything of the enemy?"

"No."

"Are we in sight of the town?"

"No."

There was a brief silence, and both boys climbed into a tree growing at the top of the kopje, to gain a better view of their surroundings.

Far off to the southward they made out the glint of a winding stream of water, while to the westward was an immense veldt, with here and there a patch

of trees and bushes, like some oasis in a desert. Otherwise they could see little but forest and hills.

“Not very encouraging,” remarked Will. “I’m hungry, too.”

“So am I, Will; but what we are to have for breakfast I don’t know.”

“And we haven’t anything in the shape of a weapon. Supposing some wild beast takes it into his head to attack us?” And the English lad could not help but shiver.

“Let us arm ourselves with clubs, they will be better than nothing,” returned Dave, gravely, and this they did as soon as they reached the ground.

They felt that the only course for them to pursue was to the southward, whence lay their homes, still many miles off. So they struck out for the river which they had noted among the trees.

“If only we can find some native village there, we may get something to eat,” remarked Will, as they pushed on, faint and hungry. So far they had looked in vain for wild berries, fruit, or birds’ eggs, with which to stay the craving of their stomachs. A little later they came to a *vley* where there was a spring that sent a tiny watercourse on its way to the river, a mile beyond.

They were just getting a drink, when a noise in the bushes startled them, and both looked up in time to behold a short and exceedingly greasy-looking Hottentot gazing at them curiously. The native was about to run off, when Will called to him to stop.

“What do the English boys want of me?” asked the native, in the peculiar dialect employed by these people in addressing foreigners.

“We want to know where we are?” answered Will, promptly. “We’ve been out and got lost.”

“You are in the Lobalo jungle,” answered the Hottentot.

“And what is the nearest village?”

“Alcalor,” and the Hottentot pointed with his outstretched hand.

“Are any of the Dutch soldiers at Alcalor?” put in Dave, who could understand something of what was said.

At this the native smiled grimly and shook his head. “No soldiers now. All commandoes go to where the sun sets — to Mafeking.”

“Mafeking!” cried Will. “That’s an English town. I wonder if they are carrying the war as far as that?”

“War everywhere now,” said the native, frowning. “Big fight at Colenso and Ladysmith, and big fight at Kimberley, too. All English be killed soon.”

“You can’t mean that!” ejaculated Will. “Do you hear what he says, Dave?”

“I do; and if he tells the truth, the Boers must be forcing the war with all speed. But he may have only the Dutch side of the story.”

“Will you take us down to Alcalor?” went on the English lad. “We must have something to eat. We are nearly starved.”

“But we don’t want to meet any Dutch soldiers, understand that,” interposed Dave, hastily. “I’ve been imprisoned once for nothing; I don’t wish such a thing to happen again.”

A few words more followed, and Shantini — for such was the Hottentot’s name — agreed to show them into Alcalor and see to it that they obtained all they needed to eat and to drink. For this he was promised a rich reward if he would come down to either of the Nelson homesteads to receive it.

A day later found them in the village, which was almost deserted, for many of the Hottentots had become camp followers of the Boers, while others were off to see what they could pick up on the farms

which the English had left. Shantini took them to his own hut, which was occupied by himself, his wife, and his nine children. The hut was a vile-smelling place, and, at the risk of discovery by some passing Boer, the boys elected to take the meal furnished them on the outside.

While they were eating, both lads questioned the Hottentot closely concerning the progress of the war, but could get little from the native excepting in a general way. It was plain to see that the Boers had frightened the Hottentots and Kafirs as much as possible, so as to prevent an uprising of the natives.

“They say if one of us helps the English they will butcher us like so many sheep,” said Shantini, with a shudder. “Only two days ago one of my friends was shot as a spy, because he took to an Irishman a horse that belonged to him.”

Shantini was plainly anxious to get rid of them as speedily as possible, and not wishing to get the Hottentot into trouble, they moved on as soon as the meal was finished, each armed with a club and a knife, and carrying a small quantity of biltong and cakes made of mealies, tied up in a strip of limbo, a cotton stuff much used in this section. The Hot-

tentot took them as far as the outskirts of the village, and there left them, wishing them the best of good luck.

It was now ten o'clock, and by eleven the sun was so powerful the lads were glad enough to seek the shelter of a neighboring kopje and rest. On one side of the hill they found a fair-sized cave, its walls rudely decorated with fantastic pictures placed there by the savage Bushmen years before. Here they rested, looked at the pictures, and discussed the situation.

"I move we make the most of our travelling in the dark," said Will. "If we don't, the Boers will be sure to gobble us before we get anywhere near home."

"I am willing — but we must keep our eyes open for wild animals, or we'll be gobbled up in even worse fashion." Dave kicked his foot against the rocks meditatively. "What troubles me is how will we find things when we do get home?"

At this Will heaved a sigh. "Ah, that remains to be seen, Dave. But I am afraid —" A lump arose in his throat and he could not finish.

"We know well enough how we have been treated. Heaven alone knows how your folks and my father have suffered," went on Dave.

“But will they dare —”

“They may dare to do anything while this war is on. You must not forget that the Dutch hate and despise nearly all Englishmen.”

Late in the afternoon they continued their journey, along a trail which had been mentioned to them, and to this trail they stuck for two days. They were now but a few miles from Pretoria, and presently the surroundings began to grow familiar.

“Shall we go into the city or home first?” said Will.

“Home, by all means!” cried Dave. “I can hardly wait to get there.”

The youth had scarcely finished when they heard the steady hoof-strokes of a number of horses coming toward them. Instantly they hid in the bushes beside the road. The sounds came closer, until a body of Boers, about fifty in number, swept by them. Each was armed with a rifle and had an ammunition belt strapped over his shoulder.

“A company of sharpshooters, and bound for the front, I’ll wager a pound!” cried Dave, when they were gone, and he was right, and it was this same company that aided in keeping Mafeking so long in a state of siege. Each man in the com-

mando was an experienced hunter and could bring down a running springbok at a distance of four hundred yards.

The Boers gone, the two lads went on again. The nearest of the two homesteads was that belonging to Mr. Martin Nelson, and thither they directed their steps, and soon came within sight of the *scherm*, or mud fence, which surrounded the cattle kraal. At a distance stood the outbuildings, and farther on the house itself, all dark and apparently deserted.

“Gone!” burst from Dave’s lips, and he could scarcely hold back the tears. He had hoped almost against hope to find his father there, or at least some faithful servant. But not even a dog came forward to greet him as he passed through the cattle and ostrich yards and up toward the homestead.

“I wonder if father has taken all of our things away?” he said huskily.

“You’ll soon know,” replied Will. He clutched his cousin’s arm. “Look! who is that?”

He pointed to a side window of the house. Dave gazed in the direction and saw a form about to leap from the opening to the ground. The man was a

Boer, and in his arms he carried a bundle done up in a bed sheet.

“That man is a thief, and I know it,” cried Dave. “Hi, stop!” he yelled, and ran forward at full speed, with Will at his heels. Soon they reached the midnight intruder, and Dave caught him by the arm. The man struggled to get away, but the two boys overpowered him, threw him flat on his back, and made him their prisoner.

CHAPTER XXIX

NEWS THAT ROKO BROUGHT

“LET me go!” cried the captured man, in Cape Dutch. “Let me go, you dogs of English! How dare you touch me, an honest Boer!”

“Honest!” burst out Dave; “I don’t believe you are very honest. If so, what are you doing here?”

“This is the home of a — a friend of mine. I was getting something for him.”

“You tell a falsehood — this is my home, and you are a sneak thief — one of the kind that is a disgrace to any nation. Will, what shall we do with him?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” replied the English lad, gloomily. “If you make him a prisoner, what good will it do? We can’t appear against him in a Dutch court of justice, now.”

“I don’t know about that. I don’t believe the government will countenance thieving, war or no war.”

“Humph, you don’t know the Boers,” sniffed Will.

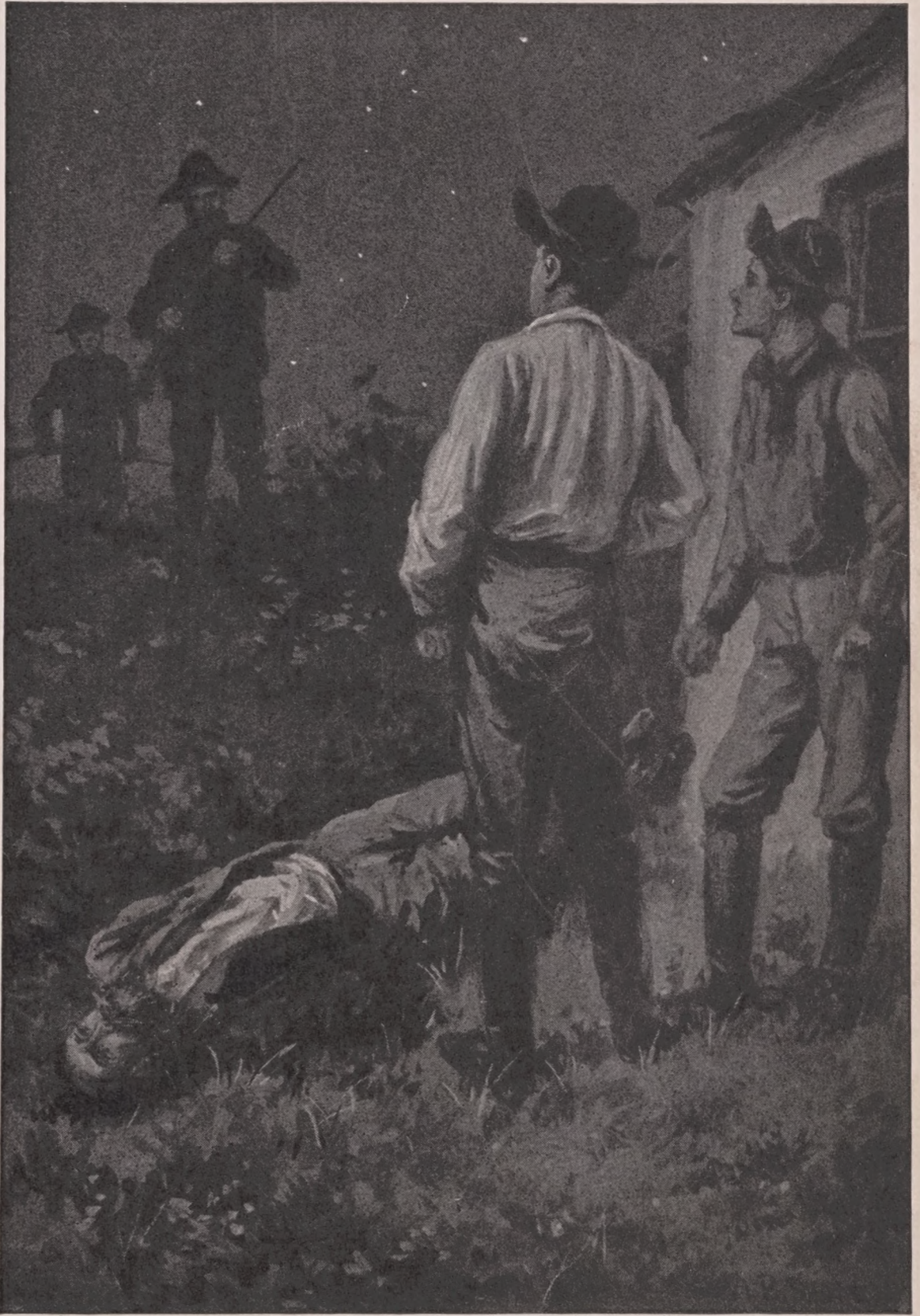
“Yes I do, and the majority of them are as honest as the day is long. I’m going to tie him up.”

