

Arab Slave Camp

Quilimane

Portuguese East Africa

Arab Slave

Zambezi River

Fort Salisbury

Fort Charter

Fort Victoria

The Zumbur's Ruins

South African Republic

Mashonaland

Matabeland

Bulawayo

Fort Tuli

Victoria Falls

Bamanangwato land

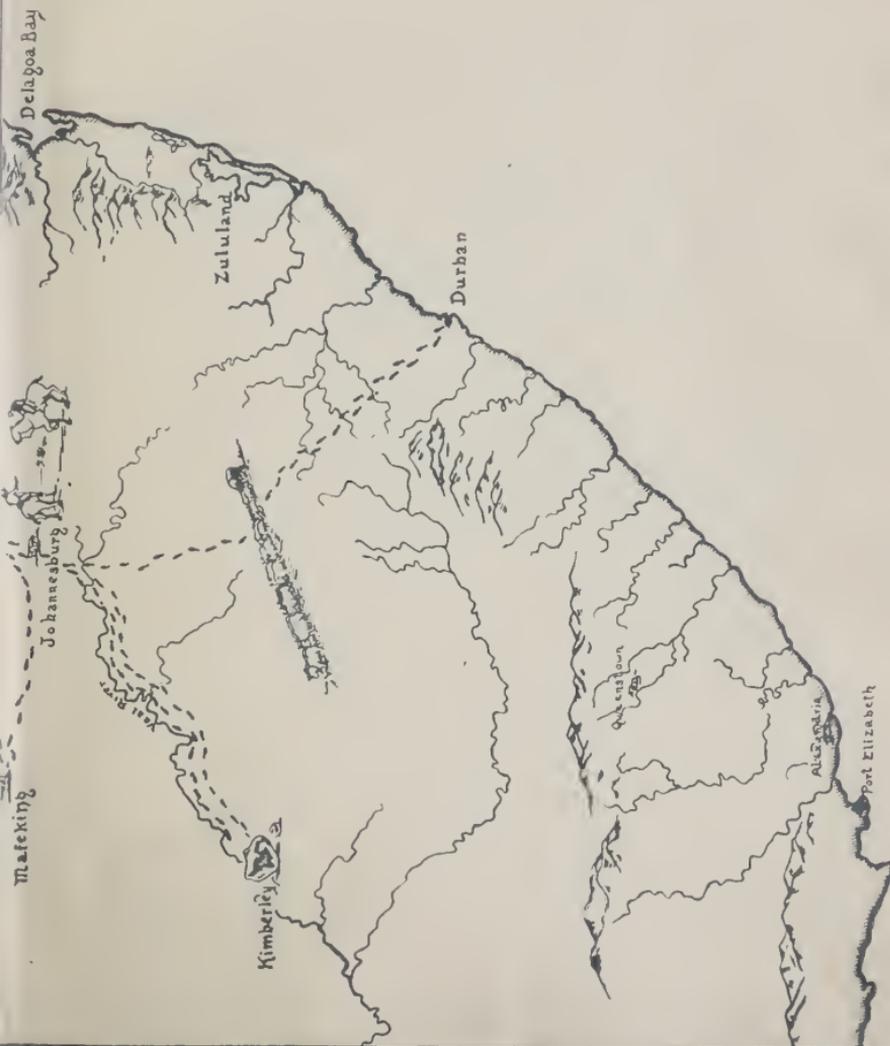
Bechuanaland

Limpopo River

# BLACK FRONTIERS

The Route of Cecil Rhodes' Mounted Police and Sam Kemp during their exploratory and military trip through

the South African Republic, Bechuanaland, Mashonaland, Matabeleland, Bamangwato land, and to the Indian Ocean through Portuguese East Africa. - 1889-1892





BLACK FRONTIERS

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THE AUTHOR

*Fr.*

# BLACK FRONTIERS

PIONEER ADVENTURES WITH CECIL RHODES'  
MOUNTED POLICE IN AFRICA

*By*  
SAM KEMP

ILLUSTRATED



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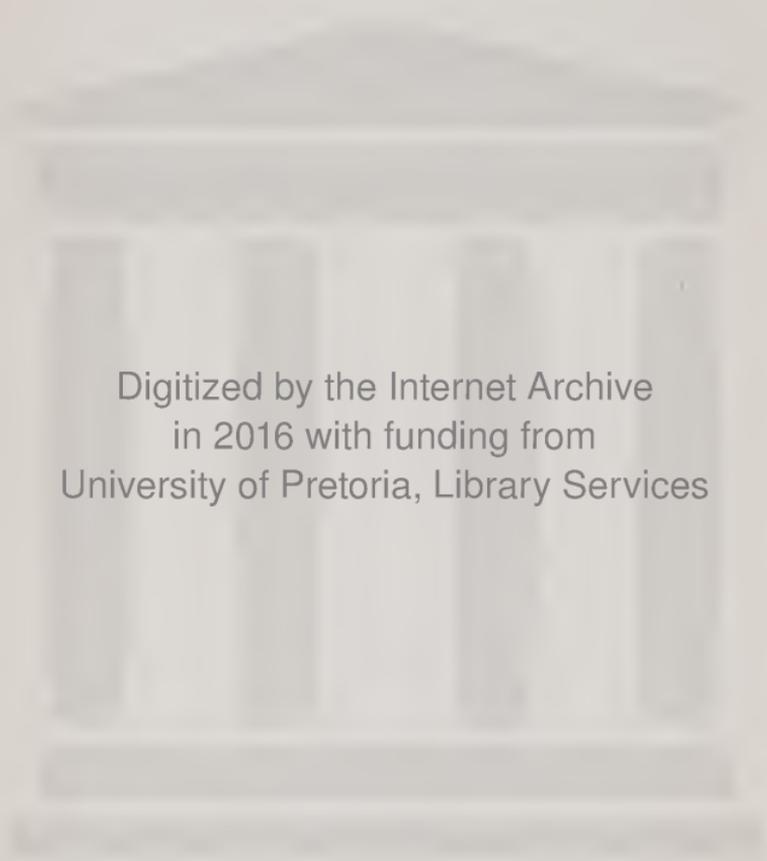
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# BLACK FRONTIERS

