

their neighbours, they were all so mixed up, owing to the curiosity my appearance excited having a stimulating effect on the custom amongst Boers of running backwards and forwards between one another's houses. There was a very large number of dirty little children of all ages, and a sprinkling of dirty but helpful boys—boys who could drive a plough, or hold it, as well as their fathers; there was an entanglement of slatternly women with loud voices, who have left shadowy pictures on my mind, as bearing the more or less depressed expression common to the Boeress. With a life of dull toil stretching from childhood to the grave, it is no wonder that it should be so; and yet, those who have known the peasantry of other lands, must feel the question arise in their minds, "Why should the Boer peasant-woman look depressed, when the South Italian peasant-woman (for instance) does not?" I think the answer to the question is, "Look at the men." It is not want of education, or rather of book-learning, that makes a life of toil dull, and the men and women who live such lives generation after generation incarnations of dulness. It is but in the latest generation that a gleam from the sun of knowledge has fallen on the peasantry of South Italy, yet who would have ever called them "dull?" who would have discovered that their women wore a general air of depression? The women of a race will not look depressed if the men be not "dull;" and *vice versâ*, if the women look depressed the men must be "dull."

Although the Boers are in many ways cunning, any one who has any knowledge of them will corroborate the statement, that the vast majority of them are dull, and that the vast majority of Boeresses bear a stamp of de-

pression, although in the elder women this stamp is somewhat effaced by a tendency to fat, which on first sight gives an appearance of jollity. I do not mean to say that I have not seen cheerful women amongst the Boers, but they are rare exceptions.

Besides the children, lads, and women, there was a group of big, rough-handed, grimy-looking, rough-voiced men, the only individual member of which I can distinctly remember was "Lo," a fine stalwart fellow, with kindly blue eyes, and whom I distinguished sufficiently from the general relationship to know that he was the son of mine host, and that he was unmarried.

These people were very kind in their way, but very annoying at the same time. They were willing to help at settling my room, so as to make it inhabitable, and willing also to help with the ploughing and sowing that had to be done; but they invaded me incessantly. To be certain of privacy, I had, from early dawn until the family retired to rest, to tie the reed door to with a piece of string, and then an enterprising youngster or an inquisitive female was as likely as not to push the reeds aside and peep in. Of course as there was no window the door had usually to be left open to afford light, and then the whole troop disported themselves from morning till night. If I did not talk to them, or even if I was engaged in writing, it did not matter; they would talk amongst themselves, and the children would scramble about at their mothers' feet, and the men would smoke, whilst all would spit on the ground in a manner trying to weak nerves. They, as indeed all the Boers I have met, treated me to a certain extent differently from the way in which they treat most people. They never called

me by any familiar name, although they were all very friendly. Perhaps they had some vague perception that if they had attempted to do so I should have stopped them; whatever the reason may be, although playful conversation amongst the Boers is frequently what we should consider both coarse and impertinent, I had only twice any occasion to check any acquaintance of mine. This point being attained, I felt that it would be unwise to try to put limits, marked out by my sense of the proprieties, upon conduct which these people considered as a proof of their friendly feeling, and which besides afforded to them a source of innocent amusement. I felt this to be the more imperative owing to the dislike existing between the Boers and the English; a feeling which in so thinly populated a country as the Transvaal, each individual settler could either augment or diminish; for it is wonderful how trifling information respecting individuals spreads in the Transvaal. I may mention an instance of this in illustration.

In the month of April I had telegraphed from Pretoria to my banker's in London to ask how my balance with them stood. In the following September old Mrs. Nell in Waterberg asked me why I was trading when I had so much money in the bank! Neither is this a solitary instance of private matters, connected with an unknown individual, being subjects of common conversation amongst people who perhaps never saw him or could be supposed to take any interest in him. Certainly, so far as my experience goes, a Boer loves gossip as well as any man or woman in existence.

Lo De Plessis and Jimmy soon became quite chums, and I was glad to hear the latter improving in speaking the

dialect of the country every day. In the meantime I rode to see various neighbours, and everywhere met with a kindly welcome, and heard a wish expressed that I should open a store at Jackallsfontein. The men were anxious to know all I knew of what was being done at Potchefstrom, and as to the general attitude of the English Government, while all professed an utter ignorance of occurrences either at Potchefstrom or elsewhere. I had no news to communicate, but I felt certain that they had; and their reticence only confirmed my opinion that the programme indicated by De Clerc was in progress.

The weather continued very stormy, and it was with anything but pleasure that I looked forward to having to ride back to Pretoria. Still it was evident that I should have to return thither, for my waggons from Waterberg were nearly due, and, of course, I had to be in Pretoria to meet them; so, after waiting as long as I could at the farm, I made a start.

The morning was so stormy that I could not saddle up until the day was far advanced, and hence I did not get into Pretoria until about ten o'clock at night. I rode to the Felmans as usual, but they had gone to rest, and I was only able to get into my little room, and put the horses into the stable. To my sorrow I found that the forage I had put by for them before leaving Pretoria had been used, so my poor animals, as well as their mistress and the boy, had to go supperless. I had taken Andreas with me instead of Soldat, as I did not wish to leave Clara on the farm without her husband. Andreas the next day went "on the spree," and never turned up again, so that I had to look after the horses myself.

In the meantime the tenant I had had in my house

left Pretoria; and as, owing to the unsettled state of affairs, it was a bad time to let a house, I determined to prepare it for my own occupation, at least temporarily, although, with a view to the possibility of an outbreak, I determined only to put the most necessary things into it. The garden had been much neglected, and I employed two Kaffirs to set it in order.

Day after day passed, and my waggons did not come in, and in the meanwhile alarming rumours were on the increase. The very morning that I left Jackallsfontein, a Boer had ridden over from a neighbouring farm with news that Paul Kruger and Pretorius had sent a message to the effect that every man who could, ought, in the name of God, to attend the now famous meeting at Perdekraal, which was to be held forthwith. Great excitement had been caused—the messenger had bargained for a saddle from me, whereon to ride to the meeting. Lo De Plessis and all the other men were going; they had pressed upon me the desirability of loading up my incoming waggons with various articles of consumption, and bringing them to the Beeinkommste, assuring me that they would guarantee a good trade to me. This plan I had revolved much in my mind. I had no doubt that it would be a good speculation, but I finally abandoned it, as I thought it would be hardly an honourable position for me to accept.

It will, I daresay, be remembered that the meeting of the final Beeinkommste had been fixed for the 8th of January, and was suddenly abandoned, much to the surprise of many of the Boers themselves, including my neighbour at Jackallsfontein; hence my plans, as well as those of a good many others, were considerably disconcerted.

One morning I had walked from the Felmans' early, to see whether the Kaffirs were at work in my garden, when I was told by an acquaintance that Robert Higgins and most of my old friends from the Magaliesberg had come into Pretoria, having been warned by the Boers that if they remained on their farms their lives would not be safe. I thought this was but one of the many false reports flying about Pretoria, but resolved to go to the house of old Mr. Higgins and inquire. On my way there I met Robert Higgins himself, who confirmed the report. That day and the following one the whole of the village was greatly agitated, and there was a great demand for waggons amongst people who thought that their lives, in case of an outbreak, would be safer out of Pretoria than in it.

I determined to seize the opportunity of selling my old waggon, and the oxen I had lately bought, at a good price; and, saddling the horses, I started for the farm, riding one and leading the other. Andreas having levanted, and there being no boy to be got at the moment, I had no choice but to do this, for volunteers were being raised in Pretoria, and horse-stealing was so rife, that had I left Dandy behind me I should probably never have seen him again.

As owing to the torrents of rain which were continually falling, the Yokeskey river was likely to be at flood, I did not much relish the idea of crossing it with a led horse. I had hardly got to the outskirts of the village, however, when I saw a storm approaching, and turned back only just in time; and the next day I was fortunate enough to get a boy to ride Dandy, and to act subsequently as leader to the waggon, which I intended Soldat to drive, an office which Jimmy would otherwise have had to per-

form. It was on Monday, the 13th of December, that at seven o'clock in the morning I started for Jackallsfontein.

The morning was fresh after the rain, and I pushed on pretty quickly, taking a shorter road to the farm than I had taken with the waggon, and hopeful of escaping rain, although very heavy masses of cloud were lowering round the horizon. I was already near the Yokeskey river, and the rain appeared not far off, when I met a Boer on horseback. We both drew rein, and he asked me where I was going; I told him to my farm.