The conversation was carried on in English, so that the Dutchman understood little or nothing of it. But when Dave procured a rope and tried to bind the man he began to struggle violently, and drawing a pistol, fired at them.

The bullet lodged in the ground at Dave’s feet, and the next instant Will kicked the weapon from the rascal’s hand and fell upon him so heavily that the Dutchman was knocked half senseless. By the time he was recovering, the boys had his hands and feet tightly tied.

A patter of footsteps was now heard, and from out of the darkness of the veldt trail there appeared a man and a well-grown boy, each armed with a gun. As the two came closer, Dave recognized the newcomers as Adolf Brucher, his nearest neighbor, and his son Karl.

“What goes on here?” demanded Brucher, as he aimed his gun at the party. Then he recognized Dave and uttered a cry of astonishment. “What brought you back? Why did you not remain with your father?” he asked quickly.



AS THE TWO CAME CLOSER, DAVE RECOGNIZED THE NEWCOMERS.



“My father?” returned Dave. “I do not know where my father is. I have just got back from the north.”

“By the head of a lion!” roared the Dutchman. “Then you know nothing of the war?”

“Yes, I know of the war, Oom Adolf,” was the bitter response. “But I—I could not get home before. What has become of my father?”

The Dutchman drew back and shrugged his shoulders. “Who can tell that?” he said. “He is gone, just as the most of the English are gone, and to where I do not know. When the war began he said he might have to leave, to find you, and he asked me to look after his farm so far as I was able to do so—and this I have done. But who is this man on the ground?”

“One we caught coming out of yonder window. He has a bundle filled with our things.”

“A thief! You son of unrighteousness! What have you to say for yourself? Do you not know the law? Oom Paul says all thieves shall be shot.”

“No! no! It is a mistake!” cried the captured man, breaking down utterly. “I was sent on an errand, and must have gotten into the wrong house. I am no thief.”

“Who sent you on the errand?” demanded Adolf Brucher.

“It was a — a — an officer named Larson.”

“And to what house did he send you?”

The man grew much confused and mentioned several names, all unknown to that locality. He had gotten on his feet and now Karl Brucher stepped forward to obtain a better view of him.

“I know him,” said the young Dutchman to his father. “He is Hans Vonstein, a good-for-nothing stage driver of Pretoria. More than likely he has his stage close at hand, and intended to loot the house from end to end.”

“Ha! I see!” shouted Brucher, his wrath rising swiftly, for a Dutch Boer can get into a rage without half trying. “I will serve you out, dog of a thief that you are!” He caught the man by the collar and shook him until his teeth fairly rattled. “Oh, that I had a sjambok here, to lay open your marrow!” And he shook the man again. “And I thought all was safe here, and went to bed to dream and to let you carry off my neighbor’s goods. Dog! dog! That for you! and that! and that!” His voice rose higher and

higher, ending in a shriek, and each one was accompanied by a blow on the head which in the end forced Hans Vonstein to his knees, where he remained begging for mercy.

“Don’t kill the man,” interposed Dave. “I suppose we had better have him arrested.”

At this the Dutch farmer heaved a mountainous sigh. “You are perhaps right, David, my lad, but in these times one must take the law into one’s own hands. If he had come to rob me, it would have been different. But I promised to look after the farm for your father, who is an American, not an Englishman,” — this was said significantly and for Will’s benefit, — “and I shall do it so long as I am home, and Karl shall do it after I am gone to the front.”

“You do not know anything of my parents?” put in Will, somewhat coldly.

“I know your mother and your little sister started for Durban shortly after the war broke out, and I think your father was to follow them — after he had found you. But if they got to Durban or not, who can tell? We have fought the British back steadily, and much fighting was done between Durban and Ladysmith, and now we have all of

the inhabitants of Ladysmith, along with a portion of the British army, locked up in that town."

"Then Ladysmith is being besieged?" put in Dave.

"Yes, and it is likely to fall into our possession at any moment," added the Boer, proudly. "We shall teach the English a sharp lesson before this unjust war is finished."

A sneer arose to Will's lips, but he wisely suppressed it. "Then it may be that my folks are in the besieged town," he said.

"It is not unlikely," answered Adolf Brucher, indifferently. There was a marked contrast between his treatment of Dave and his manner toward the English boy.

"Oh, I trust mother and Alice are safe!" murmured Will. "And father, too!"

"What do you intend to do, now you have arrived here?" asked the Dutchman.

"I don't know yet. I must look around first, and see if I can't find some trace of father."

"Be careful of your movements, — if you wish to avoid arrest. You are of English blood and will be closely watched."

"Oh, father, I am sure Will will be all right,"

put in Karl Brucher, more for Dave's sake than for the lad mentioned.

“We do not know — no Englishman is to be trusted during such times as these,” broke in the father, roughly. “We are doing all we dare, to stand up for the Americans, seeing as they are related to the Englishmen.”

Adolf Brucher turned to Dave and invited the youth to accompany him to the Brucher homestead, where he might have a warm supper and a bed for the balance of the night. But Dave could not think of leaving Will, and so it was arranged that both boys should remain where they were, while the Bruchers marched off with the prisoner.

As the door was nailed up, the two boys entered the homestead by the window, and then Dave found a match and lit a lamp.

“Nobody but that thief has been in here for some time,” said the American boy. “Don't you notice the musty smell?”

“I do, Dave. Probably your father never came back after he went on a hunt for you — or for both of us.”

Having let some fresh air into the rooms, the two boys sat down to rest and to talk over the

situation. Both were utterly worn out, yet it was not until almost daylight when they retired, to sleep by fits and starts, and dream of all sorts of horrible things. Once Will dreamed that a heavy-set Dutch soldier was about to run little Alice through with a bayonet, and he set up such a moaning and groaning that Dave had to shake him vigorously to get him out of the nightmare.

“It’s awful!” murmured the British lad. “Oh, Dave, we must find my mother and sister—and our fathers, too!”

“I’m sure I am as anxious as you, Will,” responded his cousin. “But how shall we strike out?”

When morning came it was raining in torrents, and neither stirred until about noon, when Dave prepared the best dinner which the house afforded, which was not saying much, since all of the live stock had been driven over to Brucher’s place, thus cutting off the supply of chicken meat, eggs, and milk. But there was a little potted meat in the pantry and plenty of vegetables, and flour from which to make bread, and with these things the boys were content.

The day wore along drearily, and nightfall found

it still raining as hard as ever. "There is no use in moving out in this storm," said Dave. "We would simply be drowned out."

Will had to admit the truth of his cousin's words, and heaved a sigh, for he had hoped to be on the search for his parents before nightfall.

On the following day it still rained, and the boys knew not what to do. Both were sitting at the window gazing at the rush of waters down the veldt trail, when suddenly Dave gave a shout.

"Roko!"

He was right, the faithful Kafir was approaching on foot through the storm, looking very much like a drowned rat. As he came closer he recognized them, and his black face lit up with a smile.

"Roko werry glad to see um boys ag'in," said the Kafir, as he paused at the doorstep to allow some of the water to drain from his sleek body. "T'ink no see boys any more."

"Where have you been, Roko?" questioned Dave, quickly.

"Roko look for um master."

"And did you find him?"

"No find Dave's fadder — but find Will's fadder, an' Will's fadder say um Dave's fadder go long

way off — to Mafeking. T'ink Dave at Mafeking maybe."

"My father at Mafeking!" cried Dave.

"And where is my father?" put in Will, eagerly.

"Can't tell dat just now. He go to Ladysmith wid yo' mudder and 'ittle girl. Maybe mudder an' 'ittle girl in Ladysmith. Fadder fight Boers, an' me t'ink Boers capture him an' put him in prison."

"Then my father joined the British army?"

"Yes."

"Hurrah for that!" shouted Will, and his face brightened greatly. "But you say he's a prisoner of war?" And his face fell again.

"T'ink he's a prisoner — at Johannesburg — but no sure of dat. When he git ready to fight he tell me find you. Den fight, an' many English soldiers git caught and carried away. Big fight down to Ladysmith all de time — big war all de time — fight an' fight. Dutch or Englees all killed some day," concluded the Kafir, and then he came in to give the lads the details of what had happened since he had separated from them.