## *Chapter I*

### THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

THAT gold-rush to Johannesburg in the summer of 1886 was probably the wildest, toughest human stampede the world has ever seen, and Fate, in the form of knives wielded by maddened Kafirs, threw me into the maelstrom of it.

A year earlier I had left a quiet home in Central England, where I had grown up normally with my guns and dogs. High adventure and great wealth called to me from the Colonies. I was certain of success—just as certain as all other seventeen-year-old English lads of that period to whom the possessions of Empire were lands of magic.

A tall, awkward, comparatively innocent boy when I sailed on the rat-infested *Moor*—she sank with all hands a little later—I became a rather case-hardened man within the next two years. The six-thousand-mile voyage to Durban, Natal, began my education; my teachers were the gamblers, adventurers, and loosely principled women who largely made up the passenger list of the rotten old *Moor*. I suppose I felt my boyhood slipping behind me, and regretted it, for to this day I remember that the fifth night out, after days of severe seasickness, I stood at the stern of the *Moor* and strove to visualize my English home,

## BLACK FRONTIERS

far across the black waters. In the cabin behind me were hilarious women, noisy gambling, the rough-and-tumble of drunkenness. If I wept a little because of the ache at my heart it was the last time I ever privileged myself. My skin was beginning to thicken.

The long trek from the end of the rail at Ladysmith over the Drakensberg Mountains by ox-cart to Pretoria furthered my education. Several times during that journey we hung out over space; at other times we crashed into rock walls; once we overturned completely and slid twenty feet down a cliff before a ledge caught the crude covered wagon and held us precariously. But those troubles were the look-out of the driver—a red-bearded Boer named Jan. Neither Jack Coombs, my companion in misery, nor I dreamed of suggesting that Jan go easier on the 'dop,' or Cape brandy, and the Square-face gin of which he had a plentiful supply, inside and out.

One incident of that trek was of importance to me, for it created a mild degree of fame which was to get me into trouble later. At a large camp just outside Ladysmith I entered a shooting contest. Jan, the driver, urged me into it. He had seen me handle firearms; he posted the entry fee—a bottle of dop—and furnished me a gun. The targets were empty bottles hanging from a tree; to shatter them required a dead centre hit, otherwise they would spin, unbroken.

By a combination of luck and experience I won



NATIVES AND OVERSEERS AT THE DISTILLERY AT PRETORIA, 1885



## THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

from two dozen contestants, including Boer marksmen of some fame. My reputation was begun by the Boers, who swore at the *verdammed roinek*, but who treated me to everything they owned. Often after that I was to hear myself introduced as the lad who "shot the Boers dizzy outside Ladysmith," and a year later, during the reign of terror in Johannesburg, I was made deputy to the Marshal merely because I could crack swinging bottles at fifty paces. Incidentally, after another ten years I was requested to shoot the daylight out of the notorious Dalton boys, who were terrorizing America's western frontier—a job I side-stepped, despite several brushes with the Daltons. Shooting to shatter gin-bottles and shooting to kill men are two different games. I have played both, but the latter always unwillingly.

After the Boer shooting match Jan took possession of the prize—ten gallons of dop—and our journey became more uncertain, smash-ups to be expected.

Some way we crashed through to Pretoria, after almost freezing to death in our carefully selected tropical garb as we crossed the mountains.

Near Pretoria I took my college degree, became Master of Rough-and-tumble. By luck I caught on with Sammy Marks, a square-shooting little Jew who had been given the liquor monopoly for the entire Transvaal in return for some financial assistance to the Government. Starting at the rectifying still in the distillery, I worked almost one year for Sammy.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

All the time I was broadening physically just as I was toughening mentally. At nineteen I was six feet two in height and weighed one hundred and seventy pounds. My reputation for marksmanship had increased; my self-reliance was greater; rightly or wrongly, I was considered handy with my fists and a quick thinker in a brawl. This combination earned for me the toughest job in the distillery.

‘Night nigger-herding’—that was what the pleasant occupation was called. The work consisted of patrolling the long, low native compound and keeping five hundred blacks in order, despite Kafir beer, antagonistic religions, blood feuds, or what have you. With the brashness of youth I told Sammy Marks I’d take the job; with sad experience behind me, I left it a few months later.

Night after night I walked back and forth in the centre aisle between those ebony logs which were apt to leap into drunken fight at any moment. Knobkerrie as long as a baseball bat in one hand, revolver in the other, I beat and bullied the natives into some semblance of behaviour for almost six months. Then one midnight all hell broke loose.

“*Chia, chia, chia umakulu!*”

The battle-cry of the Zulus rose from scores of black throats as I raced to the door of the compound.