"Then," said he, "you will have to swim the river, there is no passing it otherwise."

He then asked me if I meant to stay at the farm or return to Pretoria. I told him that I was going to bring up my waggon to sell, with, I hoped, a light load of farm produce.

"Look at the clouds!" said the Boer; "the river is impassable now, and if it rains, as I think there is no doubt it will, it will be still deeper by the time you get your waggon back to it."

It struck me that what he said was true; so, much disgusted, I turned my horse and we rode alongside of each other for a short time. My companion asked me if I had heard any news of the deliberation of the Beeinkommste at Perdekraal (Perdekraal was within a ride of my farm). I told him that no one in Pretoria had any news about it. He then asked me whether it was true that no Boers were allowed to enter Pretoria, saying that such was the current report; and this I was able to contradict. Shortly after he bade me good-bye, and cantered off across the veldt in one direction, whilst I held on, likewise across the veldt, towards Pretoria.

My way lay past a large farm-house, belonging to a

well-known man amongst the Boers called Guillaume Pretorius. As I was passing he came out, and I stopped and saluted him. He asked where I was going, and I told him how I had turned back from going to my farm.

“If you mean to get into Pretoria, then,” said he, “you had better push on : the Beeinkommste is broken up, and the commando rides to-day to Pretoria.”

“Does it?” said I ; “then I am in luck ; I should like to see it.”

The old fellow looked at me with an odd expression—I think he did not quite know what to make of my speech. He had never seen me before, although I knew about him, but with that habit of hospitality which has become a second nature to a Boer, he said, “Will you not off-saddle ? although perhaps you had better push on if your horses are not tired.”

At this moment we both caught sight of the Potchefstrom post-cart approaching the house, which was a post-station, and a minute after I recognized Mr. Cooper, the attorney, as one of the passengers in it. Our rencontre was a mutual surprise, and as he shook hands I noticed that his feet were bare, the result of the cart having been upset, one of the mules having been nearly drowned, and the passengers having to scramble and shift to set things straight in fording the river. Mr. Cooper introduced me to his fellow-passenger, the Attorney-General De Wett ; and, hopeful now of hearing some authentic news from Potchefstrom, I dismounted, off-saddled, and went into the house with the others, while the fresh horses or mules for the post-cart were being brought up and harnessed. Seated in a large and rather comfortable sitting-room at the back of the house, the three men talked of the present and coming events, and I listened.

Mr. De Wett told us that the commando was not to ride into Pretoria until Thursday, and then only in case no compromise had been arrived at. He said that the Beeinkommste had appointed all necessary officers, both civil and military, and had despatched a messenger to Pretoria that very day to tell the administrator that if the Government offices were not delivered over to the republic on Thursday, they would be taken by force, and that on Thursday the heads of the new government would ride into Pretoria with the commando to take possession. Mr. De Wett assured Pretorius that he had seen the Boer leaders, and that he was certain that by a little tact things might still be arranged. It struck me that it was very little use to think of compromises when things had come to such a pass, but I held my peace, and listened, whilst Pretorius expressed himself to the effect that the Boers would accept of no compromise so far as the complete restoration of their independence was concerned. This Pretorius struck me as being a good old fellow, rough enough, but yet a superior man to the ordinary Boer. All this time we had been sipping coffee brought to us by Mrs. Pretorius, who must have been good-looking in her time, and been looked at by two or three pretty little girls, in much neater trim than the generality of Boer maidens.

The post-cart being now inspanned, Mr. Cooper and Mr. De Wett started; I waited, for I was anxious to hear what Pretorius would say when they were gone, as I observed that he spoke with reticence before them, and I thought he might perhaps speak more freely when I was his only English listener. I talked first about my farm, which he knew, and was interested in, then a neighbour came in, and the conversation drifted back

again to politics, while we removed into another more homely sitting-room, and, upon hearing that I had had no breakfast before leaving Pretoria, Mrs. Pretorius brought me some Boer biscuits and more coffee.

It has always been my opinion that although the English Government were perfectly justified in annexing the Transvaal, the manner in which it was annexed was not only an unjustifiable blunder but an unjust act. My reasons for thinking that the annexation in itself was justifiable, are based on general principles, which it would be a hopeless task to attempt to explain to any Boer I ever met; but my reasons for thinking that the manner of annexation was altogether wrong are completely within the grasp of every one of them. In any expression of opinion to them, they inevitably missed my allusion to the general principles, which were unintelligible to them, and only remarked that I coincided with them in thinking that they had been very badly treated. All the Boers I knew spoke before me with great frankness, and when (in order to prevent the idea that I sided with them from obtaining) I said that in case of war I should, in spite of what I had expressed, side with the English, they accepted that as simply an inevitable consequence of my not being able to change my nationality, and it would have been a useless task to attempt to explain to them that under given circumstances I should feel myself bound to side against my own nation; but that in the Transvaal case I did not feel myself so bound. I confess I often felt seriously annoyed and depressed by this state of things in my intercourse with the Boers, so much so, that in the case of De Clerc, Willem De Plessis, Pretorius, as also of Barend Englesberg, all men superior to the common run of Boers, I should have attempted what I yet knew was

impossible, namely, to explain my opinion thoroughly to them, but for my still imperfect knowledge of Boer language. That language is unfit in itself for the expression of abstract thought, because formed by people who never think abstractly; and this deterred me from the effort whenever I felt impelled towards it, and in after-reflection I always admitted that it was well that I had been restrained from so doing.

The party assembled in Pretorius's house talked, as usual, freely before me; and I heard it confidently asserted that if the public offices were not given up on the appointed day an attack would be made on Pretoria, and that even the presence of women and children would not deter the Boers from fighting from street to street until they had occupied the whole town. The innocent blood shed would be on the head of the English Government. As to all English on outstanding farms, Pretorius, his friend, and his wife (who took an animated part in the conversation), seemed to think that those who remained strictly neutral would be left unharmed, or even protected in case of necessity. Having heard all I needed, I changed my mind as to returning to Pretoria. Rain or no rain, it was evident that I must give Jimmy a choice whether he would remain on the farm or run into Pretoria before it was too late, for I felt sure that an outbreak was imminent; so, saddling-up once more, I turned towards the Yokeskey river.

I did not, however, take the way I had retraced, but struck off across the veldt for Durks' Drift. It was a long way out of the direct path, but this plan offered two advantages, first, that I should possibly find the drift so that I could get across without swimming, which, considering that I had never swum a horse across a river, and

that I knew that Eclipse was rather shy of deep water, was, the wetting apart, a matter well worth considering; the other, that I should, by fording the drift, be able to judge whether it would be worth while to attempt to bring the waggon to Pretoria or not. At Durks' farm the Yoke-skey river winds, so that one has to ford it twice in a few hundred yards, but at neither place was the water higher than the flap of the saddle, and I pushed on quickly to Mrs. Williams's, where I off-saddled, and met with a kind and hospitable welcome. I did not stop long, however, but after the horses had had some forage and a roll, saddled once more, and started for Jackallfontein.

Just as I got on the highest part of the randt, the wind and rain came whirling up, but it was only the tail of a storm which went roaring away over the hills to one side, while another storm was pouring its fury on the distant hills at the other; and by the time Eclipse was picking his way down the stony slope above the De Plessis' cottage, all that remained of the rain was a watery sort of haze, gradually dissipating under the rays of the moon, which did not allow the party assembled outside the house, to see me until I was close to it. Then I was welcomed with a cordiality which would have made a stranger suppose that I had known, not only Jimmy, but the Boers, for years, while little Roughy, after executing some antics highly creditable to such a soft little mass of hair as he was, discharged a volley of little barks, and rushed at Moustache, who had offended him by espying and welcoming me first, and bit his long ears until they were forcibly separated, Nero, the while, wagging his short tail and giving little bounds indicative of satisfaction.

What a chattering; what an anxious asking and answering of questions; what a retailing of my news to

each member of the small community—who, hearing of my arrival, hastened to the cottage—took place that night by the light of the moon! My last evening in the yet unmade home, before all the plans that I had carefully thought over, and toiled hard to realize, were to be swept away into a past as remote as if years lay between it and to-day!