CHAPTER XXX

MAGERSFONTEIN AND THE TUGELA RIVER

AT the opening of the war it had been the intention of the British commander to concentrate a strong army on the Orange River, at De Aar and the Orange River Station, for a straight attack, first upon Bloemfontein, and then upon Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The unexpected resistance met with in the neighborhoods of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking led to a change of plans, and by the direction of Sir Redvers Buller, who had now come to the front to direct operations, the British force was divided, and while one column under General Buller marched forward to relieve Ladysmith, another, under Lord Methuen, pressed on in the direction of Kimberley.

So far the Boers investing Kimberley had stuck close to that mining city, but as soon as it was heard that Lord Methuen was advancing, the Dutch marched southward and took up a strong position

on the series of kopjes extending from Spysfontein to Magersfontein. An advance guard moved still farther on, to Belmont, and here the two armies came into battle on November 23, the British storming the enemy's position with telling effect. The fighting was of the most desperate kind, and when the Boers at last fell back, the gallant soldiers marching under the Union Jack were too exhausted to follow them.

Eager to continue their victory, the British moved on, the next day, to Enslin, seven miles away. It was supposed that the Boer commandoes in that vicinity numbered but a few hundred, but it was found that they were over two thousand strong, and that they had eight heavy guns. The fighting recommenced at dawn on the 25th, and once more the British stormed the kopjes the Dutch had fortified, and once again they forced the fighting farmers to fall back, but not until there had been a heavy slaughter on both sides, and not before scores of the British Naval Brigade had fallen to rise no more.

It looked now as if Lord Methuen's advance upon Kimberley would be nothing but a series of successes ; but the Boers were as bent upon victory

as were their enemies, and as the British army continued to move forward, the Dutch rushed many more commandoes to the front, these armed bodies being secreted among the rocks overlooking the Modder River on both sides. Lord Methuen thought he had less than two thousand to oppose, while as a matter of fact the Dutch now numbered over ten thousand.

No sooner had the first of the British troops gained the vicinity of the river, than an unexpected fire showed the force of the Boers, and for ten long, hot hours the battle waged furiously, with varying success. Again and again the British tried to cross the stream and were repulsed, but at last the Boers had to give ground, and in the end the victory remained with the soldiers of England, but at a cost of over five hundred killed and wounded.

Forced from the Modder River, the Boers trekked northward during the night, and took up another strong position close to Magersfontein. As rapidly as possible the British column made after them, and on the night following communications were opened with Kimberley by means of searchlights. In seven days the soldiers of the queen had marched over fifty miles and fought three heavy battles, losing in these

contests one man out of every twelve, including several well-known officers. Lord Methuen was himself slightly wounded.

But while Lord Methuen was thus moving forward to success, something else happened which overthrew many of the plans of the British commanders and, in the end, contributed largely to Methuen's ultimate defeat. General Gatacre had been left at Molteno with about four thousand troops, to assist in guarding Methuen's communications with De Aar and the Modder River, as well as to aid in General French's advance on Bloemfontein, for a third column was now acting in the field. General Gatacre made a long night march toward the Stormberg, and arriving there much exhausted, was surprised by the Boers and forced to retreat, leaving five hundred of his men behind as prisoners, while another hundred were either killed or wounded.

This reverse came on Sunday, December 10, and on that same day Lord Methuen began his attack on the Boer forces before Kimberley, which were commanded by the elder Cronje, a veteran Dutch fighter of no mean military ability. Lord Methuen had not been reënforced as he had expected, yet he com-

menced a splendid assault with his artillery on Sunday, and on Monday the Highland Brigade, under Major General Wauchope, fought desperately for a position on the hills, followed by the Gordons, who came to the support just after noon. But the Boers were now fighting with all the skill and courage they could command, and the British were finally beaten back with the awful loss of over eight hundred officers and men, including General Wauchope, who was shot down early in the battle. Had not the Guard's Brigade resisted a flank attack, the soldiers of the queen must have been utterly annihilated, for Dutch reënforcements were coming up on all sides.

The battle of Magersfontein, as it has been called, was a severe blow to the British cause; yet an even worse one was to follow, in which the Boers were to show that they were no foe to be despised. Although these sons of the soil lacked much of military training, nearly every one was a crack shot, an expert rider and mountain climber, and a man inured to untold hardships.

Not many miles to the south of Ladysmith flows the Tugela River, and here and near Colenso the Boers had intrenched themselves heavily, to await the coming of General Buller's column, which ar-

rived in the vicinity twenty-four thousand strong on the 15th of December.

There were two fording places in the river, one at the iron bridge, and one farther westward, and General Hildyard's brigade was sent to the first-named ford and General Hart's Irish brigade to the second, to try and force a passage to the opposite shore. This they did amid a perfect hailstorm of bullets and shells, fighting as only Tommy Atkins can fight when thoroughly aroused.

But the passage of the river was a fatal one, for the Boer cannon, well placed and skilfully handled, were of much longer range than those the British had brought over the railroad and the rocky mountain trails, and as soon as the latter came within sight, they were opened upon with such precision that many of the horses went down in the traces and their drivers with them. In a short while the British had lost ten guns abandoned and one destroyed by a shell, and then the Boers opened upon the defenceless columns of infantry and cavalry, cutting down the soldiers of the empire as with a scythe. Under such circumstances General Buller's column was forced to fall back to the camp at Chieveley, the Boers refraining from following them. The loss

to the Dutch was less than a hundred, while the loss to the English was over a thousand—the largest since the war had started. Of course the Boers were much elated over their success, coming as it did directly after the victory at Magersfontein, and many predicted that England would soon call a truce and offer to compromise. At Pretoria it was boasted that no English soldier should ever again set foot in the Transvaal, and Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, was also considered safe from capture.

The news of the defeats of General Methuen and General Buller reached Dave and Will while they were making a trip from Pretoria to Johannesburg. They had gone to Pretoria on the day following Roko's arrival, to find all quiet in the capital city, excepting down around the race-course, which had been put into shape to receive some of the English prisoners, who now numbered nearly two thousand. Here the boys were hustled away in short order, a gruff Dutch captain telling them that if they did not go about their business he would place them under arrest.

“They haven't any use for foreigners,” observed Will, as they strode off.

“They certainly haven’t any use for an English lad,” returned Dave, with a suggestive smile; “but, Will, if they are going to bring a lot of soldier prisoners here, the war must be going badly for your side.”

“Pooh, Dave, you don’t imagine they can whip us?” demanded his cousin.

“Certainly not — if England sends out a big enough army; but they must be fighting with lots of pluck.”

“I dare say they are — since their homes are here; but this war won’t last — take my word for it.”

“I think it will last a good bit longer than many suppose. Unless I am mistaken, the Boers will fight to the last ditch. They are sure that they are in the right and that God is with them.”

“And we are sure they are wrong — and there you are.”

“Yes, there you are, Will; but that doesn’t settle the matter.”

“No; that must settle itself, if you’re going to put it that way.” The English lad looked at his American cousin questioningly. “Dave Nelson, I believe you about half side with the Boers.”

“I don’t deny it, Will, for they are fighting for

what they consider their natural right — Liberty. You must remember that we Americans fought for the same thing during the Revolution. For myself, I am sorry this matter wasn't patched up without an appeal to arms."

"So am I, to tell the plain truth, for it has caused us no end of trouble all around. But this war was bound to come sooner or later."

"There is another thing to consider. Even if the Boers are conquered, what then? Unless England treats them with every consideration, they will rebel whenever they get the chance — at least, the hot-headed ones will."

"Oh, the government will fix that, Dave. But let us drop the subject. What are we to do next?"

"I don't know, unless we go to Johannesburg and see if your father is a prisoner there. It's pretty plain that they won't give us any information in Pretoria."

"And do you think they will treat us any better at Johannesburg?"

"Hardly; but if your father is there we may find some means of communicating with him."

"All right, then we'll go."

As it was raining once more they did not deem

it advisable to start at once, but returned to Dave's home, there to remain until two days later. Then they set off on horseback, in company with Roko. They might have travelled the thirty odd miles on the railroad, but preferred to take the cross cut over the veldt rather than risk an unpleasant meeting with such of the hot-headed Boers as might be around.

They reached the mining city late at night, and put up at a small inn kept by a man who knew the Ralph Nelson family well. The man's name was Victor Darning, and he was much interested in what the lads had to tell him.

"Yes, the Boers mean business," he said. "They are carrying matters with a high hand, and they threaten to blow up all the mines rather than surrender them."

"That will cause a loss of millions of dollars," returned Dave.

"True, lad, but war is war, and we must now take what comes. I'll be satisfied if they leave me my property and my life."

Victor Darning had not heard from Ralph Nelson, but said that a new batch of prisoners had come in only a few hours before.

“You will find them down on the Brayton Road,” he concluded. “But you had better not try to see any of them to-night.”

While the boys were eating their supper in a side room, half a dozen Boers came in for some liquid refreshments. As Dave glanced at them, he gave a cry of astonishment, and then clutched Will by the arm.

“Come, let us hide,” he whispered excitedly. “Do you see the last man who came in? It is Hendrik Kneip, and if he spots us, he may make us a lot of trouble!”

CHAPTER XXXI

DAVE HEARS PAINFUL NEWS

WILL understood only too well the truth of his cousin's words, and without stopping to finish his supper he arose from the table and started for the hallway of the inn, Dave having gone ahead.

Both lads were passing through the doorway when Hendrik Kneip caught sight of them and gave a cry of wonder.

"Dafe Nelson!" he ejaculated as he hurried forward. "How you vos git here, hey?"

"That is my business, Kneip," answered Dave, as boldly as he could. "I reckon I have as much right here as you have."

"I dink me not. You ought to pe in brison — and I vos put you dare, too!"

As the Dutchman finished he attempted to grab Dave by the arm. But his fingers had scarcely touched the boy's sleeve when Will hauled off and without warning hit the fellow a heavy blow in the chin, which nearly took Kneip off his feet.