Inside was a scene taken intact from Hades. The only light was from the burning embers of the fires, which had been kicked around and scattered, filling the place with heavy, low-hanging smoke. Dust

## THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

rose from the scuffling of many feet, and through the murky atmosphere I could see a seething, surging mass of black bodies, twisting and writhing and leaping. Knives flashed, clubs cut bat-like arcs.

I yelled. I roared. I demanded peace at any price. My words, of course, were futile, and with a momentary regret—"this is a hell of a way to die"—I moved into the fray with my knobkerrie. As I advanced the fighting surged backward toward the far end of the building. Around the rear door was a cyclone of bodies, waving arms, and flashing knives. Obviously some of the combatants were trying to escape, and I moved to help them.

The old knobkerrie was flailing rapidly now and I was yelling myself hoarse. Apparently I had reached a high state of hysterical intoxication, for I didn't know until afterward that I was wounded. Two knife-slashes bared my ribs, another ripped my face, one stab almost reached my lungs, and my knee-cap was split cleanly open. Come to think about it, maybe that was the reason I was roaring so.

By this time the alarm-bell had aroused the white overseers and labourers, and out they poured, half dressed, with revolvers and clubs. They didn't hesitate to use their weapons, shooting down the natives by rote and system. Probably that was the only way to control the uprising; after a number of the blacks toppled the remainder suddenly decided that the fight was over.

Thirty-two natives were killed in this fracas and

## BLACK FRONTIERS

three times as many were badly wounded. I was carried to bed. Sammy Marks came to see me.

"It's the damn' Zulus," he said. "We heard to-day that Zululand has declared war on the Swazis and Basutos. Their first gesture was to try to wipe out all the opposing tribes in the distillery. Would have done it too if you hadn't held them off. Kemp, when you come back I'll raise your wages."

"I'm not coming back," I hastened to inform him.

"I'll give you a better job, eh?"

But I'd had enough of the distillery. My education there had reached its limits; surely fabulous Africa offered more to a young man than a job cracking the woolly heads of natives with a knobkerrie.

I went into Pretoria; I'll confess to a spree, made up one part of liquor, which I had resolutely denied myself at the distillery, but two parts of horseplay and sheer animal spirits after the days in bed. Riding wild oxen whose skins seem to slide up and down the bodies for feet while the carcasses remain still—a queer sensation, because you never know whether you're over the rump or against the horns; clattering into saloons on horseback; shooting bottles behind the bar, lanterns in the darkness, or buzzards with equal verve; wrestling for half a crown; playing the American game of poker which had just been introduced; flirting with Boer maidens who sat stolidly in Papa's covered wagon—these were the occupations of days.

## THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

One noon, careening up the main street of Pretoria on a wild steer, I was neatly tossed on my head. When I regained consciousness I was on Oom Paul Kruger's *stoep*, and old Oom Paul himself was forcing brandy between my teeth. Good Oom Paul, with his face like a moon haloed in hirsute, stolid, massive, perpetually unwashed! Tears of mirth were still on his cheeks, but his tiny blue eyes were sympathetic, and he patted me on the back encouragingly when I rose uncertainly to my feet.

Two days later he ordered the town gaoler to free me after another harmless, or comparatively harmless, brawl. When I went to thank him he explained:

“You were too funny when you made the high dive from the steer. I have never laughed so much. You pleased me; now I please you.”

Perhaps it was this humanness, plus utmost honesty and love for all his people, which so endeared Uncle Paul to his race. Twice later in my life I met and talked to the great Boer; both times he harped on the same subject: his mistrust of and hatred for Cecil Rhodes, whom I considered my benefactor and friend as well as the greatest man in Africa.

The carousing days in Pretoria, hastily sketched here, were soon over. A wild rumour swept through the quaint old settlement. Free gold! Free gold in Johannesburg, only thirty-six miles away; and the stampede began.

Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief—emphasis

## BLACK FRONTIERS

on the thief—raced across the veld to Witwatersrand, or ‘ridge of white waters,’ as Johannesburg was then called. On horseback, afoot, in buckboards, and by stage the mob travelled. Plodding oxen were lashed mercilessly; human bodies were driven just as fiercely. Scores of men attempted to traipse the two hundred and fifty miles from Kimberley; others trekked the weary miles from Cape Town and the Barberton goldfields. Many who started never gained their goal, for the country was rigorous and demanded its toll. Those who reached the Rand apparently were the rougher, more reckless, ones, for Johannesburg during the next year was probably the toughest place in the world.

Since that dust-dry, blowing autumn when the human stampede to Johannesburg surged forward in full, frantic speed I have known the New Mexico-Arizona frontier in its palmiest days of villainry; I served too with the Canadian North-west Mounted Police in the early nineties, when the country we patrolled was considered no convention headquarters for angels. Yet those two hard American frontiers were picnic-grounds for a Sunday school, kindergarten class, compared to the Rand during the year following 1886. My training, my life, has not been one to lead me into narrow views of morality, but Johannesburg seemed a trifle indigestible even to my vitrified stomach.

Scenes in that quaint old town of Pretoria after the cry of “Gold!” were probably similar to those of all the settlements of South Africa. The two



THE DISTILLERY AT PRETORIA, 1885



## THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

main squares of the town—one occupied by the Dutch Reformed Church and the other largely by saloons—became seething centres of excitement. The church square, ordinarily surrounded by buck-boards and single-footers, was a loading-point for stages and hastily acquired outfits; the saloon square became the actual point of departure, where men imbibed liquid courage and strength for the dash across the veld.