At last, after I had retired to the interior of the cottage, and had eaten my supper, surrounded at first by the whole family, but with a gradually diminishing company, as sleepiness caused first one and then another to drop off to their beds, until Lo De Plessis bade me good-night, I was alone with Jimmy. Then for the first time I confessed to him that I was anxious, and told him all that I had heard with regard to the treatment the Boers had it in their minds to bestow upon the English; told him not only what Pretorius had said, but what a farmer, whose cottage I had passed between Pretorius's farm and Durks' Drift, had said. This farmer's name was Joubert. He had called to me as I was riding past his cottage, and I had ridden up to the stoop, where he and some members of his family were congregated. A big, bony, black-haired man was Joubert; with a stubbly beard, high jaw-bones, and eager eyes.

"Where are you from?" he cried, as I drew rein.

"From Pretoria."

"What is the news?"

I told him.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "that is well. Will your Government give up the public offices, think you?"

"I am in no position to know what are the intentions of the Government," I answered; "but I do not think it likely they will."

He drew his breath, and said, in a savagely suppressed manner,—

“Then the streets of Pretoria shall run with blood like water on Thursday.”

He asked me eagerly what I thought of the action of the Government; asked if I were going back to Pretoria; called Heaven to witness that the blood spilt would cry vengeance on us; his eyes glittering, his whole frame absolutely quivering with passion. He had laid his hand on my horse's neck as he spoke; there was a look in his eyes unlike anything I had ever seen before—a blood-thirsty look that made me involuntarily shiver.

“Then you don't think they will give us the country back?” he cried again. “Then we will fight; we will drive you from the country; not one of your nation shall remain alive; your blood shall run as water on Thursday; we will kill all—all of you! Where are your troops? sent away to fight against the enemies that are attacking you—the Russians—the Irish—the Americans.”

“No, no,” said I, “now there you are mistaken.”

The blood rushed to his head, suffusing his very eyes until they looked red.

“Now I know you lie,” he cried, his voice shaking with passion. “There is your path—begone!”

“Not like this,” said I, not moving. “I am not the Government. I wish the Boers no harm, and although I am English and you a Boer, there is no reason for our quarrelling personally. Give me your hand before I go;” and I held out mine. Joubert looked—hesitated—then out came the rough paw; and he bade me a civil good-bye.

All this I told Jimmy; and told him he must choose for himself whether he would remain on the farm or return to Pretoria with me. He chose the former alternative; and

after a sleepless night, I called up Soldat and the Kaffir at four in the morning to span in. I had packed up some things I required to take with me, but the waggon could not have got across the Yokeskey river with even a light load on it. The Boers before leaving me in the evening had promised that, in the event of hostilities breaking out, and of my being detained in Pretoria, they would protect Jimmy, and had also promised to give him his food until I returned, for Clara was going with me as well as Soldat.

The early dawn was just breaking when the waggon started, and I, mounted on Dandy, and with Eclipse by my side, bade Jimmy, who was holding Roughy in his arms, good-bye. They both looked so forlorn as he stood there in the cold, faint light. "It is not too late to change your mind yet," said I; "you have only to say the word." But he preferred remaining, and indeed I thought myself it was safer for him where he was than in Pretoria. The words I had heard that morning, when some movement I made had wakened the sleepers in the next room, were still in my ears.

"She is getting ready to inspann," said a sleepy female voice. "Well, she will never come back."

"Ah," remarked another equally sleepy female voice; "and if she don't, then who will pay us for the little Englishman's food?"

We forded the Yokeskey in a torrent of rain, the current running strong and deep, and outspanned at Durks' farm. Nero and Moustache had broken loose, and followed me. Nero was nearly washed away, and little Moustache was only saved by being caught by his neck as he was sinking—the leader himself could hardly keep his legs. Mrs. Durks was friendly, her husband civil. He advised

me, if my waggons had come in, to come out of Pretoria with them on Thursday as early as I could. He said even if I met the commando that I, as a woman working for herself, should be let pass, with the waggons and oxen, if I explained that I was going to my farm; but that if I remained in Pretoria I should hold my life in my hand. They gave me some milk and bread; and shortly after I inspanned, and that night I outspanned about three miles from the Red House, by a spring of water.

The moon was at its full, and I inspanned before dawn, and came into Pretoria as the clock was pointing to seven in the morning—to find, alas! that the whole village was in a panic, and that not only were most places of business shut, but that the auction I had counted upon for selling my waggon was postponed, owing to the unsettled state of things. My Waterberg waggons were not in!

I left the waggon at the auctioneer's for private sale; but I saw that, as I had failed in selling it on Wednesday, it would, in all probability, be too late to sell it at all; for, after Thursday, people were afraid to leave the village. In the meantime I took possession of my house, and sent for a carpenter to make shutters for the windows, in order to bring thither with safety the goods I had left in Mrs. Felman's care. I had only a rough shake-down for a bed, a chair or two, and a rough table; for, in the unsettled state of things and in the absence of my waggons, I did not care to go to any expense; indeed, could not have done so without incurring debt.

The dreaded Thursday came and passed quietly. I had gone to bed, when, at about eleven o'clock, I heard a tap at my window, and the voice of my next neighbour calling me. I got up and opened the door.

"I hope I did not frighten you," he began, in the

usual formula, "but I have just had news that the Boers are coming in to-night;" and he told his story.

His great point was that the band-master's wife, whom he knew, and whom he had been to visit, was sitting up, expecting the signal to be given to go into camp for protection, and that she had told him that the colonel's wife was doing the same. He said that the Boers were coming over the hill singly or in small parties, to avoid detection, and were to form at a given spot and attack the town; that all sorts of preparations were being secretly made, and that the signal for going into camp was to be a bugle call.

I thought the whole story sounded odd, particularly the bugle call as a signal.

"It is odd that no notice has been given publicly of the likelihood of an attack, and of the signal to seek protection in camp," said I.

"That is because there are so many traitors about," was the answer.

My neighbour was deeply impressed evidently, and I thought it best to take some precautions; so I waked Soldat and Clara, told Clara to put a few things together for herself and for me, in case of our having to run for it, and then dressing myself, I started to walk down the village to old Mrs. Parker's cottage, for I knew that she was likely to be alone, her sons being in the country, and I thought I might be able to be of use to her in case of a sudden alarm. I told Soldat that, as soon as the bugle sounded, he was to saddle the horses and bring them down sharp to her cottage, after leaving Clara with my neighbour's family to be taken into camp with them. My oxen were all kraaled in Mr. Felman's kraal, so nothing could be done about them.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, by no means a favourable night for a surprise, and I knew it to be against the usual tactics of Boers to attack at night at all; and as I stepped out I felt pretty sure that there was some mistake. As I passed my neighbour's cottage I saw lights inside, and through the open door I was aware of some commotion.

I had not gone far when I saw two orderlies with a saddled horse at the door of a cottage. I thought I might as well inquire of them if they knew of any report as to the Boer attack. They said that they had heard of nothing, but that in another minute Captain C—— would be coming out, and that he would be able to tell me. I waited accordingly. There was no special report as to an attack, only the possibility of such an event caused a certain anxiety. The officer was just on his way to visit the outposts, and seemed much amused at the idea that a bugle call had been suggested as an improvement on the three cannon shots always fired as a signal of danger, whereupon I went back and to bed.

The next day I heard that Mrs. Parker's sons had come in. The village was in a state of suppressed panic; but as I had a good deal to do in the matter of setting my garden in order, I went out but little the next day or Saturday, when at last my waggons came in late in the evening. They brought bad news. A good deal of the corn I had left at Makapan's-poort had been damaged by the floods of rain that had fallen there. Hendrick had traded grain and cattle, but on coming to the Pinaars river had found it impossible to cross it with heavily loaded waggons, or with loose cattle. He had therefore waited for it to run down, until he had been told by the Boers that if he did not get the waggons

into Pretoria by Saturday, they would seize them and the oxen. He had then left the cattle and part of the loads behind with some Kaffirs, and had swum the oxen through, the loads getting partly wet. It was a comfort that the oxen were in splendid condition, but a terrible disappointment otherwise.

The next day, Sunday, I spent writing, when, towards evening, Hendrick, who had been "on the spree," as is the custom with drivers in general when they come off a long trek, rushed up to me in a state of wild excitement. The Boers were coming in—the market square was being fortified—rifles were being given out—we should all be massacred that night—the danger for the half-castes and Kaffirs serving in Pretoria was even greater than for the English—they must all have rifles, &c., &c. He quite took my breath away, but then I saw he had been drinking, although he was not absolutely drunk.