“That for having had us locked up for nothing!” cried the English lad. “Come, Dave, we must get out now!” And he caught his cousin by the hand and led the way to the back of the inn. Here there was a small yard, and at the rear a large barn attached to a livery stable. They passed in at the front of the barn and out at the rear, which brought them to a side street, and, having by this movement procured their horses, they galloped away, leaving Hendrik Kneip to institute a vain search for them.

“That was a narrow escape,” observed Dave, when they considered themselves safe for the time being. “What a blow you did give him, Will!”

“Didn’t he deserve it? — the sneak!”

“I dare say he did. But he won’t forgive you as long as he lives.”

“I don’t care, — he had no right to assist in having us locked up in that dirty Boer prison.” The English lad scratched his head in perplexity. “What shall we do now?”

“Now we are on the go we may as well ride down toward the Brayton Road, and see if we can interview any of those new prisoners that were brought in.”

“I’m willing. To tell the truth, Dave, I feel reckless to-night.”

Again they set off, but not quite so fast as before, through the outskirts of Johannesburg and past the openings to several well-known mines. Each of the mines was closely guarded by a section of the mounted police of the town.

When the Brayton Road was gained, they slowed up under a clump of trees overlooking a series of kops fronting the wide veldt beyond. At a distance they made out several camp-fires.

“I imagine that is the prisoners’ encampment,” said Will. “I wonder how close the guards will let us come?”

“We’ll soon learn by riding forward,” answered Dave, and once again they started, and moved a distance of several hundred yards.

Of a sudden a cry rang out through the darkness, and the two boys found themselves confronted by three sturdy Boers, each armed with a rifle.

“Who are you?” asked the leader, in Dutch.

“Friends,” replied Dave, before Will could speak.

“They are Uitlanders,” growled a second Boer.

“Beware how you trust them.”

“What is it you want here?” went on the first who had spoken.

“I believe you have some prisoners in yonder camp,” went on Dave. “My cousin here thought his father might be among them.”

The leader of the Boers turned to Will. “Is your father a soldier?”

“I can’t say as to that.”

“Where does he come from, and what is his name?”

In a few words Will told as much of his story as he deemed necessary, to which the three Boers listened attentively. They were elderly men, had boys of their own, and could readily understand Will’s anxiety.

“I’ll do what I can for you, my boy,” said the leader. “Remain here until I come back,” and he strode away, leaving his two companions to see to it that Dave and Will did not try any underhanded work while he was gone.

The Boer was absent the best part of half an hour, and when he came back his face wore something of a smile.

“The captain says you may come in at ten o’clock to-morrow morning and talk to your father,” he said.

“Then he is there!” cried Will. “Is he well?”

“Fairly well, yes, although he has had his arm hurt by a piece of flying shell.”

“I am glad it is no worse. Yes, I will be sure and come in at ten o'clock. And I thank you for your kindness.”

There was no need for further words, and soon after this the two boys withdrew, riding back to Johannesburg, but not in the direction of Victor Darning's inn.

“Let us go over to the Alice mine and see how things are there,” said Dave, for the Alice mine was one in which both his father and his uncle were financially interested.

“I was going to suggest that,” returned his cousin. “I wonder if old Ulker is still in charge?” Ulker was an Englishman who had been general master since the mine had been opened.

They found the way to the mine barricaded in several places, and they were halted half a dozen times by the mounted guards. But at last they came within sight of the property, and at the entrance to the office found not only old Ulker but also half a dozen Boer soldiers.

“My heyes, but if it hisn't Will!” cried old Ulker; “hand David, too! Boys, 'ow are ye, hand

where did ye come from?" And rushing forward, he caught each by the hand and shook the member warmly.

"We are all right, Peter," answered Will. "How goes it here at the mine?"

"'Ow goes it, did ye say? Why, lad, business is hat a bloody standstill, don't ye know it? We'll do well if we save the mine from bein' blown hup — hif our soldier boys get into Johannesburg."

"Have they threatened that?" asked Dave.

"Threatened it? They've done more — they've planned it all hout, so that they can blow 'er hup at a moment's notice. They swear that they will not give hup the mines to Tommy Hatkins — if 'e hever gets so far as 'ere."

The Boer soldiers now interrupted the talk, and demanded to know what the boys wanted. Old Ulker explained to them that the Nelsons were large stockholders in the mine, at which most of the Dutchmen scowled ominously.

"The mine will soon belong to us," said one. "In the future the English shall not take our gold from us."

"That remains to bè seen," answered Will, but very wisely under his breath.

Ulker had a small house close at hand in which he lived, and here the boys put up for the night.

“I suppose Roko wonders where we are,” said Dave, on retiring. The Kafir had been left at Darning’s inn.

“Never mind, he won’t get lost,” said Will. “I think it will be just as well if he goes back to guard your farm.”

Will slept but little, for he could not help but wonder what the coming interview with his father would bring forth. Was his mother safe, and his sister Alice, and did his parents know anything concerning them?

The time seemed to drag on the following morning, and long before ten o’clock Will and Dave were out on the Brayton Road, waiting to get into the prisoners’ camp. Dave did not know if he would be allowed to accompany his cousin, but when the time came, both boys went in without question, in company with two Boer guards, who took from them even their pocket-knives.

The prisoners were several hundred in number, English, Irish, Scotch, and also a few Canadians and Americans.

Mr. Ralph Nelson was found seated on a rock,

his right arm in a sling, and a bandage on his left leg just below the knee.

“Will!” he cried joyfully, and tried to embrace his son. He was suffering, but his face bore a happy smile. “I was afraid you and Dave would get into no end of trouble.”

“Well, we have had our share, father,” answered the son.

“And how is it with you, Dave? Have you seen your father?”

“No.” Dave’s face fell. “I was hoping you would know something about him.”

Mr. Ralph Nelson heaved a long sigh, and his eyes dropped to the ground. “I am afraid, Dave, that—well, that all is not as it might be with your father.”

“He has been hurt?” gasped the youth, turning pale.

“It may be even worse.”

There was a suggestive pause, and Dave’s heart leaped into his throat. “Oh, Uncle Ralph, you don’t mean that he has been—been killed?” he gasped, in a choking voice.

“We must hope for the best, my lad, in such times as these. Yes, he was hurt, just as I was,

by the explosion of a shell, although at a different time. I am getting over my wounds, as you can see. He may be doing likewise."

"But where is he?"

"That I cannot say. I have tried to find out, but so far every effort on my part has failed."

"Koko told me you had said father had gone to Mafeking."

"He started for Mafeking, but whether he got there or not I do not know. A week after he left I got word, through a friend of mine, that he was badly wounded during an engagement between the garrison at Mafeking and the Boers who were assaulting the place."

"Was he in the fight?"

"He was with the Boers, but whether he fought or not I cannot say, nor can I say if anything was done for him after the fight was over."

"Then he may be either in a Boer hospital or in the hospital at Mafeking."

"Yes — if he still lives," answered Ralph Nelson.

CHAPTER XXXII

GENERAL CRONJE'S LAST STAND

RALPH NELSON'S story was a long one, but as the Boer guards told the boys that their visit must not last over quarter of an hour, it had to be condensed into the smallest possible space.

Briefly told, it was to the effect that at the outbreak of the war he and his brother had immediately started on a hunt for Will and Dave. They had gone as far as the Limpopo River, and finding no trace of the lads, had concluded that they had gone home.

On returning to the farms they found everything in confusion. Mrs. Nelson had become so alarmed over the situation that she was on the point of departing for Durban by way of Ladysmith, and nothing could induce her to remain where she was.

Accordingly Ralph Nelson had set out with his wife and daughter, taking with him only such household effects as they deemed necessary. It

was arranged that Martin Nelson should accompany them as far as Ladysmith, and then turn back and look for the boys.

The trains had been crowded, and they had had to make the journey to the southeast in a baggage coach packed to the very top with goods and people. While on its way, this train was fired upon by the Boers, and the stoker of the engine was killed and two passengers were injured. It must be said, however, that for this attack the Boer government was not responsible.

Arriving at Ladysmith, the Nelsons had found no means of quitting the town, for the railroad was being used almost solely by the British military, and there were thousands of refugees gathering there. They put up at the home of a friend named Catherwood, and there Martin Nelson left his brother and Mrs. Nelson and Alice, and started back on a hunt for the boys.

Less than a week had been spent in Ladysmith when the Boers began to invest the neighborhood, and then came the disastrous battle which placed Ladysmith in a state of siege. It was during this contest that Ralph Nelson had been wounded and made a prisoner. From Ladysmith he had been

removed to a hospital near the Vaal River, and from there to his present location.

"I trust my wife and Alice are still safe," said he. "But Buller has been defeated, and now there is no telling when Ladysmith will be relieved."

"I wish I could get to mother," put in Will, impulsively.

"If you get to her, you may not get out of Ladysmith again in a hurry," answered his father, grimly.

Ralph Nelson could tell but little about his brother, above what has already been said. He knew Martin Nelson had looked long for the boys, and had then gone to Mafeking on business connected with his mining venture. He was certain that his brother had been dangerously, if not fatally, wounded, for his friend had seen him go down under a most terrific shelling between the Boers and British.

Long before each had said all he wished, the Boer guards told Will and Dave that their time was up and that they would have to leave the prisoners' camp. Will pressed his father's hand warmly.

"I shall get to mother if I can," he whispered.

“I do hope you’ll be all right soon,” and so father and son parted, not to meet again for many a long, dreary day. Ordinarily, as a wounded man, Ralph Nelson might have been given his liberty on parole, but he had become involved in certain schemes concerning the Johannesburg mines, so this was not to be, and instead he was closely watched and was not allowed to even mention the mines in the boys’ presence.

The boys went back toward Johannesburg in a thoughtful mood. Will’s father could do nothing for them, and they must continue to shift for themselves. The news concerning his own parent made Dave’s heart sink like a lump of lead in his breast.

“Oh, if only he is alive, Will!” he cried. “If only he is alive! I would rather lose the farm, the mine, and everything, than lose father!” and he could hardly keep back the tears.