Men couldn't start for the goldfields rapidly enough. Every horse obtainable was purchased or stolen; stages were crowded to the boot; heavy-wheeled transports drawn by oxen were chartered. These, however, proved too slow, and during that dash I saw many men pile from the wagons and hurry on afoot. I saw, too, a human team in action. An old paralytic in Pretoria, unable to buy horses for the trip, hired two native blacks and hitched them to a buck-board. Out across the veld they went, trotting at a heartbreaking speed.

Among the men who took part in that first great rush of Johannesburg almost every nationality was represented. American adventurers were there by the score, toughened men who brought the training, experiences, and vices of the American gold-rushes with them. Tall, raw-boned Colonials abounded, and there were many English lads like myself, who were rapidly becoming case-hardened, a few French and Germans, a smattering of Orientals. Blacks, of course, were everywhere, all shades and hues of blacks.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

The Boers alone held aloof. Very few of them joined the rush, for they feared for their lives. There was a sworn enmity between them and the *roineks*, or 'red-necks,' as they called all foreigners, and in any settlement made up of English and Americans the Boers had little chance. The open season on Boers, to all effects, lasted the year round. Perhaps if that sturdy, slow-moving, stalwart race had joined the stampede the boom town of Johannesburg would not have become so murderous, so steeped in toughness.

Was it only a wild rumour the racing men were chasing, or was there really a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow? Johannesburg? Men wondered and asked. Wide-eyed, they seized each new rumour and magnified it, until all were certain that the greatest treasure of the world was just ahead of them.

The gold was there. Eastward of the spot where the town mushroomed into existence was an outcropping, a reef of greyish rock. In the sand around it and extending yards on both sides was gold, plenty of gold. It was 'free'—unalloyed with any other mineral. Dust and nuggets were panned out by the handful. Already the precious yellow metal was being carried around in pouches made of animal bladders and weighed out like so much tea.

Obviously the first problem was to stake out a claim along the reef. That was easy enough, but a far more difficult task was holding that claim against all comers. Somewhere in the seething

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settlement a mining commissioner was supposed to be located, but no one seemed to know who he was or where he kept himself hidden. The result was a grand jamboree, a free-for-all. Gun-play started very soon; it grew wilder during the days which followed.

## *Chapter II*

### HELL'S HALF-MILE

JOHANNESBURG was never intended to compete with the Garden of Eden. Situated on the dividing-line between the high veld and low veld, it was barren, treeless, desolate. For six months of the year the wind blew constantly, day and night. Such a wind! Dry, penetrating, it grated nerves and rasped tempers which were uneasy at best. Great yellow clouds of dust inflamed the eyes, caked the face, tasted grittily in every bite of food.

The shacks were no protection. They had sprung up overnight along the single straggling main street. One day the dusty veld, the next an anthill of wild-eyed wild men throwing together shelters. No wood was available, and kerosene-tins and tin cans were the building materials. Porous, flapping noisily, filthy, the resultant huts were no fit habitations for men; yet the worst of them rented for a hundred dollars a month, and there were not half enough to satisfy the demand. Those who could not get shacks lived in tents and dug-outs, and many had to sleep out on the wind-blown veld.

Other prices were sky-high. There was little food in the settlement, for all of it had to be hauled from Kimberley or Ladysmith, more than two hundred miles of rough going. To make matters worse, a prolonged drought had destroyed all food

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

for oxen and scarcely a wagon was on the road. Those few which came through were generally gorged with liquor and red-eyed men, of whom we already had plenty in the settlement.

Meat, generally easy to secure in that vast reservoir of cattle and wild game, became scarce. Stock was dying from starvation, and the vultures and hyenas alone seemed happy. The carrion birds gorged themselves so heavily that they could be knocked over with a stick. Ever tried vulture stew? Don't! To add to the pretty picture, rinderpest was epidemic, wiping out great herds of cattle.

The result of these circumstances was that food was almost worth its weight in gold. My diary shows that I paid the equivalent of four pounds ten for a sack of mealies, or corn. Poor cabbage cost seven shillings apiece, butter nine shillings a pound. Meanwhile more men, more liquor, and less grub poured into the feverish settlement. Ox-teams plodded along the single straggling main street; mud-caked horses raced back and forth, steaming and frothing; the perpetually open bars—at least twenty of them—debouched swearing, yelling, fighting men.

Blankets became scarce. After all, one needed blankets in which to keep one's personal allotment of sand-fleas, cockroaches, snakes, jiggers, and 'seam squirrels,' or lice. But try to buy one! It was much easier to steal one, even when it was wrapped around the victim.

Law and order? None, of course. Or, rather,

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the law of the gun and fist, the order of might and trickery. Accidents, the first murders were called. After all, an empty blanket or an empty shack was worth securing. The little cemetery on the hill behind the town had many new bunkers in it, but for every funeral there were a hundred newcomers.

Thus far there wasn't a single woman in the settlement, but soon they began to arrive, adding the mercurial emotions which such women always bring to the furore of a raw town. Steamboat Nell was the first to appear, with a nondescript bunch of twelve women and girls from the Barberton gold-fields.

Steamboat Nell was to become a prominent figure in that seething settlement. She was a large, florid woman, so tightly corseted during business hours that she could scarcely breathe, but much given to lolling about in the mornings in a brilliant wrapper. Black of hair, black-eyed, she was an Amazon when aroused. She could shoot well with either hand, a trick greatly admired in the town; she was afraid of neither man nor the devil, and I have seen her throw out bodily some drunken roisterer who disturbed the so-called dignity of her business house. Of business acumen she had a sufficiency: witness the fact that she had brought into that treeless town enough lumber and canvas to erect a huge structure at the end of the main street, the largest and most pretentious building in Johannesburg. Two days after work on it started she was reigning like a queen, and tough characters generally were angling for her favour.

