

own horse, saddle and bridle and food for a month, at a certain place from where they would proceed to the front to shoot the English and drive every one out of the country; he further added that one lot of "Rooineks" would not soon forget what they had given them the day before.

Late that night old Mr. Van Niekerk, his two sons-in-law and a friend came to see us and tried very hard to persuade my husband to join them in their proposed flight to the border and thus escape being forced to fight, for they had all been commandeered. My husband would not consent to leave his family. Van Niekerk and his party started off that very night and ultimately reached Kimberley after weeks of sleeping in the tall grass all day and living on herbs and roots, hiding in the Kaffir kraals, etc. The natives being most kind and helpful to them, when they found that they were fleeing from the Boers. When peace was restored they did not dare to return to their farms and eventually sold out at a loss and became utterly ruined people.

After a night of anxious deliberation, my husband set off to Commandant Prinsloo's farm.¹⁶⁾ He had been left in charge of affairs after the onesided Battle of Bronkhorst-spruit. A dreadful old man he was at all times, but now doubly formidable with his newly acquired power and booty including a gold watch and chain and a handsome seal ring which had belonged to one of the officers of the 94th Regiment. He begged Prinsloo to be let off personal service at all costs, as he could not take up arms against the English. At first Prinsloo angrily refused to listen to him, there were only two ways, "for them or against them", and he might choose the latter at his own risk. Devenish left him in despair not knowing what to do, and was mounting his horse when he was recalled by Prinsloo. The old man had thought the matter over and here seemed a chance of a little private speculation, so in his coarse rough way he gave him to understand that he would be let off for a month by the payment of £50 in cash and sending a good horse and other prerequisites for a month for a substitute. Needless to surmise who would be the gainer by this concession. However, my husband only too gladly consented to pay the money. To be free for a month was a respite indeed, but thankful as he was to be let off for the present he nevertheless lived in an atmosphere of danger and uncertainty being entirely at the mercy of that capricious old Prinsloo who suddenly finding himself invested with undreamt of power was a perfect demon. In these times, any old scores or grievances a Boer had against a loyal, was amply avenged. Du Preez, the Boer who had the honour of doing the commandeering the morning after the Bronkhorstspruit catastrophe, was a man whom we had employed to transport some loads of grain to the Pretoria market and there had been a disagreement about the payment. This happened only a few weeks before the war broke out, so now was the time for vengeance.

Twice a week my husband had to go to an adjoining farm and had to pass Du Preez' farm. This old man over sixty, actually laid in wait to shoot him and was only prevented from doing so by the accident of Devenish's horse breaking loose and leaving his master to get back as best he could. This saved his life for Du Preez openly boasted the next day that he had waited for hours behind a bush where he had

expected him to pass, to shoot him. Devenish meanwhile reached home by a shortcut and found his wife in the greatest alarm at his horse returning riderless. They laughed at the trick his favourite horse had played them, little knowing then that it was the saving of his life and thus does Providence often frustrate the evil design of men.

Chapter VIII

Devenish appointed by Prinsloo to attend to the wants of the Bronkhorstspruit camp

A few days after the events related in the last chapter, six mounted Boers arrived at our farm with an order from Prinsloo that my husband was to come to him at once on urgent business. It seemed that Prinsloo had received orders from Headquarters to look after the wounded prisoners and it occurred to him that Devenish would be the best man for this purpose; so he appointed him Commissariat Officer over them. A duty he gladly undertook, for he had been longing to know how these poor wounded soldiers were being treated, not daring to show too much interest in them by enquiring.

After telling my husband what he wanted him to do, Prinsloo went with him to the English camp where he was introduced to Dr. Ward, the medical officer in charge, who was told to apply to Devenish in future for whatever they needed.

Dr. Ward took him to Colonel Anstruther's tent where the poor Colonel lay mortally wounded, but looking bright and cheerful. The Colonel seemed pleased to see one who could speak to him in his own tongue. On being asked what could be done for him, the Colonel replied "Get me some good English stout". Unfortunately none could be got anywhere. He died soon after. The besieged camp at Pretoria sent on another doctor and necessaries for the wounded under the Red Cross flag, but it was too late for the Colonel whose case was hopeless from the start.

Devenish now spent all his time in catering for the English camp and was very happy to be able to be of some comfort and service to them, driving over to see them every day. The Boers looked with some suspicion upon him but could not do without his services. He was able to supply them with good mutton from his own flocks and brought up slaughter oxen for them.

An incident happened which gave us fresh cause for anxiety. Pretoria was still besieged and the British Military Authorities were growing very anxious for news of the wounded comrades at Bronkhorstspruit, the Boers allowing no direct communication between them. Knowing that my husband was living in the close neighbourhood of Bronkhorstspruit and sure to be loyal, Col. Bellairs¹⁷⁾ sent out a native runner with a short note, merely asking him how the wounded were faring. This messenger managed to dodge through the Boer guards safely and reached our farm late in the evening. On entering and greeting his old master, Jan, the native very mysteriously pointed to the lining of his tattered coat to indicate that his message was there. No time was lost in cutting out and after reading it we told the native where to sleep and gave him something to eat, telling him to be in readiness to start back to Pretoria the next evening with a reply.

This was a source of anxiety and danger, for if Devenish had been discovered in the smallest way to be in communication with Pretoria, he would have been shot with scant ceremony or trial. The Government at Pretoria little knew the danger to which they were exposing a loyal and defenceless subject. The Boers in their then mood would have been glad of an excuse to make an example in the district as they had already done in several others.¹⁸⁾ My husband started off early next morning to the English camp to consult with Dr. Ward as to a suitable reply. They together drafted a short note which he brought home and copied in his smallest type, for he had decided to place it between two pieces of cardboard in the shape of a button and cover it with some of the tatters of the overcoat. This necessitated making four buttons for the sake of uniformity, no pleasant task considering the grimy material from which they were made. They were all firmly sewn on and Jan being informed as to which was the button chuckled with amusement and pleasure at the happy thought of carrying the letter in that form, saying that even if the Boers caught him they would never guess at those harmless looking buttons. He went off delighted in outwitting them so easily.