“Now we are finding out how terrible war really is,” was the sober response. “Those who are not in it cannot realize the awful truth. General Buller has failed to relieve Ladysmith; who knows but what the Boers may shell the town and burn it down,—and then what will become of my mother

and dear little Alice?" and his voice choked so that he could not go on.

The distance from Johannesburg to Ladysmith in round figures is two hundred miles, but by the various roads and mountain passes the journey covers fifty to sixty miles more. Will knew very well that the Boers would no longer carry him on the railroad, at least not any farther than Wakkerstroom, which is more than eighty miles north of Ladysmith.

"I want to get there, but I don't see how it is to be accomplished," he sighed. "What do you advise?"

"I advise going on horseback," answered Dave. "And take absolutely nothing with you but some money and a pistol. Then if you are captured they cannot say very well that you are a spy with a message, or something like that."

"And what will you do, Dave? Go with me, or try to reach Mafeking?"

"I would like to reach Mafeking, or, at least, find some trace of father. But I don't think we ought to separate."

"Then why don't you go to Ladysmith with me first? Then, if all is well, we can see what

we can do toward finding your father immediately after. I don't want to separate either," and Will caught his cousin's hand.

"I'll think it over to-night," said Dave.

In the morning he decided to accompany Will, at least for a part of the journey, and they returned to the farms to obtain fresh horses and also to get some money which Mr. Ralph Nelson had hidden away. The next day they set out for Natal, each with forty pounds and a pistol in his pockets.

To those not used to hard riding the journey would have appeared a difficult one, but, as we know, both Dave and Will were thoroughly at home in the saddle, and so the riding did not bother them in the least. To throw the Boers off their guard as much as possible each of the boys had made himself look as youthful as he could, so that neither appeared to be over fifteen years old.

"They won't bother boys," had been Dave's comment, and there was a good deal of truth in this, for often, instead of stopping to question them, a Dutch guard would merely pass them by with some rude joke about the English army,

and asking if they were going to join, as targets for the Boer guns. Some of these jokes made Will very angry, yet he was prudent enough to hold his tongue, knowing that a row could result only in the complete overthrow of his plans.

Yet the journey was full of excitement, and once they were detained for two days at the village of Ruistein, where they found two Irish soldiers being held as prisoners, and where they had to act as interpreters for the men. One of the Irishmen was a spy, but Will helped the soldier to clear himself, and of this the English lad was very proud. In return for this the Irishman gave them valuable information regarding the manner in which they should continue their journey.

"The war is just begun, me b'y," said the soldier. "Mark me wurrud if that isn't so. So far they have had the best av us, for we couldn't git our sodgers down here quick enough. But now Lord Roberts has taken control, wid big reënforcements a-comin', and soon the whole Boer nation will wisht they had never been born, bad luck to 'em!"

What the soldier said about Field-marshal Roberts was true. Immediately after the reverses at Magersfontein and on the Tugela River, Lord

Roberts, V.C., was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British army in South Africa, and it was decided to increase the force in the field fully fifty per cent.

But if the forces of the British were increasing, so were those of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. From every village and every farm the men, young and old, poured forth to fight for what they considered their rights, and to these were added many foreigners who did not deem it wise to let England control this territory. Soon the Boers had half a dozen divisions in the field — one harassing Ladysmith, another surrounding Kimberley and bidding defiance to Methuen, a third cutting off far-away Mafeking from all the rest of the world, and still others holding White and Gatacre in check, and daring Buller to make another advance. This was the time when the Boer cause was nearest to success; the downfall began when Lord Roberts reached the scene of war.

It was on February 6, 1900, that Lord Roberts left Cape Town, where he had just arrived from England for the Modder River, to see what could be done for the relief of Kimberley. The first

movement was to send General French with a cavalry division to Dekiel's Drift, on the Riet River, from whence this commander pushed on to Modder River. An infantry division, under Generals Kelly-Kenny and Tucker, followed the cavalry, and then General French began a swift ride directly for Kimberley, scattering the Boers in all directions as he went.

The mining town went wild when the troops entered the place, but now was no time for rejoicing, for it was soon learned that a large Boer force, under General Cronje, was trekking with all speed in the direction of Bloemfontein.

"He must not escape — he shall not escape," Lord Roberts is reported to have said, and immediately despatched one of Kelly-Kenny's brigades in pursuit. The Boers were sighted at Klip Drift and were pursued eastward for twenty miles. Then Cronje and his army intrenched themselves in the bed of the Modder River, close to Paardeberg Drift, laagering their wagons at Koodoos Rand Drift.

The stand taken by the Boers was an unusual one, the high banks of the stream affording them much protection from the fire of their enemies.

They were soon surrounded, and a fierce battle followed, in which the Essex, Welsh, and Yorkshire regiments of the English army distinguished themselves, and the artillery joined in just as soon as it could be brought up, sending down a rain of shot and shell that was frightful to behold.

It was felt by the English that Cronje, no matter how valiant a fighter, could not hold out against those who surrounded him, and if he held out at all, it would only be in the hope that some other Boer force would come to his relief. Accordingly, a strict guard was set, and a relief force from before Ladysmith was beaten off.

The British now began a bombardment of the Boer position in earnest, and this was kept up day after day, with severe losses to the Dutch command. With General Cronje were many women and children, and these were offered a safe conduct from the scene of battle, but the Boers refused the offer.

The end of the tremendous struggle came upon the 27th of February. Cronje's means were now almost exhausted. Rations and ammunition were both low, and English shot and shell had burnt and destroyed his wagons and his guns and killed

and wounded hundreds of his men. In the midst of this a Canadian regiment, followed by the First Gordons and the Shropshires, dashed to within eighty yards of the main laager, doing awful execution with their rifles. Cronje, unable to withstand the onslaught, surrendered unconditionally, and four thousand prisoners fell into Lord Roberts' hands. These prisoners were shipped to various points in Cape Colony and Natal, while General Cronje was sent to the island of St. Helena, the scene, years before, of Napoleon's exile.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SPION KOP AND LIFE IN LADYSMITH

“DAVE, where in the world are we?”

“I can't tell you, Will, excepting that we are on the Tugela River, and not many miles from Ladysmith.”

“Well, I am tired of this travelling at night and trying to get through the Boer lines,” grumbled the English lad, as he slipped from his horse and threw himself on the rocks to rest. “We've been doing nothing but dodge those Dutchmen for days and days.”

“We can be thankful that we have not been caught and treated as spies.”

“Humph! I suppose that's so. Do you think we will ever get into Ladysmith?”

“Oh, we'll get in the town when the relief force comes along, I suppose. Anyway, you know as much about it as I do,” concluded Dave, and threw himself down beside his cousin.

They were in the mountainous territory along

the Tugela River, at a point many miles southwest of Ladysmith. They had travelled principally at night, and had been on their guard constantly. Yet they had not escaped the Boers entirely, and had been fired upon twice. Now they were practically lost, for the rough mountain trails around them appeared to lead nowhere in particular.

During those days, and while both sides were active at the Modder River, Buller's column, trying to get to Ladysmith, was not idle. There had been a heavy attack on the town, on January 6, but this had been repulsed, and five days later General Buller started again to the relief, occupying the south bank of the Tugela at Potgieter's Drift without great difficulty. From this point the British army advanced step by step, from one hill to another, until the historic spot called Spion Kop was gained. This Kop is almost sacred to the Boers, for from it the *voortrekkers*, or pioneers, from Natal first caught a glimpse of the beautiful farming lands beyond, which they afterward made their homes.

The fighting was furious, lasting for several days, and the Boers gave up one kopje after another grudgingly, and only after a severe loss on

both sides. Spion Kop was gained by a force under Sir Charles Warren on the 23d, but on the day following the Boers massed their army around the Kop and brought their heavy artillery to bear at every available point, and it was then speedily discovered that the spot was untenable, and the British retired with a loss of about a thousand men killed, wounded, and missing. The blow was a heavy one, and the dark days in Ladysmith became gloomier than ever.

But General Buller was not disheartened, and soon he made preparations for a third attempt to relieve the town. With seventy-two guns he bombarded the position of the Boers in the mountains back of the Tugela, and then the infantry forced a passage over the stream, this time on three pontoon bridges, which were constructed by the Engineer's Corps under tremendous difficulties. Once across the river a high hill of the Brakfontein Range was taken, and then a Boer position at Vaal Krantz was captured.

The heavy cannonading was distinctly heard by Will and Dave, who had small difficulty in locating the battle which was taking place. But the boys had no desire to take part in the contest, — at least,

Dave did not wish it, — and so they withdrew from the river and began a rapid journey on horseback over several kopjes leading directly for Ladysmith.

They had gone less than a mile when they heard the tramp of horses and the rattle of heavy wheels, and they had scarcely time in which to hide themselves behind a clump of trees when a battery of Boer artillery rushed past. The guns were heavy ones, and to each were attached eight horses, which the drivers lashed furiously, shouting loudly as they flourished their sjamboks.

“They are going somewhere in a tremendous hurry,” whispered Will. “Dave, I’ve a good mind to follow them.”

“You’ll be shot down for your pains.”

“But I would like to do something for the cause of old England,” pleaded the British lad.

“I believe you, but — Look out!”

Dave had discovered a body of Dutch infantry approaching from behind them, and now he called to his cousin to follow him and rode off at full speed, into a pass between two of the kopjes. Will came behind his cousin, but they were discovered, and half a dozen shots rang out, although none took effect.

Neither of the boys knew anything of the trail they were following, and Dave was pushing along with might and main when, on turning a corner of the rocks, he found himself on the edge of a deep ravine. Into this plunged his horse with the youth still on his back, while Will came to a standstill, transfixed with horror, and for the instant forgetting the enemy who was pursuing him.

When Dave landed he heard a cracking of bones beneath him, and then pitched heels over head into a pool of water surrounded by a fringe of heavy bushes. Half stunned he arose to his knees and crawled deeper into the bushes, still thinking the Boers were at his heels. Thus he covered fully a hundred yards, when he reached another hollow and fell into this, striking on the side of the head, a blow which rendered him completely unconscious.

