THE YOUNG COLONISTS

By

G. A. HENTY

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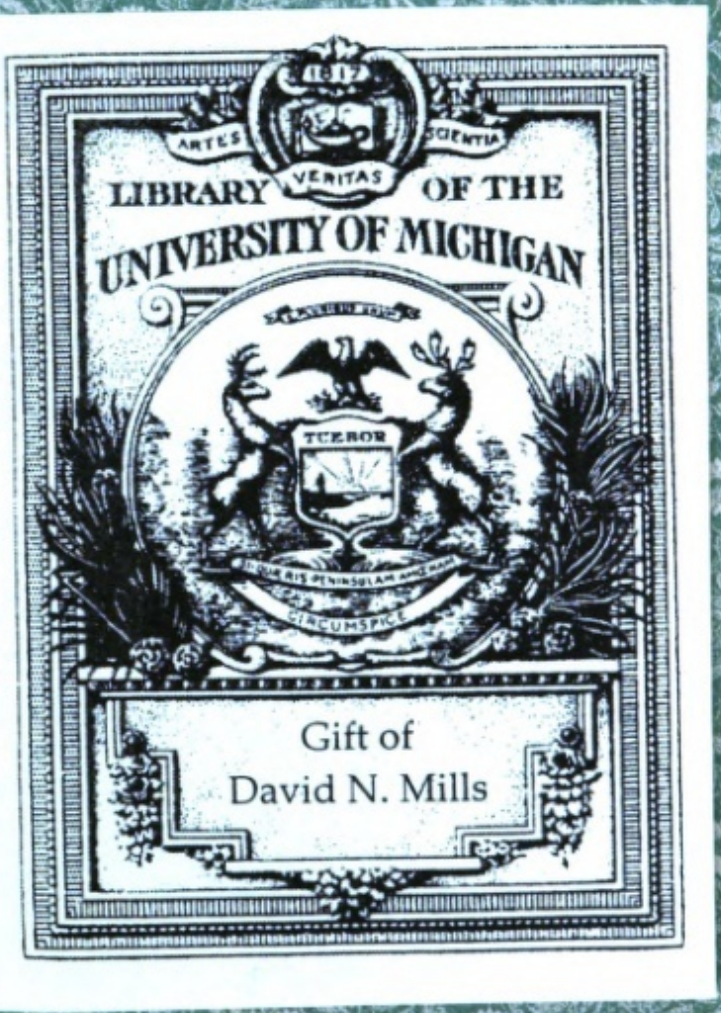

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THE

YOUNG COLONISTS

BY

G. A. HENTY

AUTHOR OF "CLIVE IN INDIA," "UNDER DRAKE'S FLAG," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A SNOW-DRIFT . . . . . PAGE 1

CHAPTER II.

THE RED FLAG 16

CHAPTER III.

THE FARM 31

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR 47

CHAPTER V.

ISANDULA 64

CHAPTER VI.

ZLOBANI 80

CHAPTER VII.

KAMBULA 96

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND ADVANCE 113

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CHAPTER IX.

PAGE
ULUNDI 129

CHAPTER X.

A TRADING EXPEDITION 144

CHAPTER XI.

A TROOP OF LIONS 161

CHAPTER XII.

AN ATTACK BY ELEPHANTS 177

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRUSH WITH THE NATIVES 193

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAPPED IN A DEFILE 209

CHAPTER XV.

A MOUNTAIN-TORRENT 224

CHAPTER XVI.

A FIGHT WITH THE BOERS 240

CHAPTER XVII.

A TERRIBLE JOURNEY 252

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOER INSURRECTION 266

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GARRISONS IN THE TRANSVAAL 277

CHAPTER XX.

LAING'S NECK 288

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THE YOUNG COLONISTS.

CHAPTER I.

A SNOW-DRIFT.

THE country round Castleton, in Derbyshire, is greatly admired by summer tourists, for it lies in the wildest part of that county; but in winter the wind whistles sharply over the bleak hills—where there are no trees to break its violence,—the sheep huddle under the shelter of the roughly-built stone walls, and even lovers of the picturesque would at that season prefer a more level and wooded country. The farm of Mr. Humphreys was situated about a mile from Castleton. It consisted of 100 acres or so of good land in the bottom, and of five or six times as much upland grazing on the hills. Mr. Humphreys owned as well as farmed his land, and so might have claimed, had he chosen, the title of gentleman-farmer; but he himself would have scoffed at such an idea. He was a hard-working, practical farmer, about over his ground from morning to night, save when the hounds met within easy distance in winter; then he would mount "Robin," who served alike as hunter, or hack,

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or to drive in the neat dog-cart to Buxton market; and, although there were many handsomer horses in the field, Mr. Humphreys was seldom far off when the fox was killed.

His family consisted of his wife and two sons, the eldest, Richard, was about fourteen years old. His brother, John, was three years younger. Both went to school at Castleton. The younger boy was fond of his books; he had always been weak and delicate, and, being unable to spend his time in active exercise out of doors, he was generally to be found reading by the fire in winter, or lying on the ground in summer under a tree in the orchard, with his chin on his hand, and the book before him. Richard had no literary taste; he managed to scrape through his work and keep a moderate place in his class, somewhere about half-way down; but he threw his whole heart into outdoor exercise, and was one of the best bats in the school, although there were many there older by years. He knew every foot of the hills, could tell every bird by its note, and knew all about their nests and eggs. Except in school, or perhaps during the long winter evenings, it was rare indeed to find Dick with a book in his hand.

"You will never set the Thames on fire, Dick," his father would say to him.

"I shall never want to, father," he would reply. "I do not see that learning will ever be much good to me."

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"That is a foolish idea, Dick. A great deal of the learning that boys get at school is of no actual value in pounds, shillings, and pence. It is not the fact of knowing Latin, and Greek, and mathematics which benefits a man; but it is the learning of them. It is the discipline to the mind, which is of benefit. The mind is like the body. There is no use in cricket, or in boating, or in hunting, but these things strengthen the body and make it active and healthy, and able to do better everything which it undertakes, and it is exactly the same thing with the mind; besides, the days are coming when farmers must farm their land with science and intelligence, or they will be left behind in the race. We are being rivalled by the farmers of America. Not only do we have to pay rent, but by the tithes and rates and taxes they put upon us government makes the English farmer pay a heavy tax upon every bushel of corn he produces, while they allow the American corn to come into the market tax-free. This may be all right, but it does not appear fair to me. However, there it is, and we have got to meet it, and if we are to keep our heads above water, it can only be by farming up to the very best lights of the day."

"Well, father," Dick said, "then it seems to me that when we grow up, John and I must farm together. He shall be the scientific partner; I will do the work."

"That is all right enough, Dick, but you must

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have some science too, else you and he will never get on. You would want to go on in the old-fashioned groove, and would call his ideas new-fangled. No, I intend you, when you get old enough, to go to Cirencester College, where you will learn the theory and science of farming thoroughly. You will get the practical part at home. As to John, he is a child yet, and, I trust, will grow up strong and active; but if his tastes remain as they now are, I do not think it likely he will take to farming, and we must find some other career for him."

One afternoon in the beginning of December two of Dick's school-fellows said to him,—

"We are going over the hills to our uncle's farm, Dick. Will you go with us?"

When there was nothing better to do, Dick was always ready for a walk, and he at once agreed to accompany the Jacksons. The elder boy was about his own age, the younger two years his junior.

The Jacksons called for him directly he had finished his dinner, and they started away together for a farm which was about four miles distant. They struck right across the hills, as it would have been two miles longer by the nearest road.

"I should not be surprised," Dick said, "if it were to snow to-night; it is bitterly cold, and the clouds look very heavy."

"I hope it won't snow until we get back," James, the younger of the brothers, remarked.

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"I don't know," Dick answered, looking at the clouds. "I should not be surprised if it began at any moment."

The wind was blowing strongly. The hills were high and steep, and, although the boys made their best speed, it was considerably over an hour before they reached the farm. They had started at two, and it was now a quarter past three. Mr. Jackson was out. The boys delivered the message with which they had been charged to their aunt.

"Now," she said, "I will cut you each a hunch of cake, and when you have eaten that and had a glass of fresh milk you had best start at once. It is bitterly cold, and we are going to have snow. The sooner you are home, the better."

The boys now ate their cake. Mrs. Jackson came to the door with them. Then she said, as the first flake of snow fell,—

"I am not sure, boys, that you had not better stay here all night."

The boys laughed.

"Why, what would they say at home? They would just be in a way about us."

"Well, at any rate, you had better go by the road."

"Oh, that is two miles farther at least. We should not get home until long after dark. We shan't be an hour by the hills. We know every foot of the way."

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"Well, good-bye, then. Make as much haste as you can."

For half a mile their way led along the road, then they scrambled over a wall and began to ascend the barren hill-side. The snow was falling fast now. Thicker and thicker it came down, and when, hot and panting, they reached the top of the hill, the wind blew the flakes so fiercely into their faces that they were half-blinded, and were obliged to turn their backs to the gale while they got breath. For half an hour they struggled on. They could scarcely see ten paces before them through the driving snow, and in every sheltered spot white patches rapidly began to form.

"How different things look in a snow-storm!" Dick said, as they stopped for breath and shelter under the lee of a wall. "I don't know, Tom, but I am not quite sure that we are going straight; I do not know what wall this is."

"No more do I," Tom Jackson replied. "I felt quite sure that we were going right at first, but somehow I don't think so now."

"I wish the snow would stop for a minute," Dick said, "just to let us have a look round. If I could see a hundred yards I am sure I should know where we are. What is the matter with you, James; what are you blubbering about?"

"My feet are so cold; they hurt dreadfully."

"Oh, never mind," Dick said. "Come, boys, push along, and we shall soon be home."

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Again they started with heads bent to face the storm.

"It is getting dark awfully fast," Tom Jackson said.

"It is, and no mistake. Come, let us have a trot. Come on, young one."

But, although Dick spoke hopefully, he was not as confident as he appeared. He was sure now that they had lost the way. They might not, he hoped, be far off the track; but he knew that they were not following the precise line by which they came.

It was now nearly dark. The snow was falling thicker than ever, and the ground, except upon the uplands exposed to the full force of the wind, was covered with a white mantle.

On arriving at the bottom of a steep hill, they stopped again.

"Do you know where we are, Tom?"

"Not in the least," Tom answered.