I ordered Eclipse to be saddled, and rode into the village, taking Hendrick with me on foot. My house lies at the outskirts, near to the camp; but I was soon close to the market-square. Then I saw that Hendrick had not exaggerated. Crowds of Kaffirs, superintended by an engineer officer, were hastily throwing up earth-works round the church in the centre, whilst a mass of frantically excited white men and lads of all ranks, was rushing after and crushing round a cart laden with rifles, that was being driven through it to the place appointed for distributing them.

It was with difficulty that I made my way through, and learned from an acquaintance that no rifles were to be given to the coloured population, till all the white

population had been provided. The rifles in the cart were not nearly sufficient for those who crowded round it, so it was not worth while staying. I turned into the square, and approaching the little group of officers, waited till the one in command was at liberty. I then asked him whether it was true that an attack was expected that night. He said that there was reason to believe that such would be the case; and I then inquired what provision had been made for the protection of the horses and oxen belonging to people in the town.

"Where are you going for refuge?" he asked, disregarding my question.

"I was not asking about protection for myself, but for my oxen and horses," I answered.

"But what ward are you in?" he asked.

I said I did not know, but that my house was near the camp common.

"Well, then, you had better go to the convent," he said.

"I shall remain at my own house," I answered. "What I want to know is, whether any place of comparative safety has been appointed for the oxen in the town. I have three valuable spans; I don't want to lose them."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "have you any waggons?"

"Yes—three."

"I am greatly in want of waggons for barricading," he went on eagerly. "The best thing you can do is to bring them up here to me."

"But the oxen?" I remarked.

"I think," he answered, "the best plan for them would just be to let them loose in the square."

"Between the barricades and the earthworks?" I said, "just let them go loose?"

“Yes,” was the reply.

I thanked him very politely, and rode off, thinking to myself how singularly beneficial to all parties it would be to have thirty-eight oxen, maddened with fear, rushing about a small square that was being desperately defended; unless, indeed, one looked upon the arrangement from a Boer point of view.

When the waggons were mentioned I had glanced in the direction of my old waggon, which I had left at the auctioneer's. It was gone; and the next day I discovered it in the barricade of one of the streets approaching the market-square, from whence, of course, I was not allowed to remove it

Having been unable to get any information from the engineer officer, I cantered quickly towards the camp to try to find Colonel Gildea, for it seemed almost impossible to me that some plan for protecting the large numbers of oxen and horses belonging to people in the village had not been devised, considering that in case of a siege of even a few days' length, such a provision was of the greatest public importance.

On my way across the common I met Mr. Hudson, the Colonial Secretary, hurrying down to the village on foot, behind a hand-cart drawn by Kaffirs, and full of rifles. He told me that Colonel Gildea was not in camp; he did not know where he was, but as to the oxen, he said there was no place set apart for them; that he thought the best thing I could do was to let them run about the town loose that night. As this idea seemed inadmissible to me, I asked him whether, in case of an attack, the fire from the guns at the camp was likely to be directed so as to injure my house, which I pointed out

to him. He said he thought it was in a safe position; so I determined to keep my oxen with me.

I had, since the arrival of my waggons, brought my other oxen from the Felmans' kraal, and let all the spans feed together; so now I had them all tied to the yokes inside the erf, barricaded the entrance to it with the two waggons, made my boys sleep close to the stable and the oxen, and determined to sit up myself.

The streets, by the time I was returning from the common to my house, were full of people wending their way to the various places of refuge; men with rifles on their shoulders, going off on patrol; women and girls carrying hastily-made-up bundles, mattresses, and infants, and dragging little children after them. There was no attack, but the morning brought the news of the massacre of the 94th; and the panic and excitement increased.

I managed that day to get old muzzle-loading rifles for my boys from the Ordnance Department; and, as I was riding back from camp, I saw a commissariat officer superintending the moving of stores into camp, in preparation for the siege which was now undoubtedly imminent.

There was evidently a great deficiency of waggons to convey all the stores, and yet haste was imperative, for the news that the Boers were close by was expected at any moment. All coloured men seen in the streets were being seized; horses, waggons, and oxen also. Now I had been revolving in my mind whether or not I would save my property by a trick. My waggons I did not think of moving, but my oxen were all grazing far out of the village. I had only to mount little Hendrick on Dandy, and with him as my companion ride out to them, drive them through a poort at some little distance, and

not much under observation, and get them away to my farm. I knew pretty surely that what Durks and other Boers had told me was true—there was but little danger of the Boers robbing me, unless in some case of necessity; and should I meet the commando, I had little doubt that by speaking fair I could induce the commander to let me pass, even if I could not wheedle him out of a safe-conduct, which I deemed it very probable I should be able to manage. It was a temptation to do this, not only on account of my own pecuniary advantage, but because I am very fond of my animals; and I thought it likely that they would get hard usage in government employ; but on the other hand it seemed, and seems to me, that when matters have been brought to the war-test in any country in which one happens to be residing, one is bound in honour to side distinctly with either one or the other of the combatants. On general principles I believed, and believe, that a vindication of British authority in the Transvaal would benefit, or rather would have benefitted the majority of its inhabitants; and hence I determined not to ask favours from the Boers, but to do all that lay in my small sphere of action to help the side that I felt was the one I ought to wish to win. I therefore, of my own accord, offered my waggons and oxen to the officer in question. He gladly accepted the offer, telling me that he should like to have the waggons and spans in an hour's time; and I sent out for my poor oxen, and by the given time had delivered them and their drivers and foreloopers over to the government. I did not know that such would be the case at the time, but by doing so I gained several advantages which, had I not come forward in this manner, I should have missed. And as I am on the subject of my animals, I may as well say

that I succeeded in saving my horses from being seized for mounting the so-called volunteers, by offering them to the government for a special service—which service, as matters turned out, was never required of them.

Everything was now confusion. The streets were full of waggons, Kaffirs, half-castes, and white people, intermingled here and there with officers, orderlies, or volunteers on horseback. In every house the women were busy packing up, unless they were stupefied with fear, as they were in some cases. Arrests were being made every now and then on charges of conspiracy with the enemy, which were in some cases I know of made very lightly, although the suspicion may have been strong. Numbers of farmers from the immediate vicinity of Pretoria had come in with their families for protection, and swelled the already thick ranks of the emigrant population. I rode to the Felmans, and found them in a state of distraction. I had meant to speak about my goods, but it was impossible to obtain a hearing.

On Tuesday the order circulated that all the inhabitants were to go into camp, and we were also told that all those who adhered to the loyal cause should receive full compensation for any loss they might receive from so doing. I hastened to the Commissariat Yard, to see if I could get Major W——, who was in command, to let me have back my large tent-waggon. He was not there, but as I was riding away I heard a horse's gallop behind me, and turning saw him. He said he had seen me, and guessed what I wanted, so had followed me, and we cantered to where the waggons were working, and he gave me the order I required. The oxen were to be sent to him again the next day.

Once more I loaded up, not leaving anything in the

house, and just as the oxen were inspanned, we heard the report of a cannon. Oh! the terror of those boys of mine! The Boers were upon us! We should not be in time to get into camp! All the roads to the camp were crammed with ox-waggons being hurried along, with mule-waggons dashing along, with people on foot, women, little children, some carrying a bundle, some a mattress, or a chair, some pulling a hand-cart piled up with articles hastily snatched from their dwellings; and all this in mud, and with the thunder growling overhead. Suddenly a rattling peal came through the poort near the camp, and a cloud of thick rain driven by the wind came sweeping towards us from it.

“The Boers! look at the smoke of the firing!” cried the boys.

But soon a torrent of rain showed them their mistake. Through this pelting shower I, and the rest of the Pretorian wanderers, made our way to headquarters, and were there told what?—That there had been a mistake as to our going into camp that day, that the camp was not ready to receive us, that we must go back and return the next day. So all the poor women and little children, who had toiled up through the mud and wet, had to toil back again to the homes they had dismantled. It was a sad procession to look at. That evening, I, as having but little to move, a horse to ride, and last, not least, no little children, wet, cold, and tired, to console and feel anxious about, was probably the happiest person in Pretoria.