We afterwards heard that Jan caused great amusement in the British camp when he proudly produced his button.

Chapter IX

Boers search Bronkhorstspuit for arms

About a week after the button incident, a fresh cause of anxiety occurred.

Devenish was driving along in his cart on his usual daily visit to the camp, when passing a farm on the way he saw rather a large number of horses grazing kneealtered a little way from the house.

Thinking something must be wrong, he drove up to the homestead and on entering found a dozen or more Boers smoking and hurrying up the old woman to give them some coffee quickly as they were going to search the English camp for arms which they had just heard were still in their possession. They were all vowing vengeance on the whole camp if the report proved correct.

Devenish took in the situation, but fearing to arouse suspicion by going off too soon waited for some coffee too, saying something pleasant to the old woman and asking her to serve him first as his horses were standing in harness. After swallowing the coffee with as much haste as he dared, he got up and with a nod to the men that he would see them again at the camp, drove slowly off till he got out of sight of the house, when he drove for dear life, not thinking for a moment that the English would have any arms but wishing to warn them of what was coming. On reaching the camp he immediately told what he had heard. On enquiries being made it was ascertained that the only weapons in camp were a revolver which had belonged to the late Captain Nairn and a sword owned by a wounded officer. Lieutenant Hume who was then in the camp, fearing that in the then mood of these conquering heroes, even these weapons might arouse ill-feeling, my husband offered to put them under the seat of his cart. The great risk to himself he thereby ran did not occur to him at the

time. The weapons were hastily put away only just in time, for the Boers were even then arriving.

They searched all over the camp, even under the beds of the wounded, but found nothing, so returned to their homes telling the soldiers that it was well for them that nothing was found. Devenish left about the same time as they did with the innocent cause of all the commotion safely tucked under the seat of his trap. He was not feeling quite happy, at his self-imposed task of finding a safe hiding place for them, as he knew the Boers might take it into their heads to search our house at any time.

The fact of the matter was, that the Boers in this district were already beginning to be very tired and restless at being kept on commando so long. It was only by little expeditions of this kind that they were kept in good humour. General Joubert had all he could do to keep his army from going "huis toe" in a body, until the unexpected success of Majuba. On arriving home there was a consultation as to a suitable place of safety for the weapons. They could have easily been buried in the garden, but it being a very wet season, they would have become hopelessly rusted in no time.

It so happened that we had in our bedroom a small table with a drawer in it. The top of the table had been loose and Mr. Devenish having set a Kaffir boy to secure it with nails, Kaffir like turned the top round so that the drawer came to the back of the table and was so securely fixed that it could not be altered for fear of its collapsing altogether. This gave some annoyance at the time but soon proved a blessing. The revolver just fitted into the drawer and the table turned to the wall gave no suspicion of any such receptacle. We could, however, find no suitable place for the sword and at last in desperation just hung it against the wall behind the bed curtains.

These little matters may seem very trivial now, but at the time they were mountains for those poor people who were so completely at the mercy of the Boers. Not very long after this a party of Boers, armed to the teeth, came to our house with an order from Prinsloo to search for arms. This was a great shock to us and I turned cold in hearing their errand and trembled all over, though it was one of the hottest of February days. It was a marvel that they did not notice my guilty looks. Well, they ransacked the house, one Boer standing at the front door and another at the back with loaded rifles to stop my husband's escape in case anything was found. At last they came to our bedroom and I thought all was up with us, but went into the room with them and stood watching them breathlessly. They pulled out drawers, my linen press was opened and everything scattered about on the floor. They actually pulled off the bedding and mattress, yet never thought of pulling away the curtains which concealed the sword. I suffered tortures in those few moments; the chances were so great that they must see it, but thank God, they did not, for otherwise it would have fared badly for my husband, if even those solitary weapon had been found, for they were much annoyed at the last search of the English camp proving a wild goose chase.

When they had satisfied themselves that there was nothing concealed, the Boers told me to be quick and give

them some coffee and not stare at them as if they were going to eat me.

I gladly got the coffee with all speed being only too willing to expedite their departure. They were annoyed at this second fruitless search for arms, out of which they had hoped for some chance of exercising their power and ill-will, and felt a bit foolish no doubt.

After drinking their coffee, which they remarked was d... English stuff, they flung their cups and saucers onto the floor and rode off to our infinite relief. The sword was afterwards restored to its rightful owner, little knowing at what risk it was preserved.

Devenish was kept fully busy in supplying the needs of the hospital camp and had to go about a good deal to buy up what was required for them.

One morning Dr. Ward informed him that their medicines, etc. were running out, so he had to get an order from Prinsloo to proceed to Middelburg with Dr. Crow, who had been sent from Pretoria to assist Dr. Ward soon after the Battle of Bronkhorstspruit. Middelburg being the nearest town in the hands of the Boers, it was thought best to send there for what medicines they required.

After securing a pass, Devenish and the doctor started off, the latter delighted at the chance of an outing after his hard work and confinement in camp and was in high spirits. The journey took them several hours with cart and mules and they only arrived there late in the afternoon, tired and dusty. After presenting their passes and showing their orders from Prinsloo they were allowed to proceed. They went to the only chemist's shop and got all they could which was by no means all they needed and then went to their hotel.

After dinner they went out for a stroll, down the main street, lighting their cigars as they went, ignorant of the fact that it was forbidden to smoke in the streets after 6 o'clock. As they sauntered along my husband heard some Boers saying "Look at those Rooineks smoking". He at once threw away his cigar and urged the Doctor to do the same, but he indignantly refused. Presently they came up to a Boer guard who roughly accosted them demanding their passes and told the Doctor to put his cigar away instantly. The Doctor again refused and was promptly laid hold of and would have received a merciless sjambokking had Devenish not assured them in their own language that they did not know that smoking was forbidden and that they were both under orders from Prinsloo to get back to the English camp as soon as possible. The Doctor was furious, the cigar had been knocked out of his mouth, and he had received several severe cuts with the sjambok which had hurt his feelings more than anything else. He vowed vengeance on the Boers when the war was over, little dreaming what an ignominious ending that war was soon to have.