"This ought to be the last valley," Dick said, "and after one more climb we ought to go straight down into Castleton. Don't you remember in that valley there were a lot of sheep in a fold, with a wall round it? If we can find that, we shall know that we are right. It is near the bottom, so we shall not miss it. Which way shall we turn, left or right?"

"Let us try the left first," Tom said.

They walked for half a mile, gradually ascending.

"It is not this way," Tom said at last. "We are getting to the head of the valley. What are you

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doing, James?" as the young boy, who had been sobbing for some time, threw himself on the snow.

"I cannot go any farther," he murmured. "I am so cold, and so tired, and so sleepy."

"Oh, nonsense!" Dick said. "Here, take hold of his arm, Tom, and lift him up; give him a good shake; he must go on; he would die if he stopped here."

The two lads raised the younger boy, and half-supporting half-dragging him turned and retraced their footsteps.

It was pitch dark now, and they could not see a yard before them. For some time they continued their way.

"There is no shepherd's hut. Certainly, this is not the valley. What on earth are we to do?"

"I don't know," Tom said, beginning to cry.

"Shut up, Tom Jackson. What are you thinking about? This is no time for howling like a baby; you have got to think of what is best to do. It is no use climbing the next hill, for we might be going away from home, instead of getting nearer. Besides, we should have to haul Jimmy up, for he can scarcely stand now; and, although it is bitterly cold here, it would be worse on the top of the hill. No, we have got to stop here all night, that is clear."

"We shall be dead before morning!" Tom roared.

"I will hit you in the eye, Tom Jackson, if you don't shut up; you are as bad as a girl; I am ashamed of you. Now, what we have got to do, is to find some sort of shelter, either a wall or bush, and we must

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keep on until we come to something. Keep awake, Jimmy; we shan't have much farther to go, and then you can lie down quietly."

They went on for a bit.

"It is no use," Dick said. "They don't put walls across bottoms; more likely to find one either to the right or left. Now, Tom, you stop here for a minute or two, and I will look about; you keep shouting every minute, so that I can find my way back to you."

Turning off, he began to ascend the next hill, and in two or three minutes shouted the glad news to Tom that he had found the wall; then he returned.

Jimmy, cheered at the prospect of lying down, made an effort, and they soon reached the wall.

Like most of the walls in Derbyshire, it was formed of flat stones laid without mortar, some four feet high.

"Now, Tom, set to work; get some stones off the wall on both sides, and build up two other walls against this; three feet wide inside will do, and just long enough to lie in. Here, Jimmy, you help; it will keep you awake, and, you see, the higher we make the walls the snugger it will be; we will have quite a nice house."

The boys all set to work, and in half an hour three walls were built. At the point where the two side walls touched the other, they were three feet high, and sloped down to two at the lower end.

"Now, Jimmy, you chuck the snow out. Tom and I will go, one each way, along the wall; likely enough

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we may come upon some bushes—they often grow in shelter of the walls: if we can find a few sticks we will cover the house over. Lots of these stones are a couple of feet long, and we will manage a sort of roof. The snow will soon cover it, and we shall be as warm as possible."

A quarter of an hour later the two boys returned; both had been successful and brought a bundle of sticks; these were laid across the top, interspersed with smaller twigs, the ends being kept down with stones to prevent their being blown away. The last were placed in position after the boys had crept inside. They did not attempt to roof it with stones, for the supply of sticks and brushwood was large enough to catch the snow-flakes as they fell, and these would soon form a covering, while it would have been difficult to balance the stones.

Jimmy was by this time in a state almost of lethargy; but the others were fairly warm from their exertions. They now lay down close beside the younger boy, one on each side. At first they felt the cold extremely.

"Let us keep awake as long as we can," Dick said.

"I don't feel inclined to sleep at all," Tom answered; "my hands and feet feel frozen, but I am warm enough everywhere else, and the ground is precious hard and bumpy."

"I am only afraid about Jimmy," Dick said; "he is sound asleep, and he was so awfully cold; lie as close as you can to him, Tom, and put your arm over

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him and keep your legs huddled up against his."

"It feels warmer than it did," he went on, after a pause of half an hour; "don't you think so, Tom?"

"A lot warmer," Tom said. "I expect the snow has made a good thick roof."

"Yes, and the wind does not blow through the stones as it did. I expect the snow is drifting up all round; it was getting very deep against the wall when we got in, and if it goes on all night, Tom, I should not wonder if we are covered deep before morning. The wind always sweeps it off the hills, and makes deep drifts in the bottoms."

"What shall we do, then?"

"I don't know," Dick answered; "but there will be plenty of time to think of that in the morning. I think Jimmy is all right, Tom; I have just put my hand inside his waistcoat and he feels quite warm now. Say your prayers, and then let us try to get off to sleep."

This they were not very long in doing, for the air in the little hut was soon heated by the action of their bodies. Outside the storm was still raging, and the wind, laden with swirling snow from the uplands, was piling it high in the valleys. Already the hut was covered and the wall behind it.

All night and all next day the snow continued to fall; the next day, and the next, it kept on. Old folks down in Castleton said they never remembered such a storm. It lay three feet deep in the fields, and

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there was no saying how deep the drifts might be in the hollows. For the first two days the wind had tried its best to keep the hills clear, but it had tired of the work, and for the last two had ceased to blow, and the great feathered flakes formed steadily and silently.

Tom was the first to wake.

"Holloa!" he exclaimed, "where are we? Oh! I remember. Dick, are you awake?"

"Yes, I am awake now," Dick said. "What is it? It is not morning yet. I seem to have been asleep a long time, and don't my bones just ache? Jimmy, old boy, are you all right?"

"Yes," Jimmy grunted.

"It is quite warm," Dick said. "It feels very close, and how still it is! The wind has quite gone down. Do you know, Tom, I think it must be morning. There seems a faint sort of light. I can see the stones in the wall behind you."

"So it must," Tom assented. "Oh! how stifling it is!" and he raised himself into a sitting position.

"I am afraid we are buried deep in the snowdrift. Put your hand up, Tom; don't you feel some of these sticks are bent in the middle?"

"Ever so much; there must be a great weight on them. What are we to do, Dick; shall we try and dig a way out?"

"That will be no good," Dick answered; "not if it is deep; and if it has been snowing all night, there is no saying how deep it may be this morning down

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in this bottom. This drift-snow is like dust. I remember last winter that Bill Jones and Harry Austin and I tried to make a tunnel in a deep drift, but the snow fell in as fast as we scraped it away. It was just like dry sand."

"We are all right for warmth," Tom said; "but it feels quite stifling."

"Yes, we must try and get some air," Dick said. "The roof-sticks are close together down at our feet. There were three or four left over when we had finished, so we can take them away without weakening the roof. We might shove one of them up through the snow."

The sticks were removed carefully, but a quantity of fine snow fell in on their feet. One was then shoved up through the top, but the only effect, when it was removed, was that it was followed by some snow powdering down on their faces.

"Let us tie four of them together," Dick said. "I have plenty of string in my pocket."

This was done, fresh sticks being tied to the bottom as the first were shoved up through the snow.

"Now, Tom, help me to work it about a bit, so as to press the snow all round, and make a sort of tube."

For some time a shower of little particles fell as they worked, but gradually these ceased. Then the stick was cautiously lowered, being untied joint by joint, and looking up the boys gave a shout of pleasure. At the top of the hole, which was some six inches wide at the bottom, was a tiny patch of light.

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"We have only just reached the top," Dick said; "the snow must be near fifteen feet deep."

Small though the aperture was, it effected a sensible relief. The feeling of oppression ceased; half an hour later the hole was closed up, and they knew that the snow was still falling.

Another length of stick was added, and the daylight again appeared.

The boys slept a good deal; they had no sensation of cold whatever, the heat of their bodies keeping the air at a comfortable temperature. They did not feel so hungry as they expected, but they were very thirsty.

"I shali eat some snow," Tom said.

"I have heard that that makes you more thirsty," Dick remarked; "hold some in your hands till it melts, and then sip the water."

Four days passed; then they found that the snow no longer continued to cover up the hole, and knew that the snow-storm had ceased. The number of sticks required to reach the top was six, and as each of these was about four feet long they knew that, making allowance for the joints, the snow was over twenty feet deep.

Very often the boys talked of home, and wondered what their friends were doing. The first night, when they did not return, it would be hoped that they had stayed at the farm; but somebody would be sure to go over in the morning to see, and when the news arrived that they were missing, there would be a general turn out to find them.

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"They must have given up all hope by this time," Dick said, on the fifth morning, "and must be pretty sure that we are buried in the drift somewhere; but, as all the bottoms will be like this, they will have given up all hopes of finding our bodies till the thaw comes."

"That may be weeks," Tom said; "we might as well have died at once."

"We can live a long time here," Dick replied confidently. "I remember reading once of a woman who had been buried in the snow being got out alive a tremendous time afterwards. I think it was five weeks, but it might have been more. Hurrah! I have got an idea, Tom."

"What is that?" Tom asked.

"Look here; we will tie three more sticks—"

"We can't spare any more sticks," Tom said; "the snow is up to our knees already."

"Ah! but thin sticks will do for this," Dick said; "we can get some thin sticks out here. We will tie them over the others, and on the top of all we will fasten my red pocket-handkerchief, like a flag; if any one comes down into this bottom they are sure to see it."

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CHAPTER II.

THE RED FLAG.

DICK'S plan was soon carried into effect, and the little red flag flew as an appeal for help ten feet above the snow in the lonely valley.

Down in Castleton events had turned out just as the boys had anticipated. The night of the snow-storm there was no sleep for their parents, and at daybreak, next morning, Mr. Humphreys and Mr. Jackson set out on foot through the storm for the distant farm. They kept to the road, but it took them four hours to reach the farm, for the drifts were many feet deep in the hollows, and they had the greatest difficulty in making their way through.

When, upon their arrival, they found the boys had left before the gale began, their consternation and grief were extreme, and they started at once on their return to Castleton.

Search-parties were immediately organized, and these, in spite of the fury of the storm, searched the hills in all directions.

After the first day, when it was found that they were not at any of the shepherds' huts scattered among the hills, all hopes of finding them alive ceased. So hopeless was it considered, that few parties went out on the three following days; but

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on the fifth, when the snow-storm ceased and the sun shone out, numbers of men again tramped the hills in the vague hope of finding some sign of the missing boys; they returned disheartened. The snow was two feet deep everywhere, twenty in many of the hollows.

The next day but few went out, for the general feeling was, that the bodies could not be discovered until the thaw came, and at present it was freezing sharply.