The next day we all fairly went into camp and prepared for the siege.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANY one who has paid me the compliment of reading this story of my adventures will, perhaps, remember that in the earlier chapters I mentioned that I was writing in the besieged camp of Pretoria; and, indeed, the principal part of my book was written there, partly with a view of recording facts which might prove interesting, and possibly instructive, to a few, and partly to while away the time. I am finishing the story when the war, of which the siege formed a small episode, is a thing of the past—a past which, if I do not mistake, will have an important influence on numbers to whom the Transvaal is, and will remain, utterly unknown, except as a small part of Africa, which gave rise to a peculiar exhibition of political incapacity on the part of those who sway the British nation at the present time, and have swayed it for some time past. Our colonial policy is not a thing of to-day, nor are the ideas which have had their outcome in a convention—which, if it has not pleased, has certainly astonished everybody—ideas of sudden growth.

Before attempting to describe the life we led in camp, I must try and describe the camp itself. Although I talk of *the* camp, there were in reality three camps on the hill above Pretoria, exclusive of the camps formed in

the convent, and in the prison within the village, of which I knew little. On the hill there was the military camp, which, although composed in great part of civilians, was called military, partly, I fancy, because most of the able-bodied men attached to families quartered in it were either members of the mounted volunteers, or in what was called the Reserve Force, and principally because it was circumscribed by the military lines. At a short distance from this, there was what was called the civil camp, the able-bodied men in which belonged to no corps, but had to do picket-duty; and at some distance from it, higher up on the hill, was a camp inhabited by coloured people. Just below the military camp was the great kraal where the cows and slaughter cattle were kept at night, and a little above it was the so-called Government kraal, made of waggons impressed by the Government, or belonging to them, in which the Government oxen, and all the impressed trek oxen but mine, and one span belonging to my old acquaintance, Mr. Brown, of Rustenberg, were kept. I may here mention that Mr. Brown had come on business to Pretoria, where his waggon and oxen had been impressed, and he himself stopped, whilst poor Mrs. Brown was left in Rustenberg. His oxen and mine were the only spans that had their own drivers and foreloopers, and hence they were kept separate from the others, and were always tied to the yokes of the waggons they served with, instead of being kraaled, which was a great advantage. The native camp was composed of tents pitched round an old hut or two, and from its position it certainly struck me very forcibly that it was very possible for continual communication to be kept up between it and the insurgents. It is an absolute

fact that their leaders knew most of our movements, and as it certainly was impossible for any doubt to exist that, if so inclined, a Kaffir could any night have slipped in and out of the camp without being observed by the out-posts, I have very little doubt that such communication took place.

The civil camp was composed of waggons with awnings, or side-tents made to them with buck-sails or other canvas; of tents, and of a few little canvas houses, although these last were only erected a week or so after the siege commenced. Some of these had boards put down for the floors, and were in some cases divided into rooms.

The military camp consisted of all these elements, and besides of the ordinary soldier's bungalows (long, low, stone buildings), and of other so-called bungalows, made of wooden framework with canvas drawn over it. All of these bungalows were given up to accommodating the women and children who could not be accommodated with tents, or who had no waggons of their own in the military camp; and the beds in them were almost touching each other. Every night the women and children of the civil camp had to come up to one or other of these bungalows to sleep, so as for them to be within the military lines in case of attack; and wretched work, indeed, it was for the poor things on wet evenings and mornings.

The first evening that the order came out, it happened to rain, and to continue raining all night. At the last moment it was found that there was not sufficient accommodation for all of them. Some, after standing in the wet, were obliged to paddle back through the running water to the civil camp, others got into tents not yet properly protected by trenches from the rain, and I saw

them in the damp morning shivering with cold, their bedding, which they had had to bring with them, soaked through, and the floor of the tent one big puddle. On the whole, however, I think, considering all things, the camp was well managed as far as the comfort and health of its inmates were concerned. With a number of people all crammed together in a confined space, discomfort is, of course, unavoidable ; and the discomfort naturally tends to cause irritation between the members of the community. I had my own waggon in the military camp, and made a comfortable side-tent to it, and had besides the advantage of having my waggon at the end of a line of waggons facing a main road through the camp, so that I was not subject to the same annoyances as most of my neighbours.

A most miserable sight was that camp, early on a rainy morning, when I would be coming back from the lines where the horses were picketed, with my waterproof over me, and the water running, very likely, over my boots. Women of various ranks emerging from their tents, or from their waggons, slipping in the mud, or plashing into the water so soon as they stepped on the ground ; making their coffee, or preparing the breakfast over the little fire some shivering Kaffir was trying to blow into a blaze, while a little child, perhaps, held on to them and cried, or bewailed itself from within the tent. In many cases numbers of people were stowed away in one waggon, and both in these waggons and in the bungalows ablutions had to be very much restricted, and many people both looked and were very dirty.

Against this picture I may set that of a fine evening, after the band had ceased playing. Then all the various

habitations were alight, and one caught glimpses of illuminated interiors, with dashes of bright colour in them, arranged in long vistas. The camp-fires burnt cheerily, and one heard nothing but merry voices and laughter from the groups of coloured people assembled round them and from the promenaders, whilst here and there a gay party would be assembled, and one would hear snatches of song—and even, in one bungalow, the sound of a piano.

Of course there was an unlimited amount of scandal and gossip of all sorts, and of course there was also an unlimited amount of squabbling, more or less serious, varying from the quarrel between Mrs. A—— and Mrs. B——, which raged femininely and furiously, but nevertheless privately, to the noisy vociferation between another pair of ladies, which woke the neighbours from their slumbers for some fifty yards around the scene of warfare. Besides these quarrels there were, of course, occasional rows between the inhabitants of the bungalow where the less aristocratic members of society were accommodated, which took the form of unparliamentary language, and which, when human patience (in the shape of the sentry on guard) could endure it no longer, had to be suppressed by the master of the ward.

These ward-masters had a hard time of it, I fear. They were civilians, appointed over different blocks of the camp, to see that the orders issued from headquarters were observed, and to be general referees on disputed matters. The smoke grievance, which was perpetually recurring, must have caused many of these persecuted mortals to become prematurely grey. It was a general conviction of the camp-mind that the owner of a fire could prevent the smoke from the said fire drifting into

his neighbours' nostrils. This peculiar mental epidemic was not peculiar to females. Many a time an indignant head of the family would exclaim, appealing to his particular ward-master, "It is outrageous. I cannot allow the ladies of my family to be inconvenienced in this manner." And then, if the bewildered official shrugged his shoulders in despair, an appeal would be made to the camp-quartermaster. This office was held by a youthful officer, who, I think, had a quiet enjoyment of a joke—a young officer who, although he never in my presence did wear them, always impressed me with the idea that he wore pale kid gloves—a young officer who never appeared to be in a hurry, although he worked hard, and who (as I learnt from many a conversation) had a singularly exasperating effect upon minds excited by the influences of camp-life. I remember seeing this young gentleman seized upon in his tent by an infuriated neighbour of mine, and carried off to decide a smoke dispute between her and an equally impassioned neighbour of hers.

"The smoke of that lady's fire absolutely suffocates us," cried the one.

"I declare I can't endure *her* smoke any longer," retorted the accused. "You really must do something to alter this state of things, Mr. H——."

But it was not only on the subject of smoke that the camp-quartermaster was assailed. Once, when he was speaking to some one just in front of my tent, a well-dressed woman rushed at him, exclaiming,—

"Mr. H——, I want some soap. Where can I get it?"

I must give credit to the ward-masters for keeping their wards very fairly clean. There was one ward in

particular which was particularly nicely kept, but of which the ward-master was of course particularly obnoxious.

Then there was the light grievance. At first all lights had to be out at nine, but the hour was advanced to ten. Of course there were refractory spirits who would not put out their lights, if only to show their free and independent spirit.

"Put it out now, ma'am," I have heard the soldier who went the rounds say. "You can light it again after I'm gone."

But then sometimes the ward-master or the quartermaster was inconveniently active, and one was caught, as I was once, and had my candle ordered out, interrupting me in a species of hunt attended with much anxiety in camp, viz., the flea-hunt! If the camp was not a paradise for man and beasts, it certainly was for fleas and flies. Not but that there were many human beings who enjoyed the camp thoroughly. I have heard more than one girl and child aver it would be "nice" to have it over again. There were lots of flirting and lots of playing to be had. Every day was a holiday to the children, who swarmed to the gates of the camp to see the volunteers, the soldiers, and the cannon go out, as if they were going on parade—who swarmed there too, I am sorry to say, in a state of half-amused, half-frightened excitement, to see the wounded men and horses come in. They became wonderfully knowing did those children.