It was several hours before Dave came to his senses, and even then he scarcely realized his wretched condition. The side of his head was covered with dried blood, and when he opened his eyes everything appeared to dance before them. He tried to get up, but the effort was a failure, for he was greatly weakened by the loss of blood.

The night came on, and the next day, and still



INTO THIS PLUNGED HIS HORSE WITH THE YOUTH STILL ON HIS
BACK. — Page 320

the youth remained in the ravine. He had eaten nothing but a few crackers which had happened to be in the horse's saddle-bags when the accident occurred. The steed was dead, having broken his neck in the fall.

Dave wondered what had become of his cousin, but felt almost certain that Will had fallen into the hands of the Boers. "It's a miserable ending to this expedition," he groaned. "We would have done far better had we kept out of it altogether."

The next day found him feeling better, though still much bruised and weak. He did not know where he was, and wandered on and on until he struck the road running from Ladysmith to Colenso. Here he came upon a deserted Boer camp and found a number of rations which proved highly acceptable.

The youth was now desperate, and that night he struck out boldly for Ladysmith, and kept on until he reached the vicinity of End Hill and the White Kopje. He was now within four miles of Ladysmith proper. A storm was coming up, and he determined to take advantage of the elements and get past the Boer guards, were such a thing possible.

As he advanced he became more cautious. The Boers had a twelve pounder planted on End Hill, and there was a strong picket guard stretching from this hill over the veldt and the roads to Colenso, and the mountain passes, on to Lancer Hill.

“If they get me, they’ll surely shoot me on the spot,” he thought, and then as a burly Dutch picket appeared out of the darkness he dropped into the tall wet grass and laid as silent as possible.

The Boer tramped close to him, and it was a long while before Dave felt able to go on, and then he slipped through the grass on his stomach like a snake. But at last the pickets were passed, and then the boy arose and went forward on a run, using up all the strength that was left in him.

“Halt! Who goes there?” The cry came from directly ahead, and straining his eyes, Dave made out a British soldier — one of the Gordon Post — who had his rifle aimed ready to fire.

“Don’t shoot!” cried the boy. “Is this the English camp?”

“It is,” was the welcome answer, and a great load was lifted from Dave’s heart. He walked closer and told his tale, and long before morning was

safe in Ladysmith. Here he had to report to General White himself, and what he had to say was listened to with close attention.

“Well, my lad, you are in Ladysmith now,” said General White. “And I am afraid you will have to stay in—at least for a time. But don’t mind that; we’ll treat you as well as we can,” and he gave Dave a friendly hand-shake.

As soon as he was able, Dave hunted up his Aunt Isabel and his little cousin Alice. He found both at the house of a friend, in fairly good health, but much worn out through anxiety attending the siege.

“It has been a dreadful time,” sighed Mrs. Nelson. “We are not safe, no matter where we go. Yesterday the Boers continued the bombardment, and the store directly across the way was completely wrecked, as you can see.”

“Yes, and the bad, bad soldiers fired a shell right in the back yard once, and killed a dog and a horse,” put in little Alice. “Oh, it was simply drefful!” And she shook her curly head ominously.

“It’s too bad, certainly,” said Dave. “I trust the town is soon relieved. Won’t they let the women and children get away?”

“No. General White tried to arrange with General Joubert about that, but the most Joubert would allow was to form a sick camp and station along the line of the railroad to Maritzburg, at a point within the Boer lines, a place they now call Imtomb Camp, for the cemetery is also there. As the folks were not allowed to go to the English camps, they preferred — that is the majority of them — to remain in Ladysmith.”

Mrs. Nelson was, of course, very anxious to hear from her husband and her son. Dave broke the news as gently as possible, but Mrs. Nelson could not stand the strain, and went into a fit of weeping, in which little Alice joined.

“It is too cruel!” she wailed. “My husband a prisoner and wounded, and Will either a prisoner, or perhaps dead!” She was nearly overcome, and a physician had to be called in to give her something soothing, that she might not break down utterly.

It was on the day that Dave entered Ladysmith the news came in that General Buller’s third attempt to relieve the town had failed. As mentioned before, a hill on the upper side of the Tugela had been gained, but while the army was preparing to advance, a war balloon was sent up,

and through observations taken from this high elevation it was discovered that the Boers had planted some extra heavy guns directly in the mountain passes, so that to push forward would have been suicidal. Under such circumstances there was nothing left to do but to go back and over the river once more, and this the British commander did.

This retreat came on the 7th of February, and once more Ladysmith was in gloom. Rations were short, and extravagant prices had to be paid for everything, so that Dave's money was soon gone, and, in company with hundreds of others, he had to get his kettle of soup at the public kitchen, in order to keep from starving. All of the cattle had been killed, and luxuries in the way of fresh meats and fresh vegetables were unknown. The bombardments continued, and no one knew but what the next minute would be his last.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH

“IF I only knew what had become of Dave!”

Such was Will's remark as he sat on his horse, several miles away from the mountain trail where his cousin had taken the awful tumble into the ravine. The lad's left arm was bleeding from a bullet wound, made by a Boer sharpshooter's rifle, and his pistol and cartridge box were both empty.

It had been a wild and dangerous ride, around the rocky trail and through a cross cut which had unexpectedly opened to his vision. The boy, desperate in the extreme, had resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, and with true Anglo-Saxon pluck had loaded and emptied his pistol twice, and had had the satisfaction of seeing two of his pursuers drop out of the race, one seriously wounded in the breast. Now he was as deep into a dense forest as his steed would carry him, hatless, his jacket in rags, and his breath coming and going rapidly.

He felt that Dave must be alive—he would not believe his cousin dead. Yet he would not dare go back to the spot—indeed, he doubted if he could find the locality again.

“It was a nasty tumble,” he told himself. “If Dave is hurt, he will be next to helpless down there. What shall I do?”

He passed a dismal night, speculating upon his situation for several hours, and then falling into a fitful doze, from which the distant booming of a cannon aroused him at daybreak. He rode off, not knowing in what direction, and hardly caring. Never had he felt so lonely as at that moment, with the great Drakensberg Mountains hemming him in on all sides. He felt that one might easily become lost in those mountains and never find his way out again.

At last he gained the Tugela River. The sun was again setting, and at a distance he beheld a number of men moving about on the stream in flatboats. He gazed long and earnestly at them, and made out the well-known khaki uniform of the British soldier of the tropics. At some distance from the river were a number of *sangars*, or shelters, put up against the rocks, and here

were more soldiers, some on guard and others at rest.

“Hurrah!” he shouted, and rode toward them swiftly, waving his white handkerchief as he advanced. Soon he was among them, and found they were a detachment of the Queen’s Guard, sent out to watch a pass to the north.

“You’ve had a remarkable adventure,” said the captain of the command. “And your escape from the enemy does you credit. If you have any military information to give, you had best take it straight to headquarters.”

The next day found Will with the main body of General Buller’s army, and there he remained for the time being. Once he went out with half a dozen soldiers to look for Dave, but this search proved, as we know, unsuccessful.

The armies at the Modder River and before Ladysmith were separated by about three hundred miles of rough territory, yet constant communications were kept up between Lord Roberts, General Methuen, and General Buller, and about the time that Kimberley was relieved, General Buller began his fourth attempt to relieve the city which had so long and patiently awaited his coming, feeling

that the Boers opposing him under General Joubert could not now look for reënforcements from General Cronje. In the meantime many heliographic messages had passed between Buller and the commander in Ladysmith, and General White promised to do everything in his power to aid the relief column in getting to him.

The advance began on February 14, when the Queen's Guard crossed the nek and fought for a position on the southern slope of Monte Carlo, while the Fourth Brigade fought for the western slope, and the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and a portion of the Sixth Brigade struck at the eastern flank of the Boer army.

Every step of the way was bitterly contested, in weather which was frightfully hot and dusty, but the British were now on their mettle, and slowly but surely the Dutch were driven across the Tugela and away from both banks, and then General Buller's whole army came over and encamped under the high cliffs which in the past had afforded such generous protection to their opponents.

The capture of Monte Carlo was followed by the taking of Hlangwane. This high hill commanded a good view of Colenso, and no sooner were the Brit-

ish guns brought to bear on that town than the Boers retreated with all speed. They were pursued by the Fifth Division, and a sharp encounter followed with the Boer rearguard. At the same time the First British Brigade pushed on to Grobler's Kloof, but here the Boers held a strong position and beat them back, with a heavy loss to the Somerset regiment, of which over a hundred were killed or wounded.

Will went with the Queen's Guard to Monte Carlo, a rugged mountain overlooking the river, behind the rocks of which a strong Boer force was intrenched. At his own request the youth had been supplied with a rifle and cartridges, and had learned as many military movements as were absolutely necessary to the occasion.

"We'll make a soldier out of you, never fear!" cried Captain Rathmore, of the company to which Will had attached himself. "I have heard you can shoot pretty straight, and out here that is the main thing."

Will's heart beat wildly when the advance came. In a person of real backbone blood will always tell, and to him England was his own country, although he had been born and brought up in South Africa among the Boers.

“Hurrah for the Old Flag!” he shouted enthusiastically. “Come on, fellows, who’s afraid!” And his show of valor made many a Tommy Atkins laugh heartily.

But there was small pleasure in that day, outside of the pleasure which comes from the knowledge of a duty well done. Soon the lad found himself on the firing line, amid a dust and apparent confusion which for the moment dazed him. He heard the crack! crack! of many rifles, the booming of deep-throated cannon, and the whining and shrieking of shells and hissing of shrapnel. Once a shell burst directly in front of him, and only by hurling himself flat on the ground did he manage to save his life.

“This is hot, eh?” he gasped, as he got up again. “If that had come fifty feet closer—” The balance of his remark was drowned out by the report of the British artillery, and, along with his company, he rushed forward, firing whenever he got the chance to do so. He saw one burly Boer peeping over a distant rock, gun in hand, and took careful aim at the man. The Boer fell back, and that was the last seen of him in that fight.