Among those who still kept up the search were several of the boys' school-fellows. They had not been permitted to join while the snow-storm continued, and were therefore fresh at the work. A party of four kept together, struggling through the deep snow-drifts, climbing up the hills, and enjoying the fun, in spite of the saddening nature of their errand.

On arriving at the brow of a deep valley five miles from home, they agreed that they would go no farther, as it was not likely that the missing boys could have wandered so far from their track. That they had in fact done so was due to a sudden change in the direction of the wind; it had been driving in their faces when they started, and with bent down heads they had struggled against it, unconscious that it was sharply changing its direction.

"Just let us have a look down into the bottom," one of the boys said; "there may be a shepherd's hut here."

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Nothing, however, was seen, save a smooth, white surface of snow.

"What is that?" one exclaimed suddenly. "Look, there is a little red flag flying down there—come along."

The boys rushed down the hill at full speed.

"Don't all go near the flag," one said; "you may be treading on their bodies."

They arrived within ten yards of the flag, in which they soon recognized a red pocket-handkerchief. They were silent now, awe-struck at the thought that their companions were lying dead beneath.

"Perhaps it is not theirs," the eldest of the party said presently. "Anyhow I had better take it off and carry it home."

Treading cautiously and with a white face, for he feared to feel beneath his feet one of the bodies of his friends, he stepped, knee-deep in the snow-drift, to the flag. He took the little stick in his hand to pluck it up; he raised it a foot, and then gave a cry of astonishment and started back.

"What is the matter?" the others asked.

"It was pulled down again," he said in awe-struck tones. "I will swear it was pulled down again."

"Oh, nonsense!" one of the others said; "you are dreaming."

"I am not," the first replied positively; "it was regularly jerked in my hand."

"Can they be alive down there?" one suggested.

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"Alive! How can they be alive after five days, twenty feet deep in the snow? Look at the flag!"

There was no mistake this time; the flag was raised and lowered five or six times. The boys took to their heels and ran and gathered in a cluster fifty yards away on the hillside.

"What can it be?" they asked, looking in each others' pale faces.

The behaviour of the flag seemed to them something supernatural.

"We had better go back and tell them at home," one of them said.

"We can't do that; no one would believe us. Look here, you fellows," and he glanced round at the bright sky, "this is nonsense; the flag could not wave of itself; there must be somebody alive below; perhaps there is a shepherd's hut quite covered with the drift, and they have pushed the flag up through the chimney."

The supposition seemed a reasonable one, and a little ashamed of their panic the group returned towards the flag. The eldest boy again approached it.

"Go carefully, Tomkins, or you may fall right down a chimney."

The flag was still continuing its up and down movement; the boy approached and lay down on the snow close to it; then he took hold of the stick; he felt a pull, but held fast; then he put his mouth close to the hole, two or three inches in diameter, through which it passed.

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"Halloa!" he shouted; "is any one below?"

A cry of "Yes, yes," came back in reply. "The two Jacksons and Humphreys."

"Hurrah!" he shouted at the top of his voice, and his companions, although they had not heard the answer, joined in the cheer.

"Are you all right?" he shouted down again.

"Yes, but please get help and dig us out."

"All right; I will run all the way back; they will have men here in no time; good-bye; keep up your spirits."

"They are all there below!" he shouted to his friends. "Come on, you fellows, there is not a moment to lose."

Wild with excitement the boys made their way home; they rushed down the hill-sides, scrambled through the drifts in the bottoms, in which they sometimes disappeared altogether, and had to haul each other out, struggled up the hills, and, panting and breathless, rushed in a body into Mr. Humphreys' farmhouse, that standing nearest to them, on their way to Castleton.

"We have found them; we have found them," they panted out. "They are all alive."

Mrs. Humphreys had risen from her seat in a chair by the fire as the boys entered, and uttering a faint cry fell back insensible.

At this moment the farmer, who had but five minutes before returned, having been out since daybreak on the hills, hurried into the room; he was taking off his heavy boots when he heard the rush of feet into the house. "We have found them, sir; they are all alive!"

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"Thank God! thank God!" the farmer exclaimed reverently, and then seeing his wife insensible hurried towards her, uttering a shout for the servants. Two women ran in. "Look to your mistress," he said; "she has fainted; the good news has been too much for her—the boys are found alive."

With mingled exclamations of gladness and dismay the servants raised their mistress.

"Now, boys, where are they?" Mr. Humphreys asked.

The lads gave a rapid narrative of what had happened.

"Under the snow all this time!" the farmer exclaimed; "they must be, as you say, in a hut. Now, will one of you stay and show me the way back, and the others go on to Mr. Jackson's and other places, and bring a strong party of men with shovels on after us?"

The lad who had spoken with the prisoners remained to act as guide, the others hurried off.

"Come with me, my boy, into the larder. There, help yourself; you must be hungry and tired, and you have got to do it over again."

Mr. Humphreys then ran into the yard, and bade the four labourers provide themselves with shovels and prepare to accompany him at once.

He then went back into the parlour. His wife was just opening her eyes; for a time she looked confused and bewildered, then suddenly she sat up and gazed beseechingly at her husband—memory had come back to her.

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"Yes, wife, thanks be to God, it is true—the boys are alive; I am just going with these men to dig them out. They are snowed up in a hut. Now, Jane, get a large basket, and put in it lots of bread and bacon—the men who are working will want something; fill the largest stone jar with beer; put in a bottle of brandy and a bottle of milk, and set to and get some soup ready; bring three small mattresses downstairs and a lot of blankets."

Five minutes later the search-party started, Mr. Humphreys and the guide leading the way; the men followed, one carrying five shovels; another, the basket and jar; the other two, three hurdles on which were placed the mattresses and blankets.

It was no easy matter so laden making their way over the hills and through the deep drifts. Mr. Humphreys took his share of the labour; but it was two hours from the time when they started before they arrived at the spot where the flag was waving, and the night was already closing in.

Mr. Humphreys hurried forward to the flag; he knelt down beside it.

"Are you still alive, Dick?—it is I, your father!"

"Yes, father, we are all alive, and we shall be all right now you have come. Don't get too near the stick; we are afraid of the hole closing up, and smothering us."

"Which side is the door," Mr. Humphreys asked, "so that we can dig that way?"

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"There is no door, father; but you had better dig from below, because of the wall."

"There must be a door," Mr. Humphreys said to himself, as he rejoined the men. "There can't be a hut without a door; Dick must be a little light-headed, and no wonder. Now, lads, let us set to work from below."

The five men were soon at work, throwing aside the snow. In a short time the other parties arrived.

Mr. Humphreys had brought with him a stock of candles. These were lit and stuck in the snow, where, as there was no wind, they burnt steadily, affording sufficient light for the search. The work was all the more difficult from the lightness of the snow, as the sides fell in like sand as they worked upon it, and they were obliged to make a very broad cutting.

At last there was a cheer, as they struck the ground.

"Now, working up hill we must be at the hut in a few feet."

Twenty willing hands laboured away incessantly, but to their surprise no hut was met with; they worked and worked, throwing the snow behind them, until Mr. Jackson struck his shovel upon something hard.

"Here is a wall or something," he said.

Another minute uncovered a low wall of two feet in height, and directly afterwards a leg was popped up through the snow. A loud cheer broke from the men.

But again the snow-drift fell in from the sides, and it was another quarter of an hour before the lads were

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lifted from the narrow shelter where they had for five days lain.

The Jacksons were too weak to stand, but Dick was just able to keep on his feet. A cup of milk mixed with some brandy was given to each. Then Dick in a few words told the story, and the surprise of all, as they examined the little hut and heard the details of the almost miraculous preservation of the boys, was almost unbounded.

They were now wrapped in blankets and laid on mattresses placed on the hurdles; the contents of the baskets—for others besides Mr. Humphreys had brought a stock of provisions, not knowing how long the search-party might be engaged—were distributed among the workers, and then four men lifted each hurdle and the party started for home, a messenger having been sent back at full speed directly the boys were got out, to bear the glad news to Castleton.

It was just midnight when the main body returned. A second cup of brandy and milk had done much to revive the two elder boys, and Dick had been able to eat a piece of bread. James, however, had fallen asleep directly he was wrapped in the blankets, and did not awake until he was set down at his father's door.

At both houses doctors were in waiting for their arrival. Dick was at once pronounced to be none the worse for his adventure, except that his feet were frost-bitten from long contact with the snow; indeed had it not been from this cause he could, on the

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following day, have been up and about. As it was, in a fortnight, he was perfectly himself again.

Tom Jackson was confined to the house for many weeks; he lost several of his toes, but eventually became strong and hearty again. James, however, never recovered—the shock to his system had been too great; he lingered on for some months, and then sank quietly and painlessly.

The events of the snow-storm left a far deeper trace upon Mrs. Humphreys than upon her son. The terrible anxiety of those five days had told greatly upon her, and after they were over she seemed to lose strength rapidly. She had never been very strong, and a hacking cough now constantly shook her. The doctor who attended her looked serious, and one day said to Mr. Humphreys,—

"I don't like the state of your wife; she has always been weak in her lungs, and I fear that the anxiety she went through has somehow accentuated her former tendency to consumption. The air of this place—you see she was born in the south—is too keen for her. If I were you I would take her up to London and consult some first-rate man in lung diseases, and get his opinion."

The next day Mr. Humphreys started for London. The celebrated physician examined his wife, and afterwards took him aside.

"I cannot conceal from you," he said, "that your wife's lungs are very seriously affected, although consumption has not yet thoroughly set in. If she remains

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in this country she may not live many months; your only hope is to take her abroad—could you do that?"

"Yes, sir," Mr. Humphreys said. "I can take her anywhere. Where would you advise?"

"She would benefit from a residence either in Egypt or Madeira," the doctor said; "but for a permanency I should say the Cape. I have known many complete cures made there. You tell me that you are engaged in agricultural pursuits; if it is possible for you to settle there, I can give you every hope of saving her life, as the disease is not yet developed. If you go, don't stay in the lowlands, but get up into the high plateaus, either behind the Cape itself, or behind Natal. The climate there is delicious, and land cheap."

Mr. Humphreys thanked him and left, returning the next day to Castleton. The astonishment of the boys, and indeed of Mrs. Humphreys, was unbounded, when the farmer announced in the evening at supper that he intended to sell his land and emigrate at once to the Cape.