"Hark to the boom of the gun," I said to a little girl, as we were watching the engagement at Henning Pretorius's camp; "do you see the smoke?"

“That is not firing,” replied the little wretch, quite confidently. “That is dynamite. They must have got to the lager, and be blowing it up.”

One great event every day was the getting the rations at the booth appointed for the purpose in each ward. It was a frightfully tedious affair, and a most grotesque picture did it offer. Old and young—men and women—Kaffirs with the name of their employer written on a piece of paper, either in their hands or fastened on to them, some carrying baskets, some dishes, cups, all sorts of things; all crowding round the unfortunate men who had to serve out the rations. There was plenty of grumbling, and also plenty of joking. One old farmer of the name of Cockcroft, who had been in the camp at Durban when the Boers besieged it, had a standing joke with me when any one grumbled about the meat being bad or the rations being small.

“They’ll be glad to come to dine with us presently,” he would say, chuckling. “I’m glad you’ve got that leather fore-tow. It’ll make good soup yet.”

He remembered eating soup made of the same ingredient, just before relief came to that gallant little band in Natal.

Mr. Cockcroft was a very fine old fellow, and very touching it was to see him leading his blind wife. They had lately bought a fine farm not far from Pretoria. They had worked hard and had got on well, and had invested their earnings in it. Their son was in the volunteers—a hard-working young farmer. When we were listening to the firing from Swartkopjee, two officers rode up to where he was standing near to me.

“Heavy firing, Mr. Cockcroft,” said one of them,

"I'm afraid there won't be much of your house left; they must be just close to it."

"Let it go," cried the old man, with kindling eyes; "if only it gives some shelter first to our poor fellows."

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the officers, "that's the right sort of spirit, Mr. Cockcroft."

Yet this gallant old farmer is now a ruined man.

As time went on, little concerts, bazaars, and theatrical entertainments were got up in camp—open-air performances of course—and there was a little camp newspaper. The band of the 21st played every evening, except, indeed, for some while after the disastrous fight at the Red House, for then there were many dangerously wounded, and it was thought that the noise would disturb them. There were invitations to dinner also occasionally, and on one occasion there was a grand birthday festival given by a certain old gentleman, who, on rising to make his speech returning thanks, remarked, "Little did I think this night sixty-two years ago, when I was born, that I should live to see," &c., &c., thereby, of course, bringing down the house.

My time was taken up in a routine, of which the following is the outline. I got up at dawn, and went to see the horses fed, and then walked to the Government kraal, to see how the oxen were. Early coffee. Went to fetch the rations (for by going myself, instead of sending a boy, I got better rations); then breakfast; afterwards rode down to the village and let the horses graze, while I generally lay on the grass and either worked or did nothing, except when I would take pen and paper with me, and write some of this history. Home to dinner at

about five; looked to the horses being settled for the night, inspected the oxen; then paid visits.

There was a great gathering of people from all parts in the camp. Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Farquason had waggons not far from mine; so had the young farmer and his wife on whose farm I had been outspanned before I went to the bush-veldt. The Robert Higgineses had a waggon and a little house in the civil camp, which was shared by old Mr. Higgins and his family. Next to them was old Mr. Sturton, with his wife and his unmarried children. Alice Higgins had been married before the war, and had been at Potchefstrom, but had escaped thence to the Cape Colony. John Higgins and his family had gone also, but James had been stopped, and was a sort of prisoner at Fahl-plas. Arthur and William Sturton, and also Mr. King, had been seized by the Boers on their way into Pretoria, and carried back to their farms. I may here say that when, at the end of the war, we learnt what had been happening to them, we were relieved to find that they had been well treated; but in the meantime the anxiety about them was very great, although after two months of suspense a Kaffir managed to get through to them and then back to us, and brought us word that they were well; brought us word also, alas! that every head of cattle, every sheep, all ripe crops, all fruit, had been swept from both Surprise and Moy-plas, whilst in the case of the latter, every article of furniture had been seized, and the whole place laid desolate. Robert Higgins and old Mr. Sturton were both obnoxious to the Boers. Half of my sheep, too, were reported as being gone. My old friends Sam and Dick had been impressed by Government, and poor Sam lost his life at

the fight at the Red House. Wellington was impressed also, as indeed all the horses in Pretoria but mine were. He was always ridden by whoever was in command of the Pretoria Carabineers; and, strange to say, Captain D'Arcy was wounded severely, and Captain Sanctuary mortally, whilst riding him, whilst he was only slightly grazed.

The weather was very stormy, and children and delicate people suffered severely. Many a coffin was taken down in a cart to the little graveyard with a few mourners walking after it; a few flowers plucked from some deserted garden strewn on it. Poor, inglorious martyrs, sacrificed for nothing! The number of deaths was at last so great that there was difficulty in obtaining planks for the coffins, and those earthworks in which wood had been used as a support, had to be demolished to supply what was necessary, the earthworks, being replaced by brick walls. I never thought the village of Pretoria so pretty as I did when riding through its deserted streets, in which the grass grew knee-high, until cut for hay for the horses in camp, whilst the neglected gardens bloomed in glorious luxuriance. The Felmans' erf was now beautiful to behold, the thick luscious green herbage covering up all signs of former disorder and dirt. The stores were all closed, the streets almost deserted. Sometimes I came across the Government horses and mules, sent out to graze under guard; and sometimes a few dropping shots would be heard, and they would be hastily collected and brought near to camp for fear of some sudden raid. On the hills around, the cattle were pastured under the surveillance of a guard, and they too were often to be seen hurrying home for fear of capture. Sometimes a store-

keeper would obtain permission to leave the camp (all men had to obtain passes), and would half open his store for a few hours ; then the place would be thronged by people, mostly women.

By order of the Government, mule-waggons plied between the camp and the village three times a day. I never tried them, having my horses ; but I heard that those who drove in them suffered excruciating torture, owing to their being springless. Sometimes Mrs. Parker used to visit her pretty cottage (it looked so sad to see it deserted), and then she used to ask me to a picnic there. Once when I was at my own erf, and the horses grazing quietly near me, I was a spectator of a small engagement quite close to the village. A party had been sent out as an escort to a mowing-machine. The Boers made a raid, reinforcements were sent out to our men, but the Boers had the best of it. They captured the mowing-machine !

There was great demoralization among all the coloured people in camp. Very stringent orders had been issued against any violence being used to them, and the upshot of this was that they became very insolent, and that their masters and mistresses were afraid of punishing them. I openly punished a leader of mine more than once for neglecting my oxen, and was not interfered with, and I must say that my servants were better than most in camp ; but I everywhere heard complaints, and saw myself that some very bad influence was at work among the coloured people. The drunkenness among them was very great, and this while civilians, not volunteers, could not obtain wine or spirits unless they got a special order from the Provost Marshal

on a particular store, or an order from the doctor. Of course it was supposed to be the rule that no liquor at all was sold to coloured people, unless they presented a written order from their employers, and the requisite order from the Provost Marshal as well; but the rule was openly and constantly disregarded, whilst the store-keepers were obliged to be very strict with white people. For instance, I once wanted some Pontac wine, so I went to the Provost Marshal and asked for an order. He asked me what wine I wanted, what number of bottles I wanted, and at what store I was going to buy the wine. I told him, and he wrote out the order, and I went to the store; then it turned out that at this particular store there was no Pontac, so my order was of no use. In the meantime my groom often got enough liquor to get drunk upon. The fact about the coloured population was, I believe, this. The authorities were afraid of them, and winked at their sins. The immense number of them in camp helped the general demoralization, and there were doubtless many messages sent backwards and forwards between the Boers and their secret friends in camp, by means of these people.

One day my driver "boy" told me that a friend of his had come in from Waterberg, and had brought word that Mapeela had broken out and had driven off numbers of the Boers' cattle, had also put all the women and children of the Boers in that part of the country into a sort of lager, and had provided for them, saying, that he would show his respect for the English by treating them well; but had dragged a man, whom he had found hiding among them, outside the lager, and killed him then and there. It seemed odd to me to think of this self-same Mapeela sitting by my

waggon in his smart dress a short time previously. I heard afterwards that the Boers in part of Waterberg had cruelly ill-used unoffending Kaffirs during the war, and this I learnt from the Landrost of Nilstrom, who came into Pretoria after the war was over. He told me he had seen them seize a Kaffir, tie him up, and give him fifty lashes on his bare back for no fault.