When the heights were gained, and the Boers

had fallen back and out of sight, the boy was ready to drop from exhaustion. He had been on his feet in the broiling sun for six hours, without a mouthful to eat or to drink. Joining a number of the soldiers, he let himself fall on a stretch of grass, and lay there panting, like a dog from the chase.

“I said ye would make a soldier,” cried one old veteran, catching him by the arm. “I had my eye on ye, and ye did nobly. But, lad, ye’re wounded—your back is covered with blood!”

“Wounded!” repeated Will, and then he felt the blood trickling down over his left shoulder. In the excitement he had not noticed the shot. His jacket and shirt were taken off, and there, just below the collar bone, was an ugly gash made by a rifle ball, which had made two holes through his jacket, several inches apart. As the regular surgeons were busy, attending to the more seriously wounded, Will’s companions cared for him.

“You are lucky to escape with your life,” said one. “If that bullet had come a bit closer, it would have passed right through your throat.”

“I was lucky,” answered Will; “but don’t think that this has knocked all the fight out of

me. I'm good for many a battle yet," and this proved true, for the following day saw him on the firing line once more.

The fighting was now principally at Grobler's Kloof, whence the British had taken their Howitzer Battery. This battery the Boers tried to capture, but failed. But the Dutch position was so strong that a further advance seemed well-nigh impossible, although the troops of the queen did all in their power to take the mountain fastnesses which confronted them. For the Boers these fastnesses were proving veritable forts.

At last, finding progress absolutely blocked in the neighborhood of Langewachte Spruit, General Buller recrossed to the south bank of the Tugela, and on the 27th a small force took Pieter Hill, after climbing a cliff over five hundred feet high. At the top a desperate encounter ensued, but the Boers had to fall back, their left flank much disorganized. Sixty prisoners were taken by the British, and the Dutch fled in all directions.

"On to Ladysmith!" was now the cry, for an entrance into the mountains had been gained at last, and a rivalry sprang up as to which organization should be first into the town. Yet there was

more fighting, for twenty-four hours longer, in half a dozen directions, before Lord Dundonald, with the Natal Carbineers and a composite regiment—that is, companies from several different regiments—marched into Ladysmith at night.

What a rejoicing there was then! Cannons boomed, church bells rang, and the besieged people shouted themselves hoarse, as they ran out on the streets almost ready to embrace those who had come in. “Buller is coming!” was the cry. “He has scattered the Boers in all directions!”

The post-office had been the main centre of attraction during the siege, for it was here that all news from the outside world was posted up each day. Hither went the soldiers and the citizens, many of the latter flourishing Union Jacks as they ran. On the steps of the post-office General White addressed the crowd.

“I thank you one and all for the heroic and patient manner in which you have assisted me during the siege of Ladysmith,” he said. “It hurt me terribly when I was compelled to cut down your rations, but, thank God, we have kept our flag flying!”

“Hurrah for General White!” was the shout,

and three cheers were given with a will, with a tiger to follow. Then the general led all in singing "God Save the Queen." It was a meeting which will never be forgotten by those who were present.

On the day following General Buller made his formal entrance into the town, and there was a regular military parade. Dave was out to see this parade, as were also his Aunt Isabel and Cousin Alice.

Suddenly Alice gave a shriek of joy. "Will! Will! My own brother Will!" she exclaimed, and pointed with her little hand to a body of soldiers who were approaching. It was Will, true enough, and in a moment more the lad was in his mother's arms, with Alice perched on his shoulder, and Dave looking his thankfulness out of his happy eyes.

CHAPTER XXXV

ON TO MAFEKING

“I AM so glad you are alive!” said Dave, when he could get the chance to talk to his cousin.

“And I am glad that you are all right, too,” answered Will. “I felt sure that fall over the cliff had killed you.”

Of course each had to tell his story to the other, and then Mrs. Nelson had to relate all she knew, and little Alice had to tell something, too. The little girl kept on hugging her brother, and could not be made to leave him once for the balance of that day.

The fighting to get into Ladysmith had told severely upon Will, and it was deemed best to put him under a physician's care. The doctor ordered perfect rest for at least a month, and the English lad was made comfortable at the home of his parents' friend, and Mrs. Nelson took care of him.

The days following the capture of General Cronje and the relief of Ladysmith were busy ones for the

armies on both sides of the war, but to go into the details of all the battles which were fought would take more pages than I can spare for that purpose. Leaving the Modder River, Lord Roberts struck out directly for Bloemfontein, and two weeks later the capital city of the Orange Free State was entered, and a few hours later the flag of England was floating from the top of the government building. The Boers fled, and with them went President Steyne and many other members of the Free State government.

“Bloemfontein is ours!” said Mrs. Nelson, bringing the news in to Will. “I presume the next movement will be on Pretoria.”

“Yes, mother, and that will wind up this terrible war, I hope,” answered the son.

“If only I could get some word from my father,” put in Dave, with a long sigh. He had wished to journey in the direction of Mafeking, but had seen no chance to do so. Besides, there was no telling if his parent really was in that besieged town.

Mafeking was as badly off as Ladysmith had been, and conditions there were growing rapidly worse. The Boers bombarded the place time and again, but the gallant garrison, under Colonel

Baden-Powell, refused to consider any terms of surrender.

“We are here to stay,” said the commander. “And here we will stay until the end.” Rations went down almost to nothing, and horses had to be shot for food and to keep them from starving, while many of the soldiers fell sick of fever and for the want of a proper diet. Yet little grumbling was heard.

While the several forces of the English army were operating in the south, as related in the past chapters, another force of two thousand men, under Colonels Plumer and Houldsworth, had started in the north, from Rhodesia, to march south to the relief of Mafeking. Thus two armies were moving toward the town, yet they were hundreds of miles apart, and between them lay several of the strongest of the Dutch commandoes. The command from Rhodesia encountered severe opposition almost from the start, and during the third week in March was driven back to Crocodile Pool; and then the relief of the town seemed as far off as ever.

But the Boers, having suffered one great loss in the capture of General Cronje, were to suffer another

still greater in the death of General Piet Joubert, the Commander-in-Chief of all the Dutch forces, and the able military leader who had so long held General Buller in check at the Tugela River. General Joubert died of stomach troubles, on the 27th of March, and was buried with the highest honors. He was of old French Huguenot blood, his ancestors having settled in South Africa many years before. Those who knew him well say that he was a man absolutely without fear, yet a soldier who was kind and considerate to the last degree.

The loss of Bloemfontein aroused the Free Staters to great activity, and for weeks after Lord Roberts entered the capital the fighting went on continually, to the northward and in the direction of Mafeking, while at Ladysmith the Transvaal Boers sought to regain some of the ground lost to General Buller. Hardly a day passed when some battle, large or small, did not occur, the British losing at times, and at others driving the Boers back for miles with heavy loss. Once a Boer commando marched into a village thinking it unoccupied, and a British regiment captured all of the Dutchmen, nearly two hundred in number. At another time several companies of British were caught in a pass between

the kopjes and had to surrender under threat of being blown to pieces by the Boer artillery, trained on the spot. Scouting was attended with great difficulty, for both sides had out the best of their sharpshooters, and to attempt to cross the stretch of veldt from one hill to another was hazardous in the extreme. The British freely acknowledged that they had found a foeman worthy of their steel, and the whole world looked on and regretted that the difficulty between the two nations could not be adjusted without further fighting.

One day Dave could stand the suspense no longer, and came to his Aunt Isabel and Will. "I am going to leave you," he said.

"You are going to look for your father?" questioned his cousin quickly.

"Yes, dead or alive, I must find out what has become of him. This suspense will drive me to an insane asylum."

"My dear David, I can realize how you feel," said his aunt, taking him in her arms. "But such a mission as you propose will be highly dangerous."

"No more dangerous than to get into Ladysmith," he answered. "Anyway, I am going to try it, no matter what the risk."

He was off on the day following, having procured a good horse and an entirely new outfit, as well as a fair supply of money and a trustworthy pistol.

In a roundabout way Dave had heard that a special relief column, composed of cavalry and mounted police from the Cape, was to start for Mafeking by way of Kimberley, keeping as much as possible out of the way of all Boer forces, and doing a large portion of their travelling by night. To this force he meant to attach himself, and for that purpose took the train to Maritzburg, where he disembarked with his horse and continued his journey directly westward through Basutoland to Wepener.

There had been severe fighting at Wepener, but the Boers had retired and he was not molested, and his next movement was to Jagersfontein, and thence, by the public highway, direct to Kimberley.

The ride was one of over three hundred miles, over kopjes and rolling veldt, with many a stream to cross, and he had to keep a constant lookout for soldiers, fearful that some one upon either side of the contest might shoot him down. He was stopped several times, but his story was such a straight one that none of the delays lasted over a few hours or a night.

When Kimberley was reached boy and steed were sorely in need of rest, yet Dave spent only one afternoon and a night in the mining city, for the relief column had already left, and he did not wish to miss it on the road. On the day following, and while Dave was on his way to Vryburg, a strong English command, under General Warren, also moved on toward Mafeking, to meet the Boers in a sharp fight at Fourteen Streams and the Vaal River.

Several days later, after having passed through the village of Taungs, Dave came upon a number of wounded Cape police, and from them learned that the first relief column was pushing on toward Mafeking with all possible vigor.

“We have heard that the Boers are getting ready for an extra heavy bombardment of the town,” said one of the sufferers, “and our command wanted to get there before Colonel Baden-Powell was forced to surrender.”

Again Dave pushed on, and after two days of hard riding he came up to the flying column, just as it was joining forces with Colonel Plumer at Jammāsibi, on May 15. With this force were a few guns, but these were brought into action only with difficulty.”

The Boers were now finding the territory too "hot" for comfort, and not knowing how great a force of the British was advancing upon them, began preparations to retire, taking with them their big siege guns, which for many months had been the terror of all in Mafeking. The siege had now lasted almost seven months, a time which to many of the people seemed an eternity. "Will relief never come?" was the question asked daily.