The boys were full of excitement at the new and strange idea, and asked numerous questions, none of which the farmer could answer; but he brought out a pile of books, which he had purchased in town, concerning the colonies and their resources, and for once Dick's aversion to books vanished, and he was soon as much absorbed as his brother in the perusal of the accounts of the new land to which they were to go.

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On the following Saturday, to the surprise of all Castleton, an advertisement appeared in the Derbyshire paper announcing the sale by auction at an early date of Mr. Humphreys' farm.

Dick and John were quite heroes among their companions, who looked with envy at boys who were going to live in a land where lions and elephants and all sorts of wild beasts abounded, to say nothing of warlike natives.

"There always seem to be Kaffir wars going on," one boy said, "out at the Cape; you will have all sorts of excitement, Dick."

"I don't think that sort of excitement will be nice," Dick replied; "it must be horribly anxious work to think every time you go out to work that the place may be attacked and every one killed before you get back. But that is all nonsense, you know; I have been reading about some of the Kaffir wars; they are in the bush-country, down by the sea. We are going up on to the high lands at the back of Natal. Father says very likely we may buy a farm in the Transvaal, but mother does not seem to like the accounts of the Dutchmen or Boers, as they are called, who live there, and says she would rather have English neighbours; so I expect if we can get a farm somewhere in the Natal colony, we shall do so."

"You seem to know all about the place," the boy said, surprised.

"Well, we have had seven or eight books to read about it, and I seem now to know more about South

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Africa than about any other country in the world. There are the diamond-fields, too, out there, and I hope, before I settle down regularly to a farm, that father will let me go for a few months and try my luck there. Would it not just be jolly to find a diamond as big as a pigeon's egg and worth about twenty thousand pounds?"

"And do they do that?" the boy asked.

"Well, they don't often find them as big as that; still, one might be the lucky one."

The news that Mr. Humphreys and his family were about to sell off and emigrate naturally caused a great deal of talk in and around Castleton, and put the idea into the minds of many who had never before seriously thought of it. If Mr. Humphreys, who had one of the best farms in the neighbourhood, thought that it would pay him to sell his land and go out, it would surely be a good thing for others to do the same. He was considered to be a good farmer and a long-headed man; one who would not take such a step without carefully looking into the matter—for Mr. Humphreys, in order to avoid questioning and the constant inquiries about his wife's health, which would be made, did he announce that he was leaving for that reason, did not think it necessary to inform people that it was in the hopes of staving off the danger which threatened her that he was making a move.

A great many of the neighbouring labourers would gladly have gone with him; but he found by

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his reading that Kaffir labour was to be obtained out there very cheaply. He determined, however, to take with him two of his own hands; the one a strong active young fellow named Bill Harrison, the other a middle-aged man named Johnson, who had been with him from a boy. He was a married man with two girls, aged fifteen and sixteen, the eldest of whom was already employed by Mrs. Humphreys in the house. Johnson's wife was a superior woman of her class, and Mr. Humphreys thought that it would be pleasant for his wife, having a woman at hand, whom she could speak to. The girls were to act as servants—indeed Mr. Humphreys thought it probable that the whole party would live under one roof.

Among those whom Mr. Humphreys' decision to emigrate had much moved was Mr. Jackson. He was not in so good a position, as he did not farm his own land; but he had sufficient capital to start him well in the colony, where a farm can be bought outright at a few shillings an acre. He talked the matter over with his friend on several occasions, and at last said,—

"Well, I think I have pretty well made up my mind; the doctor is telling me that my poor little chap is not likely to live long; his mother is wrapped up in him, and will never like the place again;—so I think on all grounds a change will be good. I can't come out with you, because I have got a lease of the farm; but I fancy that it is worth more than it

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was when I took it, and if I can get a good tenant to take it off my hands I don't suppose the landlord will make any objections. I shall look about at once, and, when my poor little chap is gone, I shan't be long before I come after you. You will let me know how you find the place, and whether these book-accounts are true?—I have heard that many of these chaps who write books are awful liars. I should like to get a farm as near you as may be."

It was early in the spring when Mr. Humphreys and his party embarked at Plymouth in the *Dunster Castle*. The farm had sold well, and Mr. Humphreys possessed a capital of several thousand pounds—a sum which would make him a rich man in the colony. None of the party had ever seen the sea before, and the delight of the two boys and the wonderment of the labourers at all they saw was very great. Mr. Humphreys had taken first-class passages for himself and family, while the others of course were steerage passengers.

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CHAPTER III.

THE FARM.

THE voyage to the Cape passed without any incident whatever. The weather was fine the whole distance. Without even a single storm to break the monotony they touched at Capetown and Port Elizabeth, and at last arrived at Durban. The journey had not been too long for the boys; everything was so perfectly new to them that they were never tired of watching the sea and looking for porpoises and the shoals of fish, over which hovered thousands of birds.

Once or twice they saw a whale spout, while flying-fish were matters of hourly occurrence. They had prodigious appetites, and greatly enjoyed the food, which was altogether different to that to which they had been accustomed. They had stopped at Madeira and St. Vincent, where great stocks of delicious fruit had been taken on board. Altogether they were quite sorry when they arrived at the end of the voyage.

The landing was effected in large boats, as the *Dunster Castle* drew too much water to cross the bar at the mouth of the harbour.

They stopped only one day at Durban, where Mr. Humphreys hired a waggon to take the party to

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Pieter-Maritzburg, the capital. He was not encumbered with baggage, as he had decided to buy everything he wanted in the colony.

"You may pay dearer," he said, "no doubt; but then you get just what you want. If I were to take out implements, they might not be suited to the requirements of the country. As for clothes, they would of course be pretty much the same everywhere; still, it is better to take out only a year's requirements and to buy as we want, instead of lumbering over the country with a quantity of heavy baggage."

The party were greatly amused at their first experience of a Cape waggon; it was of very large size, massively built, and covered with a great tilt; and it was drawn by sixteen oxen, spanned two by two. This was an altogether unnecessary number for the weight which had to be carried, but the waggon had come down loaded from the interior, and Mr. Humphreys therefore paid no more than he would have done for a waggon with a small number of oxen. They took two days to accomplish the journey, the women sleeping at night in the waggon, and Mr. Humphreys and his sons in blankets on the ground.

The driver, who was an Englishman, had been many years in the colony, and from him, upon the road, Mr. Humphreys gained much valuable information about the country. The driver was assisted by two Kaffirs, one of whom walked ahead of the leading cattle, the other alongside, shouting and prodding them.

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The boys were astonished at the power and accuracy with which the driver whirled his whip; this had a short handle and a lash of twenty yards long, and with it he was able to hit any animal of the team with absolute certainty, and indeed to make the thong alight on any part of their bodies at which he aimed.

On their arrival at Pieter-Maritzburg Mr. Humphreys hired a house, and here he placed his party while he set to work to make inquiries after a suitable location. He soon heard of several places which seemed suitable, and having bought a horse started for Newcastle, a small town situated close to the frontier-line between the Transvaal and Natal.

He was away for three weeks, and on his return informed his wife that he had purchased a farm of 2000 acres, with a substantial farmhouse, at a distance of ten miles from Newcastle, for the sum of 1500*l.*

The farmhouse was already roughly furnished, but Mr. Humphreys purchased a number of other articles, which would make it comfortable and home-like. He laid in a great stock of groceries, and then hiring a waggon, similar to that in which they had before travelled, started with his party for the farm, having also hired four Kaffirs to assist there. Travelling by easy stages, it took them twelve days to get to Newcastle. The country was undulating and the road rose steadily the whole distance.

Near Pieter-Maritzburg the population was com-

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paratively thick. The fields were well cultivated and the vegetation thick and luxuriant, but as they ascended the character of the country changed. Vast stretches of rolling grass everywhere met the eye. This was now beautifully green, for it was winter. In the summer and autumn the grass becomes dry and burnt up; fire is then applied to it, and the whole country assumes a black mantle. But the first shower of rain brings up the young grass and in a very short time the country is covered with fresh verdure.

Mr. Humphreys told his wife that, before fixing on the farm, he had ridden into the Transvaal, and found that land could be purchased there even more cheaply than in Natal; but that he had much conversation with English settlers on the frontier, and these had for the most part strongly advised him to settle inside the Natal frontier.

"It may be that all will be right," one had told him, "but the Boers have not yet recovered from their scare from Secoceni."

"Who is Secoceni, father?" Dick asked. "The books we have say nothing about him."

"No," Mr. Humphreys said; "they were all published a few years since, and none of them treat much of the affairs of the Transvaal, which, as an independent state, had comparatively little interest to English settlers. There are in the Transvaal, which is of immense extent, a very large number of natives, enormously outnumbering the Boers. In the southern districts, where the Boers are strongest, they

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cruelly ill-treat the natives, making slaves of them, and thinking no more of shooting one of them down than they would of shooting a dog. In the outlying provinces they live almost on sufferance of the natives, and, were these to unite their forces and rise, they could annihilate the Dutch. Secoceni is a powerful chief, who lives with his tribe in a natural stronghold; he has always held himself as independent of the Dutch. As his men used to make raids upon the Boers' cattle, the latter attacked him, and in alliance with Swazis, another powerful tribe, endeavoured to carry his fortress; they were, however, badly beaten; it being only by the gallantry of their native allies that the Boer contingent was saved from destruction. Secoceni then took the offensive. A perfect panic seized the Boers; they refused to obey the orders of their government, and to turn out to resist the invaders. The treasury was empty, for their government had never been enabled to persuade them to pay taxes. They applied for aid to Natal, but finally their plight was so bad that they were glad to accept the offer which Mr. Shepstone made them, of annexation to England, by which they secured our protection and were safe from annihilation. Secoceni was not the only enemy who threatened them. They had a still more formidable foe in the Zulus on the eastern frontier. These are a very warlike people, and it was known that their king meditated the conquest of the Transvaal. But, glad enough as the Boers were at the moment to accept the protection of England, now

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that the danger is over a great many of them would like to kick down the bridge which has helped them over the stream. They make no secret of their dislike to Englishmen, and although they are glad enough to sell their land at prices immensely in advance of the former value, for indeed land was previously almost unsaleable in the Transvaal, they are on bad terms with them. One of my informants describes them as a sullen, sulky people, and predicts that sooner or later we shall have trouble with them ; so I thought it better altogether to pay a little higher for my land, and to be within the boundaries of this colony."