They started back at dawn the next day and got back to their camp without further adventure.

Chapter X

Battle of Majuba Hill; Great Britain makes peace

Some weeks passed in quietness, interrupted now and then by reports from the front of a more or less exciting nature, always to the advantage of the Boers. The poor loyalists and

English at the hospital camp fully realised how "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" and were beginning to wonder what the British army could be doing, when the awful news reached them of the Battle of Majuba. A young Boer despatch rider came to our farm fresh from the battlefield and told us what he had seen with his own eyes. That the English were all killed and that they had been driven down the mountain with their petticoats flying. We knew he must be referring to the Highlanders and much against our will we were forced to believe that a part of his story was true. We felt confident that England would soon retrieve her loss and show the Boers that they had not killed all her soldiers. We smiled at those who made much of the news and assured them that there would soon be a different story to tell, for the English could never be beaten by a handful of Boers.

Alas, before the end of the week was out we had, indeed with shame and dismay, to hear another story - that England was making terms of peace after a reverse. Never shall I forget the shame and misery these tidings caused us. My husband would not credit them and gave them the lie direct over and over again until at last he heard the news from a perfectly trustworthy source and was obliged to accept it as an acknowledged fact. He felt then that he could never hold up his head as a British subject again. Had the Boers only been beaten and made to respect the English nation, this terrible war, even now being fought out in Africa might have been avoided.¹⁹⁾

My husband went over to the Bronkhorstspruit camp and found that they had already received official news of the Armistice and had received orders to proceed to Pretoria as soon as possible, an ambulance being sent out to bring them in.

The bitterness of the loyalists and English was indeed great, their faith in England's justice was shaken. Had the Boers not been the humane people they really are at heart their position would have been positively dangerous. As it was, they felt utterly crushed, and for a long time they did not dare to use the English language, so great was the derision and contempt it created in the breasts of the inflated conquerors. Even the kindest of the Boers did not spare those unhappy betrayed people who had risked so much in their loyalty and good faith to England.

General Joubert certainly knew better than most of the Boers when he quoted the proverb "half an egg is better than an empty shell" to some of his burghers, who flushed with victory would fain have refused the terms offered by the British Government. He well knew that they had not beaten the English and that Sir Evelyn Wood held the Boer Army in the palm of his hand. Joubert knew that one reverse would have sent every burgher flying to his home and felt that it was a piece of undreamt of good fortune in their favour that caused Gladstone to decide upon an ignominious peace.

Devenish felt how impossible it had become for us to live on in the Transvaal under the altered circumstances. He went to Pretoria and gave up the sword and revolver which had caused so much anxiety. The revolver was handed back to him to keep as a relic of Bronkhorstspruit and as such is still in the family possession.

The Military Authorities paid his account for supplies and money advanced by him to the hospital camp during the siege and thus ended with all its trials and hardships and crowning disappointment to those who had been most loyal, the War of 1881.

Soon after this we started with sore hearts on a journey back to the Cape Colony leaving the farm and what we could not sell in the hands of a caretaker, hoping that time and absence would remove the sting of the effect of England's treatment of her loyal subjects. Nor was ours an isolated case. I can with truth say that there were hundreds of people who had staked all on England's good faith, but were left to shame and ruin. Many could not even afford to move out of the country and this was truly a hard lot.

Devenish always felt convinced that sooner or later there would be war again between England and the Boers. The seed of future strife and trouble being surely sown by that misplaced magnanimity.

But he did not live to see his worst fears verified or to know what a terrible war it would be, when it did come.¹⁹⁾ Who would have thought that the well governed little Free State would have made common cause with Paul Kruger? God grant that it may soon be over and peace restored to these misguided people.

If I have enlarged somewhat too much on our experiences and sentiments of these times, it is because I wish our children who may read this perhaps years later, to know what their father's opinions and trials were, in having been cut off in the prime of his life and work, leaving several children too young to realise their loss. It is for them that I am endeavouring to write down whatever of interest I can remember of his life in the early days of the Transvaal. Moreover, the record of those early days may possibly throw a sidelight on the great Boer and Uitlander question. For in the years to come a new order of things will prevail and the old life with its primitive ways and ideas must give away to the march of civilisation and I feel convinced that the majority of the Boers themselves will come to see that progress, justice and prosperity under the British flag is far better than the empty sentiment of independence they enjoyed under the onesided oligarchy which landed them in sore trouble and misery.

Chapter XI

Devenish leaves the Transvaal for a time

Having decided to leave the scene of so much trouble and disappointment, he starts once more on his journey to the Cape Colony.

We had a light wagon with a good span of oxen and native leader and driver, so travelled on as fast and prosperously as such journeys usually allow. We reached Kimberley in about a fortnight's time and stayed there only long enough to lay in fresh stocks of supplies, etc. and then journeyed to De Adar and on to the Prieska District where my husband's elder brother lived on his farm Om Draais Vley. He farmed extensively with sheep and ostrich.

Mr. John Devenish and his wife (Ellen MacDermid) gave us a hearty welcome, having experienced great anxiety about us during the war. They could get no news of us at all and knew

that we would be loyal and therefore in bad odour with the Boers. There was, of course, much to relate and they felt with us the shame of the lately made peace and advised us to give up all thought of returning.

My husband stayed with his brother for about two months planning and discussing where it would be best to settle. We came to the conclusion that it would be best to return to our farm in the Transvaal and make the best of a bad business, especially as most of our capital was locked up in that country. Our family were far from well and missed the healthy Transvaal air; so all things conspired to make us return.

We bought about one hundred ostriches and with some breeding cattle we began a most tedious journey back to the Transvaal, rendered more slow and tiresome by the troop of ostriches. They proved a continual source of worry and anxiety. They were like the old woman's pig, who would not go and when it did could not be stopped. Many of these birds died on the way from disease and accidents and some being chased by dogs were never recovered. We arrived back with about fifty birds.