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

The girls she brought with her were more remarkable for their silk stockings and short, spangled dresses than for any great beauty. They had experienced the raw life of the Barberton goldfields, and were able to take care of themselves. Only one of them seemed at all helpless, and she, strangely enough, became the admiration of Johannesburg. Her charm was never analysed, for she was a pale, yellow-haired, peaked little thing. Perhaps it was her eyes which captivated men. They were wistful, lonely eyes, and by some irony of masculine sentiment that girl, tough as tough, became, well, not a sainted lady, but at least a lady to be protected from drunken brawlers, a lady to be treated with proper respect and deference.

As news of the gold-strike at Johannesburg spread other women piled into the town, other establishments were set up, featuring girls from Kimberley, Natal, and even Cape Town. But Steamboat Nell and her little blonde lady maintained first rank in the place.

Arguments over the various women were as common as those over disputed claims. Arguments ended with gun-play; gun-play ended in funerals. Sometimes it seemed that the shooting was started out of pure deviltry. Heated by liquor, it only took the wink of an eye to start a fight. Unless a person had been in one or more fracas he was considered worthless; the more shooting indulged in, the more a man was respected, and, of course, the less was his chance of a happy old age.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

Panning for gold-dust, shaking the old 'rocker,' was an easy enough way to make a rich living. All that was needed was a shovel, a pick, and a pan on a rocking device over which water was poured. Occasionally sledge-hammers were brought into play on the greyish rock, but it was much easier to wash the sand and garner from it the gold, which varied in size from the minutest speck to nuggets almost as big as a hickory-nut.

Free gold! Every one apparently had plenty, and it seemed almost burdensome at times. The rapacious maws of the bars, dancing-halls, and gambling-dens could not swallow it rapidly enough. I've had gold sovereigns thrown across the street at me to attract my attention, and I have left them lying in the dust. I have seen men pour a little heap of gold-dust on the bar, dust for which they had laboured for hours, and blow it into the bartender's face as payment for a single drink.

Easy as gold was to obtain with the pick and shovel, there were still easier ways. No gold-mine was as good as the leading saloon, no claim as rich as the main gambling-den. And of course the easiest way of all to get the gold-dust was—hop in and take it from some other fellow. Get him drunk first, or get him in an argument. No one cared what happened to him. The man who kept his hands near his guns during the day became maudlin drunk at night and easy prey. The staccatic crack of a revolver sounded, and white smoke was swirled away on the wind.

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

Crime became too prevalent in Johannesburg. It seemed to the more respectable—or more timid—citizens that murder was a little too easy, claim-jumping too common, and ordinary thievery too certain in profits. These righteous ones proposed that a Marshal be hired and a judge and Public Prosecutor selected—in other words, a suicide club should be formed. During the next two weeks candidates were considered, interviewed, urged with all forms of flattery and promises of support. This was late in 1886.

Lispy Jones took the job of Marshal at last. He had no other name than Lispy as far as I ever knew. A tall, blue-eyed Englishman of about forty-five, woefully meek in appearance, and with a childish lisp in his voice, he seemed at first sight an impossible candidate. But Lispy's exterior belied the stuff of which he was made. He was as hard as a black walnut. Good old Lispy! He didn't last very long, but he was good while he lasted.

Some brave fellow agreed to serve as judge, undoubtedly realizing that he would not become a rival of Methuselah in longevity. The Public Prosecutor job was urged upon the chief of the complainers, and law and order had come to Johannesburg.

Nothing changed. Disappointment succeeded disappointment. When two hard characters came together one or the other was obliterated. Two or three murderers and as many claim-jumpers were brought to trial. No one was ever convicted.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

Every criminal had a group of friends who would lie themselves black in the face, or, if necessary, make things extremely disagreeable for the judge, prosecutor, and the jury. The jurymen knew this; they knew, too, that there was still plenty of room in the hillside cemetery. The result was that it was almost impossible to obtain a jury. The only men in town at all safe were those who refused jury service and those who carried no guns. Cecil John Rhodes was one of these, and almost the only 'non-gunner' who was respected.

Lispy Jones sidled up to me in the Queen's Bar one day and, wonder of wonders, offered the treat. He had something on his mind, and when I returned the compliment of ordering he spoke out.

"You're the lad who won the shooting contest from the Boers at Ladysmith during the trek of '85?"

"Sure," I admitted. "I was lucky. Besides, I've handled guns all my life."

"Heard you quelled a native uprising single-handed too," he urged.

"Not quite," I declared. "Just was a damned fool."

"You know, Kemp," he drawled, ordering another drink from the barrel-shaped bar-tender, "I'd like to make you a sort of deputy of mine. Strictly confidential, you understand, but some one I could call out when I need support."

I couldn't very well refuse the invitation, although I made the mental reservation that when things

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

became too hot I might be absent. As a matter of fact, Lispy called upon me within a week.

At midnight thirty or forty of us were gambling in the Queen's Bar. Play had been high at poker, faro, pinto, and the English game of nap. In front of us were our chips and pouches of gold.

A stamping of feet sounded, and eight thugs entered. Unmasked, disdaining all preliminaries, they announced their presence with a fusillade of shots aimed over our heads. They were not a nice-looking crew; their grins were wicked, and the way they wielded their firearms was thoroughly business-like. Resistance for the moment was out of the question.