"If you join us, you've got to fight," said one of the British officers to Dave. "We want no idle hands here."

"I shall try to do my duty," answered the boy, and saluting, he walked away. His one thought was of his father, not of the war and its awful consequences.

For five days there was fighting, first on one side and then on the other. Once Dave found himself attacked by two burly Boers, each with an empty rifle to which was affixed a glistening bayonet. It was in an out-of-the-way spot, and the boy saw that he must fight for it or be slain.

"Keep off!" he cried in Dutch. "I am a non-combatant! Keep off!" At this one of the Boers fell back. But the other came on with an evil look

in his eye, and a fierce hand-to-hand struggle ensued, which came to an unexpected termination when a rifle-shot rang out, and the Dutchman fell back, pierced through the shoulder by the skill of a Cape Colony mounted policeman.

“That’s a narrow escape for you, lad,” said the officer, as he rode up. “You ought to have shot him down with your pistol when he first made for you,” and he galloped off after the second Boer.

Three days later the first of the relief guard came within sight of Mafeking, and twenty-four hours after this the first entry was made into the town, the Boers leaving the vicinity with all possible speed.

The scene that followed is well-nigh impossible of description. The whole town went wild with excitement. Men and boys, ragged, lean, and hungry, shouted themselves hoarse, and marched through the streets waving flags and singing patriotic songs. The women wept and fairly embraced the bronzed and tired soldiers who had come to them, bringing with them many wagon loads of supplies. Soon it became rumored that another relief column was following the first, and that a large sum of money had been collected in London for the benefit of the sufferers when the siege should

be raised, and the excitement increased, and it was several days before many began to act like rational beings. Nor was the excitement confined to Mafeking, or to South Africa. When it became known in England that the gallant little town had once more received its freedom, the joy was unconfined, and for the day London and many other cities took on a holiday appearance, as the crowd congregated to talk over the good news.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FALL OF PRETORIA — CONCLUSION

“Now to find father, if he is anywhere in the place.”

Thus spoke Dave to himself, upon entering Mafeking, close upon the heels of the British soldiers. To him the victory, great as it had been, was of secondary importance. He was fairly dying with impatience to know whether or not his parent was alive.

It did not take the lad long to reach the general hospital of the town, and once there he looked over the long list of sick and wounded. There was one Nelson among the number, but the soldier was no relation to him.

“Useless!” burst from his lips, and all in a tremble, he sank down on a bench, overcome with emotion.

“What’s the trouble, my lad?” asked a surgeon, who had been passing as he came to a halt. “Do you feel sick?”

“Yes — sick at heart,” groaned Dave.

“Is some friend missing?”

“My father is missing. I heard he was wounded, and I was in great hope that I would find him here. Now I don’t know where to look for him.”

“Is he in the army?”

“No, sir, he is an American and a non-combatant. But he was shot in some way.”

“Perhaps he is in the Boers’ hospital.”

“That may be, sir.”

“If matters weren’t so red-hot just now, you might get a pass into their lines.”

“I’d like that—if it would do any good.”

The surgeon passed on, and a little while later Dave left the hospital and walked down the main street of Mafeking. His heart was like a lump of lead, and what to do next he did not know.

“Perhaps I would have done as well had I remained in Ladysmith,” he mused dismally. “I don’t know a soul here, and what will these people care for an American boy who is not fighting with them?”

On the following day, Dave was lounging around the main hotel when he came face to face with an Englishman he had frequently met in Pretoria.

“Hullo, is it you?” exclaimed Mr. Brentgood.
“How did you get here?”

The boy started to tell his story, but before he had half finished the Englishman interrupted him.

“Lad, I’m afraid the news will shock you, but —but— your father was with the Boers during that fight, and when he was wounded. I can’t say whether he is dead or alive, but if he is alive, he is most likely in some Dutch hospital, or in the sick camp at Pretoria.”

“Do you know how badly he was wounded?”

“I do not. When I saw him he was with a crowd of eight Boers, who had gathered around a fallen officer. Then came a rush of the line, and he went down in a twinkling. I trust, for your sake, that he is alive.”

“If he is in Pretoria, I don’t believe I can get to him.”

“Don’t be so sure of that. Lord Roberts is pushing forward steadily and will soon reach the Vaal River.”

This news was correct, for a portion of the British army crossed the Vaal on the queen’s birthday, and about the same time Lord Roberts annexed the Orange Free State as a British colony.

The fighting was bitter, and grew hotter as the English approached Johannesburg, and many were the threats to blow up the valuable mines located in and around that city. The Boers were scattered over a wide expanse of territory, and the soldiers of the queen had to keep close together for fear of having some detachment cut off and captured.

At last Johannesburg gave up and many British prisoners were released, and then the advance was straight on the Transvaal capital. Here it was feared that the Boers would make a final desperate stand, but they were far outnumbered and saw how useless would be such a struggle, and at the last moment the whole army retreated to the northward, taking many of the Dutch families with them.

It was a great day when the British army marched into Pretoria, with flags flying and bands playing the national airs. Soon the Union Jack was waving proudly from the Government Building, and every British subject was cheering lustily for the queen and Lord Roberts. The war had lasted nearly eight months, and had tried the resources of Great Britain to the utmost. With the downfall of Pretoria it was felt on all sides that the Dutch

struggle for independence, courageous as it had been, must soon cease.

Three days after Pretoria was taken, Dave arrived there, tired to death after his long ride, but as anxious as ever to find his father. He soon found out where the Boer's sick had been kept, and made his way to the place with all speed.

As he entered the hospital he was shocked to see, lying upon a rude couch, the form of Hendrik Kneip. The Dutchman had been shot through the neck, and was slowly dying of a wound which no surgeon could operate upon with success. His face was exceedingly thin, and his eyes seemed to start from their sockets as they were turned on the lad.

"Hendrik Kneip!" ejaculated Dave, and on the instant all the hard feelings he had had for the rascal melted away. "Where are you wounded?"

The man continued to stare, but did not answer. "He can't talk," whispered an attendant. "His throat is practically gone."

"Horrible!" murmured Dave, and gave a shudder. "Kneip, I am sorry for you! I would not like to see a dog suffer in this way," and then he passed on. The Dutchman continued to stare at him until he was out of sight. Hendrik Kneip died

that night, in terrible agony, and was buried the next day with a number of other dead Dutchmen.

Quarter of an hour later Dave learned that his father had been at the hospital, but had been transferred to a friend's house several squares away. Hither he made his way in all haste and mounted the broad piazza overgrown with native vines and flowers.

“Dave! My own boy Dave!”

The cry came from Martin Nelson, and turning, the youth saw his father resting in a hammock at one end of the piazza, while seated on a stool beside him was Ralph Nelson.

“Father!” cried the boy, and rushed to his parent. Each would have fairly hugged the other had not Ralph Nelson interposed.

“Go slow, Dave,” he said. “Your father is still a very sick man. He has been wounded in the breast and also in the shoulder.”

“But you are out of danger, aren't you, father?”

“Yes, Dave, — at least the doctor tells me so. But he says I must keep very quiet. But where have you been, and how did you get here?”

“And where is Will?” put in Ralph Nelson. “And do you know anything of your Aunt Isabel and little Alice?”

“One question at a time, please,” answered Dave, half inclined to cry, he felt so happy. “Will and the others are in Ladysmith, and all are fairly well — or were when I left. I went to Mafeking to find father, and then followed Lord Roberts from Johannesburg to here.”

“And what of Johannesburg,” asked his father. “Are the mines safe?”

“Yes, and so is every bit of the property belonging to you and Uncle Ralph. I don’t believe the Boers ever intended to blow the mines up.”

“You are right, lad. The Boers are not as bad as some folks make them out to be. I fought with them near Mafeking, as you know. But I must say I did it largely because I got mixed up in a battle while looking for you. I had heard that you had gone to Mafeking after coming from that hunt. I would have been killed had it not been for our friend Captain Barton, the animal hunter, with whom I was journeying at the time.”

“And where is Captain Barton now?” asked Dave.

“Right here,” came a voice from a long open window, and the animal hunter stepped through and wrung the youth’s hand. “Glad to see you, and glad to know you are safe.”

As soon as they could settle down to it, each told his story in detail, to which the others listened with rapt attention. Then the subject shifted to the state of affairs around the ostrich farms, and Dave's father told him that all was going well, excepting that the Dutch had confiscated the most of the cattle for military purposes. "But they say they will pay up when the war is over," he added.

"Never mind, let them have the cattle, father," answered Dave. "I am thankful we have all come out alive!" And he gave his parent's hand a squeeze that meant a good deal.

Here let us bring to a close this tale of adventure in South Africa before and during the terrible war which had now lasted eight months, and which had cost thousands of lives and millions of pounds sterling.

With the British occupying Pretoria and the surrounding territory, it was considered perfectly safe for the Nelsons to return to their farms, and as soon as it could be accomplished Dave and his father went back, while Ralph Nelson journeyed in a roundabout way to Ladysmith, to bring on his own family. At Ladysmith all were found even

better off than when Dave had left them, and the meeting there was fully as joyous as had been that at Pretoria. On returning to the farms, it was decided that, for the present, all should reside at the Ralph Nelson homestead, along with Captain Barton, until the close of the war.

"We'll keep together in the future," said Ralph Nelson. "It will be much more agreeable all around."

"Yes, and we can keep a better eye on the boys," answered Martin Nelson. "We don't want them to get into any more trouble."

At this both Dave and Will smiled broadly. But they had had enough of adventures for the time being: and here we will leave them, knowing full well, that come what may, they will ever remember the perils they encountered when caught, so to speak, BETWEEN BOER AND BRITON.

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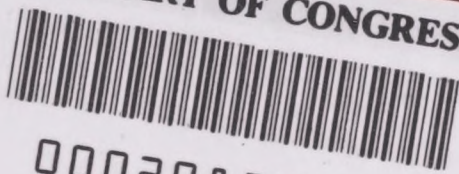
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