We found things at the farm much as we left them and the Boers had cooled down and seemed glad to see my husband back. His short absence had shown them the value of having a man in their midst to whom they could go in any emergency for help or advice. They knew they could trust him and had always been attracted by his kindly, genial manner, his readiness to write a letter or draw up a deed of sale or anything that they could not manage themselves. They were mostly illiterate in those days and the majority of them are not much better now, thanks to Paul Kruger's crafty policy.

They found again that their independence had not brought them much grist to their mill. Money was already beginning to circulate less freely after the military had been withdrawn from all the towns and the markets were very soon glutted with produce. This was a very sore point with many and they would have been reduced to bluebacks⁷⁾ again had not the discovery of the Witwatersrand Gold Fields just saved them.

Anyway, they were glad to welcome our surveyor. The late war was still a dangerous topic which always led to some gratuitous insult to the poor loyalists. This feeling would have almost died out if it had not been fanned into life again by a new faction coming upon the scene in the shape of the *Africander Bond*.²⁰⁾

Soon after our return we noticed that the Boers were much influenced and interested in the meetings being held all over the country. Every Boer you met was full of the idea that he was an *Africander*, and as such was something more than he had ever thought himself to be before and it behoved them to guard their language and help to build up a nation of their own, which would entirely exclude those hated designing English.

Every field cornet was instructed to hold regular meetings in his ward, where now and then an orator from headquarters would appear to instruct and keep them up to the mark. The Rev. S.F. du Toit²¹⁾ was the chief man in Pretoria and being a minister of the Gospel had great influence with the Boers. They have great respect for their pastor and implicit faith that anything in printed form must be true. Little slips were issued and sent about to all remote

districts and the Bond work prospered and took deep root. This was the real beginning of the race hatred which grew apace and made Paul Kruger's intrigues an easy matter.

One of the field cornets finding that he badly wanted a secretary for these meetings, begged my husband to join them, which for policy sake he did for a time. He soon found it so utterly opposed to his principles, that he would have nothing more to do with it. He at first thought that if men like himself joined the Bond, they would perhaps be able to oppose its sinister object and draw it into a more wholesome channel but he soon gave it up as impossible.

There is no shadow of a doubt that the Africander Bond, assisted by England's magnanimity, is the primary cause of all the trouble raging now in Africa.

Chapter XII

Farming proves hopeless- our surveyor takes up his theodolite again

Our farming was soon fast becoming a positive farce, with no market to speak of, the cost of transport to Pretoria taking away all the little profit there might be, it was a sorry lookout. The ostriches were a dead failure but out of them some good did come. While quarrying for stones to make them a camp, my husband first saw indications of coal on his farm. Further prospecting found this to be correct for he came upon a good seam of splendid coal only twenty feet from the surface. This was a good find, but like everything else in those times there was no sale for coal as wood was cheap and plentiful. He tried for a while to work it himself, but soon found that it required more skilled handling than he could give, so he had to engage a proper miner to work it systematically.

There was very little demand for coal, there being no railways or factories. There was only the Eerste Fabrieken at Zwart Koppies, a factory for distilling brandy from grain, and even they would not pay much for coal, wood being brought to them at little cost. So altogether this mining did not prove of much value to him. He allowed a Cornish miner named Tamblin to work the mine at his own expense and paying him a small royalty on the coal he sold. This too proved unsatisfactory, so eventually the farm, coal mine and all was sold at a comparatively low figure. My husband decided to give up farming for good and start working at his profession again.

He unfortunately sold out just before the Witwatersrand gold fields (1886) were discovered. Had he waited even a few months he would have got thousands instead of hundreds but luck did not usually attend his transactions.

The Rand Gold Fields of course boomed everything and he decided to devote all his attention to surveying as everyone wanted his land surveyed and got a touch of gold fever.

He went into partnership with a prominent Pretoria surveyor (John Rissik, who later became Surveyor General) who, being a Hollander, was in the Government's favour and had a large section of work in hand. A part of it being the survey of Montsio's location, a Koranna Chief with whom the Boers had lately made war. He was only a small chief and easily disposed of. They were utterly routed and men, women and children taken prisoners and given out as servants to the burghers who had assisted in the engagement. Devenish and his

partner both went out with a big staff of assistants in order to finish it off as soon as possible, Devenish taking his wife and eldest son, then about eight years of age. The other children were placed at Loretto House Convent, Pretoria.

Montsio's location was near Vryburg, it was called Schweizer Reneke after the two officers who were killed while storming the Koppie, not a very formidable one, if I remember rightly.²²⁾

The surveying party were no sooner camped at the location when one of their servants, a Hottentot from the Cape Colony, came rushing in to say that the whole veldt was covered with skulls and human bones²³⁾ and he would not go back alone to bring in the horses which had been turned out to graze. No amount of physical or moral persuasion would induce that Hottentot to move away from the camp after dark. The Cape Hottentot is at all times a superstitious individual and this one was no exception to the rule. One of the surveyors put a skull on top of his tent pole, which awed the natives very much. I was very glad to move away from this gruesome neighbourhood when the surveyors had finished their work. One can get used to most things, but it is depressing to say the least of it, to meet with skulls and human bones in whatever direction you may chance to walk.

After we had been camping about these dry and barren parts, as the survey work dictated for about two months, we found that this sort of life was by no means the best thing for our little son, whose liking for lessons was diminishing fast. I tried to teach him but he was invariably missing, when I was ready for him. Boys like preferring to go off with the herd and dogs hunting hares or snaring birds, fishing too in the nearest pools, being a great temptation, so we decided that something had to be done to get him to school. Just before leaving Pretoria, we had received a letter from our brother-in-law, Thos. Hugo,²⁴⁾ Manager of Cape of Good Hope Bank, Graaff Reinet, and subsequently General Manager of the National Bank, Pretoria. He was married to my sister. The letter suggested that we should send our son to them where he could be educated with their only son who was about the same age.