On arriving at the farm Mrs. Humphreys was glad to find that the house, though rough, was substantial. It was built of stone. The walls were of great thickness, as the stones were laid without mortar, with which, however, it was faced inside and out. One large room occupied the greater portion of the ground floor ; beside this was a small sitting-room. Upstairs were four bedrooms. For the time the small room downstairs was turned into a bedroom, which Mr. and Mrs. Humphreys occupied. The four bedrooms upstairs just held the rest of the party. The out-houses consisted only of a large barn and a rough stable.

Mr. Humphreys at once rode over to Newcastle, and obtained the services of a mason and six Kaffirs, and proceeded to add a wing to the farmhouse. This was for the use of Johnson and his wife, and Harrison. The whole party were, however, to take

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their meals together in the great kitchen. A hut was also built for the Kaffirs, and another large stable was erected.

A few days after his arrival Mr. Humphreys went across the border into the Transvaal, taking Harrison and two of the Kaffirs with him, and returned a fortnight later with a herd of 400 cattle, which he had purchased. He also bought three yoke of oxen, broken to the plough. Hitherto the farm had been purely a pastoral one, but Mr. Humphreys at once began to break up some land for wheat and Indian corn. The Kaffirs were set to work to fence and dig up a plot round the house for vegetables, and to dig holes near it, over a space of some acres, for the reception of 3000 young fruit-trees—apples, pears, peaches, and plums,—which he had bought at Pieter-Maritzburg, and which were to come up in two months' time. He also bought six riding-horses.

In a few weeks the farm assumed quite a different appearance. A gang of Kaffirs, ten strong, had been hired to hurry on the work of preparing the orchard and erecting a fence round it. Wood was, Mr. Humphreys found, extremely scarce and dear, the country being absolutely bare of trees, and wood for fuel was only obtained in kloofs or deep hollows, and had to be fetched long distances.

"I suppose," Mrs. Humphreys said to her husband one evening, "you mean to make cattle-raising your principal point?"

"No," he said; "every one raises cattle, and the

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Dutch can do it cheaper than we can; they have immense tracts of land, and their Kaffir labour costs them next to nothing. I do not say that we could not live and to a certain extent thrive on cattle, but I think that there is something much better to be done. Wood is an awful price here, and all that is used has to be brought up from the coast. I think therefore of planting trees. The climate is magnificent, and their growth will be rapid. They will of course require fencing to keep out the cattle, but I shall do that, as I am doing the orchard, with wire fencing and light iron-uprights. Labour is plentiful, and there are large nurseries near Pieter-Maritzburg, where I can procure any number of young trees; so I mean to plant 200 acres a year—in ten years the whole farm will be planted, and the loppings for poles and fire-wood will in a very short time after planting begin to pay well. In fifteen years the first 200 acres will be fit to fell, and the property will be worth a very large sum of money. Of course we can sell out before that if we like. But at the present price of wood up here, or even should it fall to a quarter of its present price, the value of the 2000 acres of wood will in twenty years be extremely large."

The boys were delighted with their new life. Mr. Humphreys had, before leaving England, bought for Dick a Winchester repeating-rifle. These arms are very light, and Dick was able to carry his without difficulty; and very shortly after their arrival his father had a mark erected at a distance from the

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house, at which he could practise with safety. Game was abundant all over the country. Herds of deer and antelope of various kinds often swept past in sight of the farmhouse, and winged game also abounded.

Mr. Humphreys had at home been considered a first-rate shot at partridges, and had for four or five years belonged to the Castleton volunteers, and had carried off many prizes for rifle-shooting. He was now able, by going out for a few hours once or twice a week, to keep the larder well supplied, and the little flock of fifty sheep, which he had bought for home-consumption, was but seldom drawn upon. The Kaffirs were fed upon mealies, as they call Indian corn, of which Mr. Humphreys had no difficulty in purchasing sufficient for his wants from the neighbouring farmers.

His next neighbours were two brothers, Scotchmen, named Fraser, who lived at a distance of four miles. They rode over the day after the travellers' arrival, and offered their services in any way. Mr. Humphreys, however, was well supplied with stores of all kinds, and his two white labourers, being both handy men, were able to do all that was required about the house.

The Frasers proved pleasant neighbours, and often rode over and spent Sunday with the Humphreys, and the boys sometimes went over and spent the day with them.

A Kaffir lad, son of one of the men engaged upon

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the farm, was hired by Mr. Humphreys as a special attendant for Dick. On these vast undulating plains, where there are no trees to serve as a landmark, it is exceedingly difficult for a stranger to find his way. Dick was told by his father that, whether riding or walking, he was always to take the Kaffir boy with him; and except when he was indulging in a gallop the lad was easily able to keep up with him. He had been born a hunter, and soon taught Dick how to stalk the timid deer, and, as the lad improved in his shooting, he was ere long enabled to keep the larder supplied—a duty which Mr. Humphreys gladly handed over to him, as every minute of his own time was occupied by his work on the farm.

Of an evening after supper, which was partaken of at the conclusion of work, the men retired to their own wing and Mrs. Humphreys and the two girls sat down to their sewing by the fire; for upon the uplands the evenings are quite cold enough to find a fire a comfort in winter. Then the boys would take out their lesson-books and work steadily for three hours. Under the changed conditions of their life, Mr. Humphreys felt that Dick might, if he chose, well discontinue his study of the classics, and his work therefore consisted in the reading of history, travels, and books of scientific knowledge.

"Next to being a learned man," his father said to him, "the best and most useful thing is to be a thoroughly well-informed man on all general subjects."

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John, however, continued his studies as before ; his life of outdoor exercise strengthened and improved him, and he no longer wished to be always sitting with a book in his hand—still, he had a natural love of study, which his father encouraged, deeming it possible that as he grew up he might be unwilling to embrace the life of a colonist, in which case he determined to send him home to finish his education in England, and afterwards to start him in any profession he might select.

Finding that the cost of carriage up the country was very high, and as he would yearly require many waggon-loads of young trees and fencing Mr. Humphreys determined to do his own teaming ; he therefore bought two of the large country-waggons and set a Kaffir to work to break in some young steers to the yoke.

Six months after their arrival in the colony they had for the first time visitors to stay at the farm—Mr. Jackson, his wife, his son Tom, and two daughters coming out to settle near them. This was a great delight to the boys, and fortunately Mr. Jackson was able to buy a farm of 500 acres adjoining that of his friend ; the house, however, was but a cabin, and while a fresh one was being erected the family remained guests of the Humphreys. Mr. Jackson had, at his friend's advice, brought with him from England a labourer with his wife and family, who at once took up their residence in the hut on the farm.

To Dick the coming of the Jacksons was a source of special pleasure. Tom was just his own age, and

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the two boys had become inseparable friends at home after their adventure in the snow, upon which occasion Tom, as he freely owned, had owed his life to Dick's energy and promptness of suggestion. Dick was fond of his brother, but three years make a great difference at this period of life, and, as their tastes were wholly dissimilar, John had never been a companion for him. Since their arrival in South Africa they had got on very well together; still, they had not the same ideas or subjects of thought, and it was an immense delight to Dick to have his old friend and companion with him.

It must not be supposed that Dick's time was occupied solely in amusement; from early morning until dinner-time he worked steadily. Sometimes he assisted to erect the hurdles and strain the wires of the fencing; at others he aided in the planting of the fruit-trees; then he would be with the Kaffirs who were breaking in the oxen for the waggons. At all times he took off his coat and worked with the rest, for, as his father said,—

"If a farmer is to be able properly to look after men at work, he must be able to do the work himself."

While Dick was at work with the men, John, who was too young to be of any use, remained indoors at his books, and, although of an afternoon he would stroll out, he seldom went far from the house. The other boys generally went for long rides when work was done. One day they sighted a herd of steinbock. Leaving their horses with the Kaffir lad in a hollow,

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they crept round so as to get the deer between them and the wind, and managed to reach unobserved a brow within a hundred yards of the herd. Dick had by this time become a good shot, and the buck at which he aimed fell dead in its tracks. Tom was not much of a shot, but he had fired into the thick of the deer and gave a shout of delight at seeing one of them fall. The rest of the herd dashed off at full speed. Tom ran, shouting, forward, but to his mortification the stag that he had hit rose again to its feet and went off at a trot in the direction taken by the others; a minute later the Kaffir boy was seen running towards them at his full speed, leading the horses.

The two boys on his arrival leapt into their saddles and started in pursuit of the wounded stag, which was still in sight, thinking at first they could easily ride it down. But the animal seemed rather to gain than to lose strength, and, although they had considerably lessened the start he had obtained of them, he still kept steadily on. Active and wiry as their horses were, they could not overtake it, and the boys had at last the mortification of seeing that the stag was now gaining upon them, and they presently drew rein, and their panting horses came to a standstill.

"What a horrid sell!" Tom Jackson exclaimed angrily. "I can't understand his going like that after I fairly brought him down."

"I expect," Dick said, "that your bullet can only have grazed his skull; it stunned him for the moment, but after he had once come to himself he went on as

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briskly as usual. If he had been hard hit we should certainly have ridden him down."

"Well, I suppose," Tom said more goodhumouredly, "there is nothing for it but to ride back."

"But which is our road?" Dick said in some dismay. "I am sure I have no idea, and now that the sun is gone in there is nothing to steer by."

While they had been riding, the day had changed; the sky, which had for weeks been bright and fine, was now overcast with heavy clouds.

"We are in for a storm, I think," Dick went on, "and it is coming on fast. I have not an idea which way to go, and I think our best plan will be to halt. Joel will track us, and the farther we go the longer he will be in overtaking us. There is the first drop! The best thing to do, Tom, will be to take off our saddles and tether our horses, and then to wait. This storm is a nuisance; in the first place we shall be drenched, in the second it will wash out our tracks, and the darkness will come so quickly that I am afraid Joel will not be able to trace us. You see we do not know whether we have been riding straight or not; the stag may have been running in a circle for anything we know, and as we have been riding for something like two hours, we may be within five miles of home or we may be five and twenty."

Scarcely had the boys got the saddles off and tethered their horses when the rain came down in a sheet, accompanied by the most tremendous thunder and the most vivid lightning Tom had ever seen.

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"This is awful, Dick," he said.

"Yes," Dick agreed; "thunderstorms here are frightful. Houses are often struck; but, lying down here in the open, there is not much fear."

For hours the storm continued unabated; the rain came down in a perfect deluge. The boys had put their saddles together and had covered these with the horse-cloths so as to form a sort of tent, but they were nevertheless soaked to the skin, and, to add to their discomfiture, the horses had been so frightened by the blinding glare of the lightning that they tugged at the ropes until, as the wet penetrated the ground, the pegs became loosened, and they scoured away into the darkness.