On Thursday, the 6th of January, the first sortie from the camp took place. This was the occasion when the fighting occurred near Mr. Cockcroft's farm. The troops and volunteers went out long before dawn: we heard the firing early in the morning. This was our one successful engagement. In the afternoon the wounded and the prisoners were brought in. We had four killed. The prisoners were all Waterberg men, but I was glad to learn that none of my old acquaintances were among them. Their leader, who was severely wounded, and a prisoner, caused a good deal of, not very creditable, nonsense, as it seemed to me, to be talked in camp. I believe it is true that he had allowed his men to fire under a flag of truce, still I think it would have been better, had there been no talk as to the desirability of curing him of his wounds in order to hang him afterwards. This was, of course, purely unofficial talk, but it was argued that as, according to the proclamation of the Government these men were rebels, and as he, as chief, had allowed the white flag to be violated, it was evident that he must be hung, and I regret to say many who spoke thus seemed to hope he might be so treated. Now began the piteous sight of women, watching with pale, anxious faces, to catch the last glimpse of their dear ones, as they rode out in either the Pretoria Carabineers, or Nourse's Horse; hastening from point

to point to see the last of their retreating figures, gazing with aching eyes and hearts at the little column until it was lost to sight, and then going back with pinched faces to their waggons and tents, to wait to hear the first gun, and so to wear away the day until the first few rode in to tell the fortune of the warfare. I used to admire those women! There was no ostentatious anxiety or grief, but you would see their poor trembling lips, and nervously clasped hands, and eyes strained bravely to try to keep back their tears, as they hastened to where they could get tidings of those who might perhaps be destined never to return, or to return only to die. On Friday the funerals of those who had lost their lives cast a gloom over all, still we had been successful, and that was something. Two of Mrs. Parker's sons were in the Pretoria Carabineers as officers, and one was slightly injured in this engagement. Mrs. Farquason's husband was also an officer in this corps.

This was the only success we had. There were other small sorties without any engagement taking place, between the 6th and the 16th of January, when an attack was made on Henning Pretorius's camp, situated on the randt within view of our camp. An attempt was made to distract the attention of the Boers by exploding dynamite in an opposite direction, and the ruse partially succeeded; but after some heavy firing, which was watched with intense interest from our camp, we were obliged to retreat. While almost all our available men were absent, there was a sudden alarm that a body of Boers were advancing to attack the camp from the side opposite to Henning Pretorius's position. A shot or two from our guns caused them, however, to retire. On the return of our men we heard that two wounded men had been left in the hands of

the Boers, and great dissatisfaction was expressed by the volunteers as to the management of the whole affair. The next day a Kaffir brought a flag of truce from the Boer camp, to say that we ought to send an ambulance for these two wounded men. This Kaffir said that Henning Pretorius was severely wounded, and that about thirty Boers had been killed.

With regard to the dissatisfaction of the volunteers, I may say that it increased as time went on, and that, so far as I know, the regular troops were dissatisfied also; and I think, from what I heard and observed, they had reason on their side. The volunteers said that they were sent on far in front of the guns and troops, riding in file, and were never properly supported, besides being often employed in work unsuited to their capacities; for that it was useless to try to take a laager with irregular or regular cavalry. The troops complained that they were shown off to disadvantage, being kept back from being engaged, and not receiving orders as to what they were to do. This particularly applies to the disastrous sortie on Saturday, the 12th of February.

Early in the morning of that day I heard sounds among the horses, indicating that there was going to be a move, and presently I heard the tramp and clank of the horses being harnessed to the guns; then that of the volunteers riding past my tent to headquarters. I got up and looked out. There they went—tramp, tramp, through the dark; and, as I looked at them, I felt one of those presentiments of evil, which may or may not be true, but which nevertheless affect one painfully at times. This was a large sortie, and was supposed to be a very secret one; but all the time the Boers knew all that

we were planning. Colonel Gildea was in command. Captain Sanctuary, mounted on Wellington, rode at the head of the Pretoria Carabineers for the last time. I give my account of the action from what I was told by a volunteer officer who was present, and I have had corroboration of what I say from others. The Boers were quite prepared for us. Colonel Gildea was wounded early in the action; the second in command lost his head. The volunteers, pushed on in front as usual, were exposed to a galling fire from the Boers, whilst the troops and guns remained aloof, and took no part in the engagement.

Captain Sanctuary was shot through the leg, and Mr. Mackenzie Walker took command. His men were wavering; the only orders he could get from the officer who had taken Colonel Gildea's place was an exclamation,—

“Oh! what a —— mess we are in!” and then “Retire.”

But Mr. Walker rallied his men to keep the Boers in check, and to try to save the ambulance, behind which the doctors were dressing Captain Sanctuary's wound. He pointed out to the commanding officer, that if they retired the ambulance would be taken; it was of no use, so, on his own responsibility, Mr. Walker formed his men, and tried to rescue the ambulance.

As he passed some infantry, he exclaimed, “Good God! why don't you fire?”

“We have no orders, sir,” answered one of the men.

Captain Sanctuary's wound was not yet dressed; the troops were retiring; the Boers cutting the volunteers off from the main body.

“Better put him in,” cried Walker, “and let us try to save him and the rest;” for there were other wounded.

No, the doctor thought he would finish the dressing

first; and in despair Mr. Walker had to retire and leave the ambulance, the wounded, and the doctors. One of the Boers levelled his rifle at a man in attendance on it.

“For shame,” cried the latter; “do you fire on the hospital?”

But fire he did, and killed the man; another shot at the ambulance wounded a man already wounded, who lay in it. In the meantime the volunteers, having protected the retreat of the troops, retreated themselves. They found a mule-waggon deserted on the road by the troops who had been in it. One of the mules was killed; the men had jumped off and fled, so the volunteers cut the dead mule loose, and one of them drove the waggon into camp, or it, too, would have fallen a prey.

When the news of this defeat came into camp, great was the grief and dismay. The greatest sufferer was an old Boer lady; her only son was the man wounded a second time while in the ambulance, and left a prisoner among his enemies; his father, a Boer from the old colony and a faithful English subject, was very obnoxious to the Transvaal Boers. The name of the wounded man was Desiderius (commonly called Deesy) Erasmus. He was one of a large family—the youngest, and the only boy, and was the darling of his sisters, and the very apple of his father and mother’s eye. A fine, young fellow, broad shouldered and strong, but a mere boy in years and in innocence. His father had gone to Colonel Gildea when Deesy had joined the corps, and had so besought him in the name of the boy’s mother and his own, to place him in the reserve, that the colonel had at last consented; but the young fellow held firm.

“No, father,” he said; “I have never disobeyed you

or caused my mother grief before, but now I must do so ; this is a matter of honour ; not even for your sakes can I let myself be called a coward.”

Nothing would move him, and so he rode out after Captain Sanctuary on that dark morning ; now he was a prisoner, and doubly wounded, in the hands of his enemies. His mother and one of his sisters (the wife of Major Ferreira, who had gone to the Basuto war) went to Sir Owen Lanyon, and prayed to be sent to the Boer camp under a flag of truce to see him, and the Administrator granted their petition, and placed a mule-waggon at their disposal. It was the act of a kind-hearted gentleman, but surely hardly an advisable act, particularly when the enemy had been openly styled rebels. When the ladies arrived at the Boer outposts and told what they had come for, the message was sent up to headquarters, and presently some of the chief men came to them, and laughed at the idea of allowing them to see the boy ; but the mother and sister would take no refusal ; they wept and prayed, and besought these men, by all they held dear, to let them see their darling, and at last they prevailed. They were taken to where he lay, and all night long they nursed him in a tent, the Boer commander coming in occasionally, and asking if he could assist them in any way. Outside in camp, all was joy and festivity over their victory, and the captured ambulance.

In the morning the ladies returned to Pretoria, bringing a message, that if we wished for the prisoners to be given up, we must release the prisoners we had taken at our first engagement, and must agree to send back the ambulance to the Boers, after it had conveyed the wounded to our camp. And so it was.