The idea was a good one, but just then it was difficult to send the child so far away on his own as there was no railway even to Kimberley then.

It happened that we were short of provisions in camp and the work admitting of no delay, it was decided that I and the children and native nurse girl should go by ox-wagon to Kimberley, the nearest town of any importance, buy provisions and have them sent on by return wagon to the camp and ourselves take a train to Graaff Reinet where our elder boy was to be put to school.

Chapter XIII

Revolver versus fists

My husband engaged a respectable old Boer to take us to Kimberley and arranged everything he could think of to make us comfortable.

Just before starting, my husband brought out the revolver of Bronkhorstspuit fame and in the presence of the Boer, gave it to me telling me to be sure to keep it safe from the children and yet handy and not to scruple to use it

if necessity arose. I remember the Boer laughing and remarking that he would do more with his fists than I could with the revolver, but he had good cause to thank his stars that we had that weapon, for it certainly saved his life and ours too for that matter. How this happened I will now tell you.

We started off very comfortably, my husband accompanying us a short way on horseback, at the last suffering many doubts and fears as to the advisability of us on this long rough journey. It was a great hardship for us both that he could not go with us, but as that was out of the question, we made the best of it and parted as cheerfully as the circumstances permitted.

I found it a new experience travelling with a Boer who, though anxious enough to please, was not accustomed to wait on womankind, his experience being quite the other way round. However he did condescend to do things for me that he would never have dreamt of doing for his own womenfolk, noting me a nuisance no doubt all the time. However, we managed to get on fairly well. He shot some bucks at times which considerably delayed us. My little son was a great comfort to me, as he had no lessons to worry him, made himself most useful when meals had to be prepared. We travelled on for about six days without any misadventure. When we got to the last outspan, close to Kimberley, we could easily have got into the town that evening but the Boer, considering his oxen more than our comfort decided to stay there for the night. I must have just got off to sleep when I was awakened by hearing the most terrifying yells and shouts of natives. Wakening the nurse girl we listened intently and could hear that there must be a dozen or more drunken natives around the wagon shouting and throwing stones. They were evidently coming from Kimberley and finding this solitary wagon with the Boer and Kaffir leader sleeping quietly under it thought it a tempting object of assault. The noise they made was dreadful, the nurse and I were half paralysed with fear. They pulled the Boer from under the wagon and knocked him about. He managed to get loose and got on top of the box seat and from this point of vantage tried to beat them off with the butt end of his whipstick. They pelted him with big stones, we could hear them strike the wagon in every direction. I heard them say in Dutch to him "jou verdomde Boer, you are not on your farm now to illtreat us, we'll kill you this time." A threat they would no doubt have carried out had I not at that moment opened the sail of the wagon and calling the Boer's name, handed him the revolver, at sight of which they all ran away as fast as they could. It was a bright moonlight night and the Boer fired upon them hitting one. They stopped for a few moments then ran off dragging the wounded one along with them. The Boer fired another shot after them, then handed me the revolver saying "Thank God that you had it with you." He was much hurt by the stones and said he felt wounded all over. I told the Boer to inspan at once and let us get to our friends in Kimberley. He was more tractable now and we reached Kimberley at midnight. Our friends received us most heartily and were much concerned to hear of our narrow escape and fright. I don't think I was ever in my life so thankful to get into bed in safety as I was that night.

The next morning my friends heard that a native had been shot dead by a Boer just outside the town and the authorities

were on the lookout for the culprit. Our Boer took alarm and went off at once to the Free State border which was not very far off and where he was safe from arrest, there being no extradition treaty in those days.

I was glad not to be delayed and perhaps have to give evidence, everyone who heard it feeling that the natives deserved what they got.

I lost no time in purchasing the provisions and sent the wagon back to where the Boer had arranged to meet it. We then took train for Middelburg, the nearest terminus to Graaff-Reinet, from where my brother-in-law sent a cart and horses to meet us. We then had a five hour drive amongst the most lovely scenery but sometimes so dangerous that one forgot to admire nature's handwork, in the fear of toppling over those awful precipices. However, we arrived safely and were most heartily welcomed by the Hugo's.

After about six weeks of most enjoyable stay at Graaff-Reinet and making all arrangements about our son Lennox's education, I returned to our camp leaving the boy with his aunt and uncle. I was very unhappy at parting with him, but knew that he would be in good hands and be kept at his lessons which was the main point.

My husband, meeting me on the return journey, was greatly annoyed at all we had endured since parting from him and he said that though not usually given that way, he had a strange presentiment on sending us on that journey which prompted him to give me the revolver.

Chapter XIV

Devenish surveys the western border of the Transvaal

Having completed the survey of the Location and also many private farms in its neighbourhood, my husband next received instructions from the Transvaal Government to make a survey of the whole of the western border. It was some time after the Boer raid into Stellaland when Sir Charles Warren's expedition was sent out to put a stop to any further depredations on the part of the Boers, and it was thought necessary to have a proper survey of the line, so as to more accurately define the boundary between the Transvaal and Bechuanaland.

The Griqualand West Government also sent a surveyor to survey the line on their side conjointly with the Transvaal surveyor and they worked together all along the line. It so happened that the Bechuanaland surveyor, Mr. Harry van Reenen, was an old College friend of my husband. They were at the Diocesan College, Rondebosch, as boys together and were very pleased to meet again.

Mr. Van Reenen seeing that I was in camp with my husband, brought his wife out too in their comfortable spring wagon. Together we managed to break the tedium of veldt life by walks, afternoon teas and sometimes dining together. I think they have always looked back with pleasure to this survey trip.

As soon as the Border survey was finished, we moved to Pretoria in slow stages and stayed to do any private survey that came his way. He was brought in contact with the heroes of the Stellaland raid who were most indignant with Paul Kruger for stopping their landgrabbing, not understanding what pressure had been brought to bear on him.