After continuing for five hours the rain suddenly ceased.

"What are we to do in the morning, Dick?"

"If it is fine it will be easy enough; we shall put our saddles on our heads and walk eastward. I have got a little pocket-compass which father gave me in case I should at any time get lost, so we shall have no difficulty in keeping our way, and sooner or later we must strike the road running north to Newcastle."

They did not, however, wait till morning; so wet and chilled were they, that they agreed they would rather walk than lie still. Accordingly they put the saddles on their heads as soon as the rain ceased and the stars shone out, struck a light and looked at their compass, fixed on a star to steer by, and then set out on their journey.

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Fortunately, after two hours' walking, they struck the road at a point some ten miles from the farm, and were home soon after daybreak, just as their fathers were about to set out with a body of Kaffirs in search of them. Joel had returned late at night, having turned his face homeward when it became too dark to follow the track; the horses had both come in during the night.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

As soon as the Jacksons' house was finished, they went into residence there; but two or three times a week Dick and Tom managed to meet, one or other being sure to find some excuse for riding over.

The Humphreys had arrived in Natal at the end of April, 1877, and by November in the following year their farm presented a very different appearance to that which it had worn on their arrival—sixteen months of energetic labour, carried on by a considerable number of hands, will effect wonders. Possessing ample capital Mr. Humphreys was able to keep a strong gang of Kaffirs at work, and for some time had thirty men upon the farm. Thus the house which, when he took it, stood solitary and lone in a bare plain, was now surrounded by 200 acres of young trees. Of these, twenty acres were fruit-trees; the remainder, trees grown for their wood. These were planted thickly, as they would every year be thinned out, and the young poles would fetch a good sum for fencing. Although they had only been planted a few months, they were already green and bright; they were protected from the cattle by a wire fence encircling the whole.

The cattle had thriven and were doing well, and a large field of Indian corn had been harvested for the

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use of the Kaffirs. The cattle had nearly doubled in numbers, as Mr. Humphreys did not care about selling at present. The expenses of living were slight. Meat, fowls, and eggs were raised upon the farm, and the guns of Mr. Humphreys and Dick provided them with a plentiful supply of game. Four milch cows were kept in a paddock near the house, and supplied it with milk, butter, and cheese. Groceries and flour had alone to be purchased, and, as Mr. Humphreys said, he did not care if he did not sell a head of cattle for the next ten years ; but he would be obliged to do so before long, as the farm would carry but a small number more than he already possessed, and its available extent for that purpose would diminish every year, as the planting went on.

Mr. Humphreys was fortunate in having a small stream run through his farm. He erected a dam across a hollow, so that in winter a pond of two or three acres in extent, and fifteen or sixteen feet deep, was formed, affording an ample supply for the summer ; this was of great utility to him, as he was thereby enabled to continue his planting operations, filling up each hole with water when the trees were put in, and then, as this subsided, filling in the earth ; by this means the young trees got a good start, and seldom required watering afterwards. He had a large water-cart built for him ; this was drawn by four oxen, and brought the water to the point where the Kaffirs were engaged in planting.

Steers sufficient for two waggons had been broken

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in, and when these were not employed in bringing up young trees and fencing from Newcastle they worked upon the road between Newcastle and Pieter-Maritzburg, there being a great demand for conveyance, as numbers of traders were going up into the Transvaal and opening stores there. Mr. Jackson had also two waggons engaged in the same work. When trees and goods were wanted for the farm, Dick went down with the waggons to see that these were properly loaded, and that the young trees, which were often in leaf, were taken out every night and set with the roots in water until the morning.

One evening, early in October, Mr. Jackson rode over with Tom.

"I have heard," the former said to Mr. Humphreys, "that the government have determined on moving the troops down to the Zulu frontier; the attitude of Cetewayo is very threatening."

"He is a troublesome neighbour," Mr. Humphreys said. "They say that he has 30,000 fighting-men, and in that case he ought to be able to overrun both Natal and the Transvaal, for there is no doubt that Zulus fight with great bravery. As for the Dutch, I really can't blame the Zulus. The Boers are always encroaching on their territory, and any remonstrance is answered by a rifle-shot. Had it not been for our annexation of the Transvaal, Cetewayo would have overrun it and exterminated the Dutch before now. We have a strong force in the colony just at present, and I think Sir Bartle Frere means to bring matters

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to a crisis. The existence of such an army of warlike savages on the frontier is a standing threat to the very existence of the colony, and the constitution of the army renders it almost a necessity that it should fight. All the men are soldiers, and as none are allowed to marry until the regiment to which they belong has distinguished itself in battle they are naturally always burning for war. The Pieter-Maritzburg paper says that it understands that Sir Bartle Frere is about to send in an ultimatum, demanding—in addition to various small matters, such as the punishing of raiders across the frontier—the entire abandonment of the present system of the Zulu army, and cessation of the bloody massacres which constantly take place in that country. If a man offends the king, not only is he put to death, but the whole of the people of his village are often massacred. Altogether an abominable state of things prevails; there seems to be but one opinion throughout the colony, that it is absolutely necessary for our safety that the Zulu organization shall be broken up."

"I see," Mr. Jackson said, "that there is an advertisement in the papers for waggons for the transport of stores, and the price offered is excellent. A large number are required; I was thinking of sending down my two teams—what do you think?"

"I have been turning it over in my mind," Mr. Humphreys replied, "and I am inclined also to offer

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my waggons. The rate of pay is, as you say, high, and they certainly will have a difficulty in obtaining the number they require. I shall not have need for mine for home purposes for a considerable time now. The hot weather will soon be setting in, and planting is over for the season. I shall of course go on digging holes for my next batch, but I shall not want them up until after the end of the hot season. So I think, as I can spare them, I shall hire them to government. I think we ought all to do what we can to aid it at present, for every one agrees as to the necessity of the steps it is now taking."

"And do you think that there will be any fighting, father?" Dick asked eagerly.

"That no one can say, my boy. The Zulus are a proud as well as a brave people, and believe that they are invincible. I hardly think that they will consent to break up their army and abandon their customs at our dictation; I should not be surprised if it comes to fighting."

"Oh, father, if you hire the waggons to government, may I go with them? I can see that the Kaffirs look after the oxen, you know, and that everything goes straight. I have picked up a little Kaffir from Joel, and can manage to make them understand."

"Well, Dick," Mr. Humphreys said, after a little thought, "I don't know that I have any objection to it; it will be a change for you, and of course there will be no chance of the waggons being near if any fighting

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goes on. What do you think, Jackson? I suppose your boy will want to go if mine does?"

"Well, I don't mind," Mr. Jackson answered. "I suppose it will not be for long, for the boy is useful on the farm now. However, as you say, it will be a change, and boys like a little excitement. Well, I suppose I must say yes; they are fifteen now, and old enough to keep out of mischief."

The boys were delighted at the prospect of the expedition, and at once went out to talk matters over together. They cordially agreed in the hope that the Zulus would fight, and promised themselves that if possible they would see something of it. Their fathers would, they thought, allow them to take their horses, and it would be easy, if the waggons were left behind, to ride forward with the troops, and see what went on.

Two days later the four teams started together for Pieter-Maritzburg. Contrary to their expectations the boys were not allowed to take their horses.

"No, no, Dick," Mr. Humphreys had said, when his son asked him, "no horses, if you please; I know what you will be up to. Galloping about to see what is going on, and getting into all sorts of mischief and scrapes. No, if you go, you go with the waggons, to see that everything goes straight, to translate orders to the Kaffirs, and to learn something of waggon-driving across a rough country. For between this place and Pieter-Maritzburg it is such a fair road that you really learn nothing in that way; once get into a cross

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country, and you will see how they get waggons down steep kloofs, across streams, and over rough places. No, you and Tom will stick to the waggons. I have been fixing a number of rings to-day underneath one of them, and your mother and the women have been at work, making a sort of curtain to hook on all round; so at night you will have a comfortable place to sleep in, for the waggons will likely enough be so filled with cases and stores that there will be no sleeping in them. You can take the double-barrel as well as your Winchester, as of an evening you may be able to get a shot sometimes at game, which will vary your rations a bit. You must take with you a stock of tinned meats from Pieter-Maritzburg, for I do not suppose they will issue regular rations to you. So long as you are this side of the Tugela, you will be able to buy food; but if the troops cross into Zululand, you may have to depend on what you carry."

Tom with his two waggons arrived at daybreak, and the four teams set off together, Mrs. Humphreys —who had now completely lost her cough and was quite strong and well—laying many injunctions upon Dick against exposing himself to any danger, and Dick promising to be as careful as possible.

Upon their arrival at Pieter-Maritzburg the boys went at once to the government transport-yard, and on stating their errand were shown into the office of the officer in charge.

"We have brought down four teams of sixteen oxen

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each," Dick said, "from near Newcastle, to be hired to the government."

"That is right, my lads," the officer said, "we have room for plenty more. This is the form of contract. You engage to serve the government by the month; you bear any damages which may take place from wear and tear of the roads, breakdowns, and the other ordinary accidents of travel; the government engages to make good any loss or damage which may occur from the action of the enemy. This is not," he said, smiling, "likely to take place, but still those are the terms. Have you any authority from your fathers, to whom, I suppose, the teams belong, to sign the contracts for them?"

"Yes, sir," Dick said. "Here is a paper from my father, and one from Tom Jackson's father, saying that they agree to be bound by the terms of the contract, and that they authorize us to sign in their names. We are going with the waggons, sir, to look after the Kaffirs."

"Well," the officer said, "you can do as you like about that; but if you speak Kaffir it will be useful—only, mind, you will have to provision yourselves. From the day the teams are taken up, rations of mealies will be served to the Kaffirs at the various halting-places, but there is no provision for rations of white men. The cattle, too, will be fed, but you will have to see to yourselves."

"Yes, sir; we expected to do so."

"Well, you had better fetch the teams up to the

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yard. I must inspect and pass them before they are taken up. Bring them round at once; then they will be loaded to-night, and start at daybreak to-morrow."

The teams were brought round to the yard, and immediately passed by the officer, who indeed remarked upon the excellence of the animals. The Kaffirs were directed to outspan or unyoke the oxen, for whom rations of hay and grain were at once issued.