Three of the bandits remained at the door and kept the tables covered. The other five moved forward. One by one they swept the boards clean of gold, all the time vouchsafing insolent and sarcastic remarks. Back to the door they went, and the fun commenced. The gamblers, as if on a given signal, flashed their guns and began shooting wildly. The bandits leaped into the darkness of the street, but the firing continued. Some thoughtful gent shot out the lights, now that it was too late. The bandits outside yelled, and the crowd yelled back at them. The room was criss-crossed with streaks of fire.

In all honesty I wouldn't have seen much of what happened if the lights had not been shot out, for at the height of the fusillade I dropped to the floor and began to crawl toward the door. Outside we

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could hear the creaking of leather, the jeers of the bandits, the thud of pounding hoofs. The bandits were safely away, but the shooting in the black gambling-hall did not cease. For some unknown reason the occasion had apparently become a 4th of July celebration or a Saturday evening in a Chicago night-club.

Reaching the wall, I slid along it toward the door. Just as I reached it some one caught my arm from behind. I turned and swung. The fellow dropped like a felled ox, while I plunged outside, a couple of bullets whining over my head.

The excitement quieted. Three men were shot during the brawl and they were brought out first. Next came a fellow who was apparently lifeless. Approaching, I found he was a friend of mine, the man who had invited me to the poker game and had stood me many drinks during the evening. I was feeling immensely sorry for him, when he began to blink his eyes. Consciousness returned slowly, but at last he stared at me with suspicious eyes.

"What happened?" I said. "Did that three-cornered spittoon that sailed past my head catch you?"

"No," he mumbled. "I was making for the door. I thought I was following you, but it must have been some one else, because all at once the big bruiser turned around and slugged me."

His blinking eyes were watching my face. "Huh," I said, "next time you try to follow me make sure you have the right man."

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

Lispy Jones swore that the robbers of the gambling-hall would be captured. He explained that for utter strangers they carried things too far. A few days later a native brought in word that eight strange men were camped in a blind cañon about twenty miles from town. He described them. There was no doubt that they were the guilty parties.

Lispy organized a posse immediately, choosing eight of the best shots in the settlement. It was well after midnight when we rode out toward the cañon hiding-place. We reached it two hours later and camped at the mouth, where we waited.

"There's no rush," Lispy lisped. "They can't get out the other way. Just be careful you don't get one of their calling cards through the gizzard."

About ten o'clock in the morning a lone man spurred down the cañon floor waving a white flag. It was Hargreaves, the bandit chief. In true knight-hood manner Lispy mounted his horse and rode forward.

"What do you fellows want?" Hargreaves asked.

"You," Lispy announced. "And your men. Order them out. Make them throw their guns in a heap and surrender."

"And be strung on a gallows, eh?" Hargreaves asked. "Go to hell!"

"Better surrender," Lispy counselled. "No use in all of your men and maybe two or three of mine being killed on the spot."

Hargreaves wheeled his horse and started away. Suddenly he reined up and came back. "Got a

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proposition," he yelled. "Why don't you and I fight it out alone? If I win my men go free; if you win they'll all surrender without a word. How's it hit you?"

The challenge to Lispy was definite. He wished to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. More than that, he felt that he had been challenged to a duel, and honour would not let him avoid it. Our men protested mightily, but Lispy's mild face was determined.

"No one ever lived who could say that Lispy Jones didn't give a man a fair deal," he announced. "I'm accepting your proposition. Sounds to me like even odds. You kill me and your men go free; I kill you and your men surrender without a shot."

Conditions for the strange duel were agreed upon immediately. The two men were to separate three hundred yards, face each other on horseback, and at a signal shot from a man stationed midway between them they were to ride toward each other as rapidly as they pleased, shooting as they rode. A big bewhiskered Englishman who had served in the regular army was selected as a referee. He measured off the distance and stationed himself on the middle point. We ranged ourselves behind him, the only spectators of the deadly joust. The umpire raised his revolver and fired.

Lispy spurred forward at breakneck speed, shooting a staccatic volley. Hargreaves moved more slowly, but his gun too was belching lead. Lispy's horse shied, almost threw the rider, stumbled, nearly fell.

## HELL'S HALF-MILE

Lispy, without ceasing his fusillade, jerked the horse up and continued to spur forward.

Hargreaves doubled up suddenly. He swayed on the horse's back, but continued firing. Now the arc he made was tremendous, and suddenly he pitched face forward on the sand and lay there, warped limply. Lispy reined up and waited, while we ran forward.

Five bullets had hit Hargreaves's stomach, all in the space of a hand's breadth. Obviously they had found their mark long before he ceased firing, but his tenacity of life was tremendous, and his determination to kill held him to the task for long seconds after he had been mortally wounded.

The spectacle was not a happy one, yet we were proud of Lispy. "Wonderful shooting from a running horse, Lispy," some one praised him.

Lispy grinned in his mild way. "Easy! The sun glinted on Hargreaves's belt buckle. A perfect target. I couldn't miss."

True to the conditions of the duel, Hargreaves's companions rode out of the cañon, their hands above their heads, and we conveyed them in triumph behind their leader's body into Johannesburg. Without friends to perjure themselves or to help shoot their way out, the criminals were convicted and sentenced to death. A gallows was necessary now, but after wild searching not enough extra lumber could be found in the whole settlement to build one. Without further ado the bandits were marched out on the veld and shot.