Devenish was taken to see the spot under a wild fig tree where the unfortunate Bethel was murdered by those lawless men under the command of Commandant de la Rey, probably the same man who is now fighting against our troops.²⁵⁾ We spent New Year's Day of 1887 on a farm close to Vryburg and there had an opportunity of witnessing a typical Boer's way of spending New Year's Day. It is a great day with them, Christmas day being entirely a church day but "Nuwe Jaar" as they call it is a rollicking day of enjoyment and plenty of good cheer. They began their day at early dawn as usual by firing off guns at intervals and then handing sweet cakes and coffee to all in the house. A constant stream of relations and friends arrived in the course of the morning, each arrival being welcomed by rifle firing and distribution of cakes and coffee. Then came the early dinner consisting principally of roast lamb, sucking pigs and poultry to which all the men sit down first, the women waiting upon them. After the men are finished they go outside and smoke while the women and children partake of whatever is left and all help to clear away and then dancing commences. A musically gifted youth is generally found amongst the company, brings forth a concertina which he plays in fairly good time and they start dancing on the smooth sand floor they usually have in front of their doors. In this case it was on a distinct slope but nothing daunted, they danced with a will. In time or out of it, it was all the same as they seldom listened to the music, their chief enjoyment being in trying to outdo each other in energy. The pair who could keep it up the longest was the admiration of all.

The men keep their hats on and the women their cappies and the men cast off their partners without ceremony if they show any signs of getting tired, laying hold of another by sheer force if necessary. The whole making the most incongruous scene one could imagine and all this with the temperature 96° in the shade. However, they enjoy themselves thoroughly at such times, and make welcome any stranger who may chance to arrive, to all they have going. There are however a great many Boers who do not approve of dancing at all and I once heard a Boer say that he would sooner see his child dead than at a dance. These non-dancing people play rough games, practical jokes and other questionable ways of passing the time.

Chapter XV

The survey party returns to Pretoria

On our way back to Pretoria we passed through the Rand or Johannesburg as it was afterwards called, then a bare waste of country studded with tents and iron shanties with batteries rising up in all directions. People were flocking to these gold fields from all parts and rumour was rife as to the richness of the gold reefs.

We stayed on in Pretoria for a few weeks with Mr. Hugo (my brother-in-law), who will be remembered by many old friends in Pretoria as the late General Manager of the National Bank, which post he so ably filled until his early and lamentable death about three years ago.

After a time my husband secured some survey work close to Johannesburg and they camped for weeks at Doorn Kop where that unfortunate Jameson Raid Battle took place some years



Cartoon by an unknown artist (W.H. Schröder?) of Mrs. E. Devenish's scapegoat President Paul Kruger, giving Randolph Churchill the boot. Indeed, Churchill's letters in the London paper "Daily Graphic" had been very critical of South Africa. The original caption reads: "After these letters in the Daily Graphic you could not expect anything else, my lord (words of Kruger). - This cartoon of President Kruger kicking lord Randolph Churchill out of the Transvaal appeared in a Pretoria shop window soon after lord Randolph left the Boer capital. (Source: South African Library." - From Brian Roberts, "Churchills in Africa", London 1970, p. 50.

afterwards. We often went to Johannesburg and stayed with friends. It was fast becoming a prosperous and go-ahead city, boasting the best theatres in South Africa. Friends often came out to visit our camp and wondered at my enjoyment of the rough life, but I was happy to help my husband by my presence and companionship, to hear of his far harder past, of rough work and responsibility, and now since it has been my great misfortune to lose him, it is the greatest solace of my life to think that I did try to lighten his labours by sharing the discomforts inseparable from a surveyor's field work in a country like the Transvaal. The hardships of which only those who have experienced it themselves can fully realise.

As soon as the work was finished at Doorn Kop, he secured an extensive survey in the Zoutpansberg which is a very rich and fertile district about 170 miles north of Pretoria.

Pietersburg, the chief town, is now a rising little place with a railway to Pretoria and was for some time the seat of the Boer Government after Kruger's flight. When we first saw it, it was merely a farm with a tumble-down homestead on it. My husband was appointed by the Government to survey and lay out this township, which he did. It has steadily grown notwithstanding many discouragements and drawbacks through mismanagement and neglect of the Government. Paul Kruger was too busy raking in the enormous revenues now flowing from the gold mining industry at the Rand to give much thought to remote little Pietersburg.

The town got its name from General Piet Joubert²⁶⁾ who always took a great interest in it, which prevented it falling into oblivion in those early days. Its mineral prospects are most promising and would have been heard of more if the richness of the Rand had not put it in the shade.

My husband was the first man in the district to agitate for a railway, trying to get memorials signed by the burghers asking the Government to have a line built from Pretoria to Pietersburg. Paul Kruger was always averse to railways.²⁷⁾ It brought civilisation too near to the Boers and they felt that it did away with their loved transport, the ox-wagon. I don't think a typical Boer is ever more in his element, than when sitting on the box seat of his wagon with a good load of transport and his pet span of oxen, all alike in size and colour. Give him a good whip, his gun to shoot any chance game, some coffee and dried rusks and he would not change place with the first in the land. My husband used to talk and argue with the Boers and point out the advantages of a railway, but when it came to signing a memorial for it they felt like signing away their birthright.

Mr. Carl Hanan²⁸⁾ was the first to try to get a concession for building the Pretoria/Pietersburg railway. My husband tried all he could to assist him but it was no use. Paul Kruger told the burghers that a railway built up in that direction would enable Rhodes to reach them too easily, Pietersburg being more or less on the way to Rhodesia.²⁷⁾

My husband liked the climate and prospects of Zoutpansberg very well, and having very paying survey work up there, decided to make Pietersburg his home. Being on the spot he was able to buy up the pick of the erven and farms at a fairly low rate. He purchased three erven in the best part of

the town and at once started a nursery of gum and other ornamental trees with which he afterwards laid out the grounds and built a large and comfortable house which became in time a truly happy home to his family, endeared to them all by the fact of his having planted and personally tended almost every tree on the place.

As soon as we were settled in our home, he would no longer hear of my going out with him on his survey trips, though sometimes the family went just for a week's picnicking which was always thoroughly enjoyed.