The boys returned to the town and made their purchases, which were carried down by two Kaffirs and stored in the waggons, which were already in process of being loaded—two with boxes of ammunition, the others with miscellaneous stores for the troops. They slept at an hotel, and next morning at daybreak presented themselves at the yard. The Kaffirs were already harnessing up the oxen, and in a quarter of an hour the four waggons, with sixteen others, started for the Tugela.

It was now the middle of December. Early in the month commissioners had been sent to Cetewayo with the terms decided upon by Sir Bartle Frere. The first clauses of the document contained the settlement of the disputed frontier, and fines were fixed to be paid by the chiefs whose men had committed forays across the borders; it then went on to demand that the whole of Cetewayo's army should at once be disbanded; freedom of marriage was to be allowed, when the parties thereto were of age; justice

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was to be impartially administered; missionaries to be allowed to reside in the Zulu country; British residents to be appointed; all disputes between Zulus and Europeans to be referred to the king and resident; and no expulsion from Zulu territory was to be carried into effect without the distinct approval of the resident.

It was intimated to the king that unless these terms were accepted by the 11th of January the army would at once invade the country. Few men expected that the Zulu king would tamely submit to conditions which would deprive him of all the military power in which he delighted, and would reduce him to a state of something like dependency upon the British.

During the month of December General Thesiger, who commanded the British forces in South Africa, made every effort to prepare for hostilities. The regiments which were at the Cape were brought round by sea; a brigade of seamen and marines was landed from the ships of war; several corps of irregular horse were raised among the colonists; and regiments of natives were enrolled. Before the date by which the king was to send in his answer the troops were assembled along the frontier in the following disposition:—

No. 1 Column.

(*Headquarters, Thring's Post, Lower Tugela.*)

Commandant.—Col. C. K. Pearson, the Buffs.

Naval Brigade.—170 bluejackets and marines of

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H.M.S. *Active* (with one Gatling and two 7-pounder guns), under Captain Campbell, R.N.

Royal Artillery.—Two 7-pounder guns and rocket-battery, under Lieut. W. N. Lloyd, R.A.

Infantry.—2nd battalion, 3rd Buffs, under Lieut. Col. H. Parnell.

Mounted Infantry.—100 men under Capt. Barrow, 19th Hussars.

Volunteers.—Durban Rifles, Natal Hussars, Stanger Rifles, Victoria Rifles, Alexandra Rifles. Average, forty men per corps—all mounted.

Native Contingent.—1000 men under Major Graves, the Buffs.

No. 2 Column.

(*Headquarters, Helpmakaar, near Rorke's Drift.*)

Commandant.—Col. Glyn, 1st battalion, 24th Regiment.

Royal Artillery.—N. battery, 5th brigade, Royal Artillery (with 7-pounder guns), under Major A. Harness, R.A.

Infantry.—Seven companies 1st battalion, 24th Regiment, and 2nd battalion, 24th Regiment, under Lieut.-Col. Degacher.

Natal Mounted Police.—Commanded by Major Dartnell.

Volunteers.—Natal Carabineers, Buffalo Border Guard, Newcastle Mounted Rifles—all mounted; average, forty men.

Native Contingent.—1000 men, under Commandant Lonsdale, late 74th Highlanders.

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No. 3 Column.

(*Headquarters, Utrecht.*)

Commandant.—Col. Evelyn Wood, V.C., C.B., 40th Regiment.

Royal Artillery.—11th battery, 7th brigade, R.A. (with four 7-pounder guns), under Major E. Tremlett, R.A.

Infantry.—1st battalion 13th Regiment, and 90th Regiment.

Mounted Infantry.—100 men, under Major J. C. Russell, 12th Lancers.

Frontier Light Horse.—200 strong, under Major Redvers Buller, C.B., 60th Rifles.

Volunteers.—The Kaffrarian Vanguard, Commandant Schermbuicker, 100 strong.

Native Contingent.—The Swazis, our native allies, some 5000 strong.

In the first fortnight of their engagement the waggons travelled backward and forward between Pieter-Maritzburg and Grey Town, which for the time formed the base for the column of Colonel Glyn. The distance of the town from the capital was forty-five miles, and as the waggons travelled at the rate of fifteen miles a day, they were twelve days in accomplishing two double journeys. When they were loaded up the third time, they received orders to go straight through to the headquarters of the column at Helpmakaar. The boys were pleased at the change, for the road as far as Grey Town was a good one.

They reached Grey Town for the third time on the

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2nd of January. Here they found the place in a state of great excitement, a mounted messenger having arrived that morning with the news that Cetewayo had refused all demands and that large bodies of the Zulus were marching towards the frontier to oppose the various columns collecting there.

On arriving at the government-yard the lads received orders at once to unload the waggons and to take on the stores of the 2nd battalion of the 24th, which was to march from Grey Town the next morning. The start was delayed until the afternoon, as sufficient waggons had not arrived to take on their baggage. The road was rough, and it was late in the afternoon before they arrived at the Mooin River.

The weather had set in wet, the river was in flood, and the oxen had immense difficulty in getting the waggons across. Two teams had to be attached to each waggon, and even then it was as much as they could do to get across, for the water was so high that it nearly took them off their feet.

The troops were taken over in punts, and, after crossing, a halt was made for the night.

After seeing the cattle outspanned and attended to, the boys wandered away among the troops, as they were to start at daybreak, and it was long past dark before all were over. The tents were not pitched, and the troops bivouacked in the open. Brushwood was collected from the rough ground around, and blazing fires were soon burning merrily. It was all new and very amusing to the boys. The troops were in high

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spirits at the prospect of an early brush with the enemy, and songs were sung around the fires until the bugle rang out the order, "Lights out," when the men wrapped themselves in their blankets and lay down, and the boys retired to their snug shelter under the waggons, where their Kaffirs had as usual laid piles of brushwood to serve as their beds.

The next morning they were off early, and reached the Tugela after five hours' march. This river does not here form the frontier between Zululand and Natal, this being marked by the Buffalo—a much larger and more important stream—from the point where this falls into the Tugela, some fifteen miles below the spot where they crossed the latter river, which here runs towards the southwest.

Two more days' marching took the column to Helpmakaar. The weather was wet and misty, and the troops now marched in close order, with flankers thrown out, for the road ran parallel with the Buffalo, about five miles distant, and it was thought possible that the Zulus might cross the river and commence hostilities. A cordon of sentinels had, however, been placed all along the river from Rorke's Drift down to the point of junction of the Buffalo and Tugela; below the stream was so wide that there was no fear of the Zulus effecting a crossing.

Most of the troops which had been stationed at Helpmakaar had already marched up to Rorke's Drift, and after staying two days at Helpmakaar the 2nd battalion of the 24th marched

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to that place, where the 1st battalion of the same regiment were already encamped.

Two days later the remainder of the force destined to act under Colonel Glyn had assembled at Rorke's Drift—the term "drift" meaning a ford across a river.

This column was the strongest of those which had been formed for the simultaneous invasion of Zululand, and General Thesiger was himself upon the spot to accompany it. Many of the waggons which had brought up stores were sent back to Grey Town for further supplies; but those of the boys, being laden with the spare ammunition and baggage of a portion of the 24th, were to accompany the column in its advance.

The last two days of the term granted to Cetewayo to accede to our terms were full of excitement; it had been reported, indeed, that the king was determined upon resistance, but it was thought probable that he might yield at the last moment, and the road leading down to the drift on the other side of the river was anxiously watched.

As the hours went on and no messenger was seen approaching, the spirits of the troops rose, for there is nothing that soldiers hate so much as, after enduring the fatigues preparatory to the opening of a campaign, the long marches, the wet nights, and other privations and hardships, for the enemy to yield without a blow. Men who had been in the campaigns of Abyssinia and Ashanti told their comrades how on

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both occasions the same uncertainty had prevailed as to the intentions of the enemy up to the last moment; and the fact that in both campaigns the enemy had at the last moment resolved to fight, was hailed as a sort of presage that a similar determination would be arrived at by the Zulu king.

To the boys these days passed very pleasantly; they had nothing to do but to wander about the camp and watch the proceedings. There was a parade of the two native regiments before the general, who was much pleased with their appearance, and who exhorted them on no account to kill women, children, or prisoners.

Among these native regiments were curiously many Zulus; for great numbers of this people had at various times been obliged to take refuge in Natal, to avoid the destruction threatened them by their despotic king, and these were now eager to fight against their late monarch.

Some of the bodies of volunteer horse were very smart and soldier-like in their appearance. They were for the most part composed of young farmers, and Dick and Tom bitterly regretted that they had not been a few years older, in which case, instead of looking after a lot of bulls, as Dick contemptuously said, they might have been riding in the ranks of the volunteers.

By the regulars the two days were spent in cleaning their arms and accoutrements, whose burnish and cleanliness had suffered much in the

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long wet march, and from the bivouacs on the damp ground.

After marching from Grey Town with the 24th the boys had been placed regularly on the roll of the army, as conductors, and, although they drew no pay, had now the advantage of receiving rations as white men. They had upon the line of march frequently chatted with the young officers of the regiment, who, finding that they were the sons of well-to-do farmers and were cheery, high-spirited lads, took to them very much, and invited them of an evening to join them round the camp-fire.

The last day came, and still no messenger arrived from Cetewayo, and in the evening orders were issued that the column should at daybreak pass the drift and advance into the enemy's country. The troops laid down that night in high spirits, little dreaming of the disaster which was to befall them in the campaign which they thought of so lightly.

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CHAPTER V.

ISANDULA.

AT two o'clock on the morning of the 11th of January the bugle sounded the reveillé, and the troops prepared to cross the Buffalo. Tents were struck, baggage piled on the waggons, and the regiments stood to arms at half-past four. The native contingent crossed first. The cavalry brigade under Lieut.-Col. Russell placed their ammunition on a pontoon and rode over. The river was in some places up to the necks of the infantry, and even the cavalry were nearly swept away. The first and second battalions of the 24th crossed on the pontoons. The third regiment of the native contingent threw out skirmishers, but could find no trace of the enemy.

A heavy storm had come on at daybreak, but this left off at nine o'clock. Lieut.-Col. Buller, commanding the Frontier Light Horse, now rode in from the camp of Colonel Wood's force, which had crossed the Blood River and had encamped in Zululand at a spot about thirty-two miles distant. Lord Chelmsford rode over there with an escort of the Natal Mounted Police and the Natal Carabineers, who on their return captured three hundred head of cattle, several horses, and a number of sheep and goats. During the day the waggons,

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oxen, and ambulances were brought across the river on the platoon.