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Marvel of marvels! Criminals had been caught and convicted in Johannesburg. No matter if they were strangers robbing the natural prey of others, they had been convicted and sentenced. Why, say, the town must be getting tame and law-abiding!

Lispy Jones didn't have long to enjoy his triumph. Elated by his recent success, he determined to enforce the law more strictly. He happened on a hard character one day.

"Hands up! Come on! Move over here!"

The tough appeared to obey, but suddenly he half stumbled. His gun spoke. The gun of Lispy Jones sounded simultaneously, but he was a split second too late. When the spectators rushed forward they found there was need for two more bunkers in that cemetery behind the town. Lispy's mild eyes were still open. In them was an expression of childish surprise.

### *Chapter III*

#### WOOING CHANCE

Just inside the entrance of the Johannesburg gambling-halls, and to the right, was generally a fifty-foot bar. This in turn was flanked by a partition, on one side of which was the 'social room' where the miners played their own games. On the other side were the gambling devices of the proprietor.

Each table was managed by a house operator, and it was noticeable that all of these men faced the door. As additional protection two or three gunmen moved through the crowd, eyes alert for possible trouble. These guards were constantly changed, and no one was supposed to know who they were. For twenty-four hours each day, seven days a week, gambling went on in those dens.

Poker had captured the fancy of the settlement, and although it was an American game every man learned it. A neat little pouch of gold-dust bought a stack of chips—sometimes enough to last all the evening. Generally the professional gamblers carried away the loot; only very rarely did some lucky miner treble or quadruple his stakes. The house percentage was high, the wheels of chance were often greased, and the professionals knew their work.

As gold, liquor, and wild men became more plentiful stakes gradually increased. Probably the

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epic gambling game was that staged publicly in which two principals wagered a total of £25,000 on a single poker hand and the spectators bet as much more.

Two miners wished to combine claims, each wishing to purchase the other's. Neither would sell so it was decided to settle the dispute by the turn of cards, the winner to take both claims, worth easily £25,000, the loser to grin and bear it. The affair became noised about town, and instantly preparations were made.

In the very centre of the main street a high table was placed. On it was put another table and three chairs. Other stage setting sprang up magically. On one side the lone banker put up a tent in which he received and made a record of all bets by spectators, charging 1 per cent. in true banker fashion. Directly opposite him a group of gamblers erected another tent for bookmaking.

Now the preparations were complete and the crowd gathered—miners, teamsters, gamblers, bartenders, and scores of Boers in from the surrounding ranches. The two principals took their places on the platform, and together they blindfolded one of the spectators and turned him loose in the crowd. This man was to select the dealer. The blindfolding accomplished two things: it ensured impartiality in choice, and it made it incumbent upon the man who was caught to deal. This occupation promised to be dangerous, for a single false move of the hand was apt to mean obliteration. In return

## WOOING CHANCE

for the risk he took the dealer was to get two hundred pounds in gold from the winner.

Everything proceeded smoothly. The blind-folded man stumbled against a fellow who was busy discussing bets with his neighbour, and before he knew it the chosen man had been pushed up on the table. He was a long, raw-boned Colonial, his skin stretched tightly over his facial bones, and bronzed like a Chinese idol. He was worried, that was obvious; perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he stared at the new pack of cards which had been handed to him as if he were afraid to touch them. The bronze of his face had faded to a sickly yellow.

“Play! Play!” shouted the crowd, and the dealer began to shuffle. His fingers trembled, and often he ran his tongue across his dry lips. It was not entirely fright. Excitement was surging through that crowd, surcharging the air in a strange electrical manner. The dealer at the table, the lodestone of it all, felt himself the centre of that electric current and also the possible target of both factions.

Play commenced. Slowly the dealer flipped off five cards face up to each player, calling off the denomination of each pasteboard to the spectators, who surged and jammed around the table.

“King high in one hand, Jack high in the other,” he announced, finally.

The excitement and betting leaped.

“Five to four on the King-high hand!”

“Done, in hundreds!”

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The crowd roared to the tent and laid their bets, then fought their way back to the table. Each contestant decided to draw four new cards, and the dealer dealt the first hand, announcing it—still King high and no pair. More bets were laid as the dealer turned successive cards to the second man. Now the last card was coming.

“Ten to two that he doesn’t draw a pair!”

“Done! Done! Done!” and the crowd rushed for the tent again. I joined it, betting forty pounds.

“Ready?” called the dealer, and he flipped the last card while that crowd waited, poised on tiptoes, breathless.

“A pair of deuces,” announced the dealer.

A wild burst of cheering rose from the crowd, shouts and cat-calls, bitter groans from the bookmakers, while that raw-boned Colonial sat there, his face yellower than ever, half expecting in the heat of the moment that some one would make him the target of a well-aimed bullet. He certainly had earned his thousand.

Johannesburg was wild beyond description that night. At least forty thousand pounds in value had changed hands. Every one was drunk, the bookmakers to console themselves for their losses, the great mass of men celebrating their winnings. Some of the gamblers, it was reported, recouped their losses by simple, direct methods. The dealer, thankful to have escaped alive, proceeded to deaden himself, and the next morning was found, a gun in each hand, asleep in the centre of the street.

## WOOING CHANCE

Incidentally, the guns that fellow had escaped were no idle threats. Most of those in use at Johannesburg at the time were .45 calibre, although the makes were various. Far from the modern automatic weapons in precision, they were deadly in the hands of the hard characters who spent most of their spare time practising.