The Government School was kept by a Hollander who taught English two days a week as a foreign language. His knowledge of English being very limited, my husband tried to get up a good private school where English could be properly taught.²⁹⁾ After several attempts he gave it up as hopeless and was forced to send his children all the way to Cape Town, a journey of six days by coach and train at enormous expense. (Their eldest son Lennox went to school to Bishops and the girls to St. Cyprians Diocesan College.)

The educational question was a great grievance to the Uitlander population who, though so heavily taxed, could not secure good education for their children in the country.

Chapter XVI

The Jameson Raid and Matabele rising

Things went on more or less quietly. The gold fields in Zoutpansberg were being steadily developed, the greatest drawback to their success being the want of a railway to Pietersburg. The Uitlander grievances and Paul Kruger's obstinacy being the constant topics in every mind and tongue. People wondered what would come of it, often they thought it must surely bring war with England, when to everyone's astonishment and dismay the Jameson Raid came as a thunder-clap in its suddenness. It created a great deal of indignation in the minds of friends and foes alike and turned the tide of feeling entirely in Kruger's favour. He did not fail to take immediate advantage by imprisoning all the members of the Reform Committee and securing large sums of money as fines when he did finally release them.

Now too he could continue openly what he had been doing secretly, to lay in great stores of arms and ammunition for future use. How well he accomplished this is seen in the war now dragging through its weary length.

The Boers in Pietersburg were greatly excited and there was much talk of shooting down every Englishman in the country. Whatever the motives of that Raid, as we all know, it was a fatal mistake and only aggravated the grievances it sought to relieve and led to much misery and illfeeling all round.

As an outcome of that Raid, one cannot help attributing that terrible rising of the Matabele in Rhodesia which resulted in the murder of so many innocent lives.

We had good cause to remember that cruel time, when a much loved brother who had settled in Rhodesia some years before was cruelly murdered by the Matabele. He was one of the "Cape Mounted Rifles" who so ably assisted in the first war with the Matabele. He was saved from perishing in "Wilson's Last Stand"³⁰⁾ and was among those to whom the Chartered Company awarded a farm for their services. After the war was

over he had settled on his farm Shorts Drift and made it a most desirable residence and paying concern, having a native store and Wayside Inn which was much appreciated by travellers in those scanty populated parts. A fortnight before he was murdered he replied to a telegram from my husband asking if he was safe: "All right, still trading", the next news we heard was he and two friends were murdered while on their way to one of the Forts, they having been advised by the Authorities to come there for safety. The Matabele hearing that Jameson had been captured with his whole force by the Boers, no doubt thought they now had their chance to wipe out the whole white race altogether, for they spared neither women nor children. However, it has been some small comfort to know that they have been punished and subdued after all.

We had now settled permanently in Pietersburg and my husband may be said to have held the monopoly of all survey work for several years.³¹⁾ Although it was an isolated place owing to its great distance from Pretoria, life was quite bearable to those who made up their minds to live there.

Our surveyor being one of these, did all in his power to make it a desirable and flourishing town. He was often away for months, especially in the winter time when he could get to parts which are fever-stricken in summer. But when at home he always entered heartily into and promoted everything to the good and improvement of the town and its inhabitants. He will always be remembered as the moving spirit of the place. His genial and ready sympathy was felt at all times, by many friends who may chance to read this. Alas, how many of them will have survived this cruel war we have yet to learn.

My husband's faith was great in the Zoutpansberg gold fields and also its farming capabilities and he spent much money and time in acquiring and developing property. The only drawback then was no railway. This is now no more an obstacle as we have our line completed thanks to the pluck and energy of Mr. B.W. Wright, the contractor, who has so ably carried out his difficult task.

Where ever his survey work took him, my husband was always on the look-out for mineral indications and his prospecting pan and stamper were never forgotten when preparing for a long camp out. A great rush was at one time made to Wood Bush Range, Haenertsburg, which is a most delightful part and some wonderful specimens of gold quarts have been brought from there. The little town of Haenertsburg lies on the top of the mountains and being so high up, the air is pure and fresh and wild fruit and flowers abound. The scenery here is magnificent, it has been called the Sanatorium of the Zoutpansberg and for many years has been the refuge and hospital of the fever patients from the low country, or Murchisson Range where the richest gold fields are situated. From May to October it is considered quite safe to go to these low-lying parts which are thickly occupied by both Boers and prospectors during these healthy months. The Boers generally go with their cattle as the climate is mild and there is always a good amount of shooting, even lions are frequently shot there.

My husband owned some alluvial gold claims on the Tsama River near the Letaba Gold Fields which he worked for some months with very satisfactory results until the drought and famine in Zoutpansberg made mining impossible. He took us all

down to this mine on one occasion which we enjoyed, being very interested in the mode of getting at the gold. We occupied a comfortable little shanty with verandah all round and had quite a little farmyard of pigs and poultry and cows, with a vegetable garden which made working a gold mine quite an ideal experience.

A twenty horse power engine was put up on the bank of the river to pump the water into the sluice boxes and the gold producing earth was brought down an incline by trucks on rails and shovelled into the sluice boxes, by the natives. The empty trucks would then be drawn up by four oxen, to be refilled at the mine. Great was the excitement on "washing up" day, once a month when the engine was stopped and the boxes cleaned. The gold is collected by quick-silver and how grand a sight to see the little heap of gold in a plate (ninety ounces in this case), and how interesting to watch the whole process, seeing it put into the retort and turned out an oval lump of pure gold, more especially when it is your own property. And here I must tell you how on one occasion all work was stopped by the native herd rushing into the camp in great excitement and alarm, saying that there was a lion close by. He spoke in Kaffir and instantly every pick and shovel was thrown down and about ninety natives rushed off in the direction indicated, yelling and shouting, enough to scare away any army of lions; some of them catching up a piece of burning wood from the fire where their midday meal was being prepared. The only ones left on the scene were Devenish, his family and the man in charge of the engine. The children and nurse, a Cape Coloured girl, were so terrified, more by the noise of the pursuers than anything else, the nurse declaring that she could hear the lion roar but this might have been imagination.