Early next morning the 1st battalion of the 1st Native Regiment, four companies of the 1st battalion of the 24th, and 300 of the irregular horse started on a reconnaissance towards the kraal of Sirayo, the chief whose sons had been the greatest offenders in the raids into Natal. The cavalry were thrown out in skirmishing order, and after marching nine miles they descended into the slope of the valley in which Sirayo's kraals were situated. The enemy were heard singing their war-songs in one of the ravines, and the 3rd Native Regiment advanced against them with the 24th in reserve. The Zulus opened fire as they approached, and so heavy was this that many of our natives turned and ran ; they were rallied, however, and with a rush carried the caves in which the Zulus were lurking.

In the meantime the 24th's men had moved round to the head of the ravine, and cut off the enemy's retreat. There was a skirmish between the cavalry and some mounted Zulus, and six of these, including a son of Sirayo, were killed. Thirty horses and 400 head of cattle were captured.

The next day was spent in cleaning up arms and accoutrements, after the heavy rain which had fallen the preceding week, and several days were spent in making the roads passable for the waggons.

On the 20th the force moved forward, leaving one company of the 2nd battalion of the 24th, under

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Lieutenant Bromhead, with some engineers and a few natives to guard the ford and look after the platoons, and garrison the store and hospital. The column camped at Isandula, or, as it is more properly called, Isandwhlana, ten miles distant from Rorke's Drift. A portion of the road was extremely rough, and the waggons had the greatest difficulty in making their way forward.

The spot selected for a camping-ground was a wide flat valley, with hills on the left and undulating ground on the right; almost in the centre rose an isolated hill, perpendicular on three sides, and very steep and difficult on the fourth. The camp was pitched in front of this hill, looking down the valley, with a mile of open country between it and the hills on the left.

The camp was formed in the following order: on the left were the two battalions of the 3rd Native Regiment; the Royal Artillery were in the centre; next to these was the 2nd battalion of the 24th. The line was then taken up by the cavalry, with the 1st battalion of the 24th on the right of the whole. The waggons were all placed between the camp and the hill at the back.

By a strange and criminal neglect no attempt was made to intrench this position, although it was known that the column might at any moment be attacked by the Zulus.

It was determined that the greater part of the force should advance the next morning towards a stronghold, ten miles distant from the camp, straight

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down the valley. News had come that a large number of Zulus were at this spot, and it was supposed that these would fight. The column consisted of eight companies of each of the battalions of the 3rd Native Regiment, with the greater part of the cavalry.

The force started early and marched for three hours down the valley. Here they came on much cultivated ground, but the kraals had been deserted by the enemy. At four o'clock, as the cavalry were skirmishing at a distance on both flanks, they came upon a body of Zulus about 2000 strong. The horse fell back upon the infantry, but, as it was now late, Major Dartnell decided to encamp for the night, and to attack in the morning. A messenger was despatched into camp with a report of the day's proceedings, and some provisions and blankets were sent out, with news that the general would join the troops with reinforcements in the morning.

At daybreak he left the camp at Isandula with seven companies of the 2nd battalion of the 24th, and orders were sent to Colonel Durnford, at Rorke's Drift, to bring up 200 mounted men and his rocket-battery, which had reached that spot.

The Zulus were seen in all directions, and a good deal of skirmishing took place. By a gross neglect, equal to that which was manifested in the omission to fortify the camp, no steps whatever were taken to keep up communication between the column, which now consisted of the greater part of the troops, and those who remained at the camp at Isandula. No

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signallers were placed on the hills, no mounted videttes were posted, and the column marched on, absorbed in its own skirmishes with the enemy, as if the general in command had forgotten the very existence of the force at Isandula. Even in the middle of the day, when the firing of cannon told that the camp was attacked, no steps were taken to ascertain whether reinforcements were needed there, and it was not until hours after all was over that a party was despatched to ascertain what had taken place at the camp.

Upon the day on which the two native regiments advanced, the two boys felt the time hang heavy on their hands; they would have liked to take their guns and go out to shoot some game for their dinners, but all shooting had been strictly forbidden, as the sound of a gun might cause a false alarm. After hanging about the camp for an hour or two, Dick proposed that they should climb the hill which rose so steeply behind them.

"If the columns have any fighting," he said, "we should be sure to see it from the top."

Borrowing a telescope from one of the officers of the volunteer cavalry, they skirted round to the back of the hill, and there began their climb. It was very steep, but after some hard work they reached the summit, and then crossed to the front and sat down in a comfortable niche in the rock, whence they could command a view far down the valley. They could see the two battalions of infantry marching steadily along, and the cavalry moving among the hills and undulations on both flanks. They had taken some biscuits and a

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bottle of beer up with them, and spent the whole day on the look-out. The view which they gained was a very extensive one, as the hill was far higher than those on either side, and in many places they could see small bodies of the enemy moving about. At sunset they descended.

"I vote we go up again," Tom said the next morning. "The general has gone forward with most of the white troops, and there is sure to be fighting to-day. We shall have nothing to do, and may as well go up there as anywhere else."

After the general's departure there remained in camp five companies of the 1st battalion of the 24th, and one of the 2nd battalion, two field-pieces with their artillery-men, and some mounted men.

Just as the boys were starting at eight in the morning, there was a report in the camp that the Zulus were gathering in force to the north of the camp. This quickened the boys' movements and half an hour later they gained the top of the hill, and from their old position looked down upon the camp lying many hundred feet below them. There was considerable bustle going on, and the Kaffir drivers were hastily collecting the cattle which were grazing round, and were driving them into camp.

"There is going to be a fight!" Dick exclaimed, as they gained their look-out; "there are crowds of Zulus out there on the plains."

Could the boys have looked over the hills a mile away to their right, they would have seen that the

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number of Zulus down in the valley in front was but a small proportion of those gathering for the attack; for 15,000 men had moved up during the night, and were lying quietly behind those hills, 3000 or 4000 more were taking the road to Rorke's Drift, to cut off any who might escape from the camp, while as many more were showing down the valley. Altogether some 24,000 of the enemy had gathered round the little body in the camp. To the boys, however, only the party down the valley was visible.

At eleven o'clock Colonel Durnford came into camp with his 350 mounted men from Rorke's Drift, and advanced with them to meet the enemy threatening the left flank, while two companies of the 1st battalion of the 24th moved out to attack their right. The Zulus, now reinforced from behind the hills, moved forward steadily, and Colonel Durnford with his cavalry could do little to arrest them. For an hour the infantry stood their ground, and the two field-pieces swept lines through the thick ranks of the enemy. The Zulus advanced in the form of a great crescent.

"Things look very bad, Dick," Tom said; "what do you think we had better do?"

"I think we had better stay where we are, Tom, and wait and see what occurs; we have a splendid view of the fight, and if our fellows meet them we shall see it all; but if—oh, look there, Tom!"

Over the hills on the left thousands of Zulus were seen pouring down.

"This is terrible, Tom. Look here, I will crawl

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Others, again, when they found that their retreat was cut off, had gathered in groups and were fighting desperately.

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along over the crest, so as not to be seen, and look behind to see if it is clear there. If it is, I vote we make a bolt. It is of no use our thinking of going down for a couple of horses; the Zulus will be in the camp long before we could get there."

Five minutes later he again joined his friend.

"They are coming up behind too, Tom. They have really surrounded us. Look, they are close to the camp!"

It was a scene of frightful confusion. Nothing could be seen of the companies of the 24th, which had gone out to meet the Zulus. The great wave of the advancing army had swept over them. Below, the panic was complete and terrible, and soldiers, native drivers, and camp-followers were running wildly in all directions.

One party of the 24th's men, about sixty strong, had gathered together and stood like a little island. The incessant fire of their rifles covered them with white smoke, while a dense mass of Zulus pressed upon them. Many of the soldiers were flying for their lives; others again, when they found that their retreat was cut off, had gathered in groups and were fighting desperately to the last. Here and there mounted men strove to cut their way through the Zulus, while numbers of fugitives could be seen making for the river, hotly pursued by crowds of the enemy, who speared them as they ran.

"It is frightful, frightful, Tom! I cannot bear to look at it."

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For a few minutes the fight continued. The crack of the rifles was heard less frequently now. The exulting yell of the Zulus rose louder and louder. On the right Colonel Durnford with his cavalry essayed to make one last stand to check the pursuit of the Zulus and give time for the fugitives to escape; but it was in vain, showers of assegais fell among them, and the Zulu crowd surged round.

For a time the boys thought all were lost, but a few horsemen cut their way through the crowd and rode for the river. The artillery had long before ceased to fire, and the gunners lay speared by the cannons. The first shot had been fired at half-past eleven, by one o'clock all was over. The last white man had fallen, and the Zulus swarmed like a vast body of ants over the camp in search of plunder.

Horror-stricken and sick, the boys shrank back against the rock behind them, and for some time sobbed bitterly over the dreadful massacre which had taken place before their eyes. But after a time they began to talk more quietly.

"Will they come up here, do you think, Dick?"

"No, I don't think so," Dick replied. "They could hardly have seen us come up here, even if they had been on the look-out on the hills, and as they reached the back of the mountain before the camp was taken, they will know that nobody could have come up afterwards. Lie back here; we cannot possibly be seen from below. They will be too much taken up with plundering

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the camp to think of searching this hill. What on earth is the general doing?—I can see his troops right away on the plain. Surely he must have heard the guns? Our only hope now is that when he hears it he will march straight back; but, even if he does, I fear that the Zulus will be too strong for him. The whole force which he has with him is no stronger than that which has been crushed here, and I don't expect the native regiments can make much stand if attacked by such a tremendously strong force."

So long as the daylight lasted, the boys, peering occasionally over, could see the Zulus at the work of plundering. All the sacks and barrels were taken from the waggons and cut or broken open, each man taking as much as he could carry of the tea, sugar, flour, and other necessaries; many of the yoke-oxen were assegaied at once, and cut up and eaten, the rest being driven off towards the north by a party of warriors.

At nightfall the tents were set on fire; they soon burnt out, and the boys could no longer see what was taking place. Rising from the shelter, they walked back to the other side of the crest.

"I can hear firing now," Dick said; "it seems to me that it is back at Rorke's Drift."

They were soon sure that they were not mistaken; as it grew darker a flittering light was seen in that direction, and a continued fire of distant musketry was heard. Later on there was a broad glare in the sky.

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