The next day the prisoners were brought in, the Boers sending a slaughtered sheep along with them, which (I was told by one bred amongst them) was a covert insult; and all the Boer prisoners were released. One of them, going to Lydenburg, was fallen upon by Kaffirs, and torn in pieces. There were many wounded, most of them were severely wounded. Captain Sanctuary's leg was despaired of, and Deesy Erasmus' life, besides that of others. He had received a wound (which grazed the stomach) through the body, besides one in his leg. At first he seemed to rally, but it was a false hope, and in a few days he passed away, conscious and calm to the last—nay, almost cheerful, although he knew he was dying. One of his comrades, a Mr. Simpson, died the day before, an artilleryman had died before him, and Captain Sanctuary, after his leg being amputated, lingered to the 7th of March, and then followed his companions in arms. There was a profound feeling of sorrow through all the inhabitants of the camp on the day when the body of this kindly and gallant officer was borne, with military honours, to the little graveyard in the valley.

In the meantime we had had news of the reinforcements that were coming to relieve us, and we were counting the days until we should see Sir George Colley ride through Bobian-poort at the head of a victorious column. Some said one day, some said another, would be the likely one for the welcome sight to greet our eyes, but none doubted that we should see him.

On the fifteenth (Tuesday) we saw about twenty waggons, under escort, defile through a poort to the east of the camp, and crossing the valley, outspanned on the opposite ridge, while a Boer, bearing a flag of truce,

rode towards us. Colonel Gildea, who had only just risen from his bed, rode out to meet him in company with other officers. They brought back letters for the Administrator, and a Dutch newspaper, printed in the Free State; and the rumour that our troops had been defeated, and that Sir George Colley was killed, flew from mouth to mouth. But many would not, could not, believe it, and I was one of these. It seemed too dreadful, too incredible, to believe, until official confirmation came. Alas! it came too soon. We were now put on half-rations, but still there was enough to eat.

There was an armistice now, and it was very dreary. I used to wonder how the Administrator and some others could have the heart to play polo of an evening. The true state of affairs was not known generally, and all sorts of rumours were continually flying about; still, there was enough known to cause a great feeling of depression, though no one expected what followed.¹

On the evening of Monday, the 28th of March, I was sitting in Mrs. Parker's waggon talking to her, when a girl rushed up, and told us hurriedly that three officers had just ridden in from Newcastle; that there had been a great battle, in which Sir Evelyn Wood had completely defeated the Boers, and that he and some of the Boer leaders would be in Pretoria the next day to discuss the terms of peace. Oh! I shall never forget that moment! To leap from the waggon and hasten to headquarters was but

¹ It was commonly reported that Sir George Colley's reason for pushing on, without waiting for reinforcements of cavalry, was that he believed the people in Pretoria to be starving; had, in fact, said to his officers that he knew he was about to make a desperate effort, but that when women and children were starving, men must not hold back.

the work of an instant. Crowds were pouring towards the same goal. It was quite dark. Arrived in the square, we all waited breathlessly for the news to be proclaimed. The officers who had ridden in were with Colonel Gildea, the Administrator, and Colonel Bellairs. We waited and waited, but no sign was given, and then I heard whispers that there had been no victory, that peace had been concluded on the terms dictated by the Boers, that the country was to be given back! It seemed incredible; but a chill struck through all those assembled, and they dispersed gradually and silently, to wait until the morning should bring them some distinct official information. How well I remember that morning! I woke early, as usual, but with a dull, listless feeling of impending misfortune. I had then no reason to believe that personally I should be a very heavy sufferer. It was not for myself that I felt the bitter ache at my heart, it was for the honour of England, a thousand times worse than any pain caused by personal loss: the one I could retrieve by courage and steadiness, but it made me feel almost mad to think that I was powerless to move so much as a feather's weight to retrieve the other. I went as usual to see to the horses, and as I stroked their sleek necks I thought with a keen pain, almost amounting to agony, how glad, how really thankful I was that I had been able to win a reprieve for my pets from having been uselessly, and therefore cruelly sacrificed, while many a mother was being ground to the very dust by the crushing torment of knowing that her boy, whose life she had told herself in the midst of her woe was lost in upholding a cause she cherished, had in reality been sent forth, recklessly, wantonly, to swell the ranks of death. For what? For the *dishonour*

of that cause. A volunteer, an Englishman, one who had no stake whatever in the Transvaal, but who, happening to be in Pretoria, had joined Sanctuary's corps, spoke to me as I stood there. "So it has come to this," he said; "we have been fighting for nothing! The country is given back."

"It can't be true," I cried, although, after the dead silence at headquarters the previous night, I knew in my heart it was, "I won't believe it till I see it in general orders."

"It is there now," he answered; "young S—— has just seen it; he is almost mad. He was a rich man in his own belief yesterday; to-day he is little better than a beggar."

Yes, it was quite true. I went to see the oxen. I was luckier than most. By hard work and incessant watching them, so that I got for them every nibble of grass that was to be got while they were not working, by buying the stalks of mealeas out of private gardens for them at an enormous price, by covering them with rugs if they seemed ill, I had brought most of them through, when other oxen working for government were dying in numbers! I was the luckiest person in camp, and I felt almost as if I were selfish as I walked through the lines of tents and waggons on my way back, thinking of the ruin that had fallen on almost all in them. I went to the Higginnes' little shanty. They knew they were ruined. They tried to take it bravely, did take it bravely, but you saw that the knowledge struck home. They had staked all, on their faith in English trustworthiness. They had believed implicitly in the repeated asseverations of the Government that the Transvaal should remain British territory; they had broken utterly with the Boers,

they had lost all their oxen and cows, all their sheep, all their crops, all but two of their horses, and they were destined henceforth to be subject to the men whom we, by our promises, had tempted them to turn from friendly neighbours into enemies. The Sturtons were close to them in their waggon and tent. It was the same with them, only worse. Their very house had been despoiled, and they were old—very old. But it is useless to particularize. Wherever you turned in that little camp you saw faces, heard voices that told you of ruin; sometimes the thought of *it* was patiently borne, but the thought of the disgrace, which seemed to have been thrust on them, roused the anger of these men and women.

“Look at those fellows,” cried one old tradesman as two officers rode past; “look at them with their well-groomed horses and their dandy airs! It’s all they’re good for to look pretty. *We* wouldn’t have disgraced ourselves.”

“You’d better take off your coats,” cried another, as he passed some other officers; “you’re only carrying about the badge of your disgrace.”

Even the Kaffirs jeered at us. In the midst of all this, a large body of Boers were seen riding close past the camp. I was walking through the volunteers’ lines as they did so. The excitement was great. Some cried out to muster and charge them, not to submit to the insult that was being thrust on them; some swore; others cried out that they cared for nothing now, but would go and get dead drunk. This excitement had hardly subsided when Henning Pretorius, Joubert (I think), and Hendrick Schumann rode up to headquarters, on their shaggy nags, then rode through the camp to greet old acquaintances. How proud those men must have felt that

day, when the handsomely dressed gentlemen in military attire had to acknowledge them (whom they had termed, and unjustly termed, "rebels") their virtual conquerors. It was of no use trying to hide the fact under the cloak of generosity; the Boers knew in their hearts that we should not have attempted to fight if there had been any generosity in the matter, and so did we all, and we both knew also, that we had found them a harder nut to crack than we expected, and that the Government at home had considered the game not worth playing out. I knew Hendrick Schumann, but I could not, and would not greet him then; but I saw him meet his only sister and kiss her, and that was a pleasant sight even to my eyes. But it was not pleasant to see men who had truckled to the English, now truckling to them—and that I also saw.

The next morning, I determined to take my waggon out, and return to my house. The whole camp was breaking up. I rode through the streets of the village early in the morning. Groups of Boers were riding about, looking proud and contented, a little insolent, perhaps, but that was not to be wondered at. Numbers of Boer waggons laden with produce had come in to the market. I saw Hendrick Schumann standing by his waggon in the midst of a knot of Boers, so I went up and spoke to him.

"I am sorry for the peace," I said, "it is a disgrace to my country; but so far as my feelings towards you are concerned, I heartily congratulate you; you have fought well and have got your reward."

He took my hand. "What you say is true," he said, "and I thank you;" and his friends gave a united grunt.

The village now became a scene of disorder. The canteens opened, the whole population, black and white