After a while the natives all returned and told us that the spoors of the lions were there right enough. My husband and a Boer overseer in his employ then took horses and guns and went in search but after a long ride returned without success, having lost the trail in the long grass.

Two days afterwards a Boer wagon stopped at the camp and the Boer enquired if they would buy a lion skin which had been shot the day before. On looking at it we found that it was riddled with bullet holes and thus not worth much and on further enquiries we found that it must have been the same lion that had given us all such a scare. The Boer told us that they had made a snare for it and after catching it had fired all those shots into it, to make sure it was dead before approaching it, a wise precaution and quite in accordance with Boer mode of warfare. However, the sight of the skin gave us a sense of security from any further lion scares and is the nearest approach to a real lion story and a poor one for sooth.

It was a strange thing that though Devenish had travelled about in all directions in the wildest parts, he never came in personal contact with a lion, though it was his great ambition to slay his own lion and he was too honest to slay one in imagination. He often found their spoors or came upon their deserted lair and had even heard their roar in the distance, he had never given himself the time to specially hunt them.

Chapter XVII

Illustrious visitors to Pietersburg and our Queen's Jubilee

The little town was now and then enlivened by a visit from General Joubert, the God Father of Pietersburg, "Pieters City" from whom it had its name.

The General had for many years been a personal friend of my husband and they together worked systematically to oppose Paul Kruger's misguided Government at every election for the Presidency. He strove to support Joubert, but to no avail, for Kruger's secret service and money and intriguing policy were all powerful. The old General was often our guest on his visits to Pietersburg and was always genial and kind to everyone. He could speak fairly good English as everyone knows who has heard him speak in public. It is almost prophetic to recall his remarks and convictions of an ultimate war with England unless the Kruger Government could be altered. He said he knew if it came to that it would mean utter loss of independence to the Republic.

He has not been spared to see this war to the end and perhaps he would not have wished to do so.³²⁾ He was anti-English but consistent and reasonable and would have avoided this war if he had been in power.

On one occasion when he was staying with us, one of the surveyors who had a camera asked permission to photograph him. He very cordially assented and when seated on the verandah for the purpose, seeing our little son Graham, called him to come and stand beside him. When they were properly posed the little fellow said, "now there will be two Generals" which much amused the old man who patted the child on the head with the remark "Who knows what he may be some day."

This led to his asking my husband and eldest son, Lennox, to join the two Generals, which they did and now sad to say, the little boy is the only survivor of that impromptu group.

Every three months the Boer Nachmaal would be held on the Market Square when all the functions of marriage, christening and confirmation would take place. They camped out in their wagons and tents on the Church Square where they would religiously attend all the services. They would do all their shopping at these times, so it meant a fairly busy and prosperous time to the storekeepers but I think the general public were usually much relieved to see the Nachmaal wagons as they are called file out of the town but no doubt, not more so than those good people were to get out of the dorp as they called it. The ordinary Boer hates the town and all pertaining to it except the market where he can sell his produce and looks upon it as a necessary evil.

About once a year President Paul Kruger would visit Pietersburg, which event created the usual stir and excitement such visits generally do in a small place, but he was by no means popular in the Zoutpansberg district and for that reason took care to administrate it with his own particular flunkies, who could watch his interests, for as a rule, however much you may be in the right, there is no getting over the main in possession. He would be the guest of the Landdrost or Magistrate on these occasions, never making up personally for all the expense his host might be put to. In

order to make manifest his popularity, deputations would be rife, each party would air their grievances or wishes and could be gruffly repulsed as was the old President's usual manner, or made jubilant with promises which would most often prove of the pie crust stability as his mood might dictate.

They would always get up a banquet in his honour to which he would only remain for the first course or not appear at all, but so despotic was his majesty that everyone had to be pleased, whatever might be his behaviour.

And now I should like to tell how they spent our good Queen's Jubilee in remote little Pietersburg. They had a Committee of English born, who arranged the festivities in a most loyal and elaborate manner considering that they were only a small community.

The Boer officials assisted them all they could to make it a success and the dear old Union Jack was allowed to wave freely in every direction on that day which was a concession, for since the Jameson Raid it would not dare to be seen in Pietersburg.

They had an impressive little service in the English Church conducted by their much respected Pastor, the Rev. H. Grellier, timed so as to be as near as possible at the same time as that greater function at St. Pauls, London. After the service they had sports, etc. and in the evening a Grand Ball was held in the Masonic Hall where under the Union Jack, God Save the Queen and Rule Britannia were sung by friend and foe alike in a most hearty manner. Two prizes were given for the best essay on the Queen's life to the Dutch and English schools. The first prize, value £7, was taken by a Dutch boy, to everyone's surprise, a boy who could hardly read English fluently, just as the Boers have surprised the world by their fighting qualities; what undue assistance was rendered in each case is not for me to say.

The following evening a huge bonfire was made on the Market Square when some fifty Indunas and their followers were treated to roast beef roasted in their own native style, being laid in quarters on the burning fire and the natives would dance round, leaping forward in turns with knife and stick used as a fork, to the charred roasting meat, cut off a piece and dance round again madly, eating it as they danced and singing their war songs. This performance lasted till most of the meat was taken off the bones, then the old Indunas would sit round these pickings, enjoy their feast undisturbed by the more noisy spirits who were entertaining the lookers-on by their wild songs and war dance. They had been previously duly informed through an interpreter that this meat was given in honour of the long reign of the Great White Queen at whose name they cheered in their own native fashion and executing another wild war dance, they marched off well pleased with the meat offered them.

The troubles of the Republic seemed never over. Following the Jameson Raid which caused so much bitter feeling between Dutch and English in every town, came the Rinderpest which carried off most of the cattle in the Zoutpansberg district and impoverished both Boers and natives and caused great distress in every direction. Close upon this came the drought and failure of crops, which caused a famine in the whole district, which was truly distressing. Whole kraals of natives died of starvation, though much was done to relieve