After each shot the hammer had to be pulled back before the next one, an awkward arrangement, as the right thumb could not reach the hammer. 'Fanning,' although it was not called by that name at the time, had been introduced by the American contingent of tough eggs and was assiduously practised hour after hour. This consisted of brushing the hammer back after each shot with the palm of the left hand. The rapidity with which fanning was accomplished by some of the best gunmen was astonishing; the speed attained was easily comparable to that of the modern automatic.

It was always easy to tell whether the totter of a gun was a novice or a hardened character. The former always pulled the trigger on his gun as he lowered it. The true gunman had learned better than this. He knew that the recoil of the heavy weapon threw up the muzzle, so he started shooting on the upswing, a flash before the muzzle covered the target. In this way not only was his shooting more accurate than that of a novice, but, more important in that wild town, a split second was saved in the gunman's motion.

Enjoying a drink one day in the Queen's Bar, I

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became quite friendly with a stranger, and suggested we exchange real names.

He spelled his—"P-f-e-i-f-e-r."

"Fifer," I pronounced it. "What's the good of the 'p' in it?"

He cogitated a moment. "Has to that, wot the 'ell is the use of 'aving the 'h' in 'orse? You don't sound that, either."

Now I had no desire to argue the point with him. He had already shown me his gun, a vicious .45, and on its handle was the inscription:

Be not afraid of any man who walks beneath the skies,  
Though he be big and you be small, for I will equalize.

Instead of arguing, I accepted his invitation to attend the 'bug-races,' a new form of gambling which had captured Johannesburg. After a couple of drinks he led the way to an open space at the east edge of the town and showed me the race-track. It consisted of a twelve-foot board spaced in parallel channels by smaller boards. Around it a crowd of men had gathered, shouting for bets, laying their wagers, discussing the chances. I pushed forward to learn more about the sport.

"Anything which can't fly," explained the judge, a pompous Englishman. "Anyone can enter any bug that crawls. Just pay the fee, and your stable is entered. What you got?"

"Outside of a few fleas and lice which don't seem to move very fast, I haven't anything," I announced. "But I'm ready to bet."

## WOOING CHANCE

That bug-race was one of the most amusing events I saw in Johannesburg. There were sand-bugs, bush-bugs, beetles, spiders, weird things with long legs and no heads, weird things with heads and no legs. Each of them was assigned to a trough, and at a given signal were supposed to start down it. Most of them didn't start, or else they moved backward. Some stood on their heads, some tried frantically to climb up the sides of their channels. Others almost reached the finishing line, then for some unknown reason turned round and came back.

The owners were not idle. Each was allowed pin to prod his horse toward the finishing line. Prods were plentiful, but often the results were unfortunate. Over on their backs went the bugs, legs waving in the air. Precious seconds were lost while feet were regained, and meanwhile the owner's money had gone the same way the bug's legs had been going—up in the air.

The sight hit my funny-bone, and I began to laugh. I didn't laugh long. This was serious business, I was informed, for anything in this world where large amounts of money are involved is always serious. Soon I too became interested in the races. Betting was high, and I joined it.

A pretty green beetle, long, low-slung, and apparently built for speed, took my eye. I bet on him for five successive races. For three feet that beetle was a wonderful sprinter; then, invariably, it turned round and came back in spite of all its stable-boy could do. Needless to say, I went home dead broke,

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convinced that my bug's racing name must be Boomerang out of Bad Penny, which always returns.

Often after that I attended the races, and found in them considerable amusement and pleasure, but, like all good things, the racing had to come to an end. It developed that the races were 'fixed'—or at least every one believed they were.

It takes considerable imagination to understand how a bug-race could be fixed, but two Englishmen were supposed to have accomplished the deed with two bush-bugs known by their Kafir names of 'weeto' and 'unyote.' The former was grey, about three-quarters of an inch long, and the latter black, twice as long and with myriads of legs. These two formed the trickers' stable, which they trained.

An exact duplicate of the board race-track was built in their cabin and covered with mosquito bar. At the far end of the trough was dropped sugar-water, of which the bugs were very fond. After days and weeks of training the bugs learned, supposedly, to go straight down their troughs for that sugar-water. Now they were ready for the regular race-track.

Before a race started one of the confederates, who carried sugar-water in a small bottle with a quill in the cork, edged up to the end of the track during the excitement of the betting and dropped a little of the sweetened liquid on the finishing line. The results were all they could have asked; at least, for this reason or some other, weeto and unyote won race after race.

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It was their consistent winning which proved the undoing of the two men. The owners of other bugs and the bettors became suspicious and finally stumbled on the trick—or believed they did. The conspirators and their bugs left town very suddenly; otherwise there would have been a couple more mounds in the makeshift graveyard at the edge of the town.

## *Chapter IV*

### THE STAGE

DURING all the first excitement of the gold-rush I had not panned a speck of the yellow dust. My occupation—accepted largely because the Heys company furnished me with a bed with a canvas roof above it, which was something eminently to be desired in that wind-blown, crowded settlement—was driving the stage between the Rand and Pretoria.

The coaches used were remarkable conveyances—remarkable for their rough-riding and disagreeable qualities. Boat-shaped, round at the bottom, and hung on very thick heavy leather springs, they held nine people inside, provided they were placed like bricks are placed in a wall. When the coach went over a rock, as it did every few feet, the nine people moved as one. On top were carried the driver, the whip, and six more passengers, with the boot, or back-end, loaded with baggage. I soon discovered that if a person weren't an acrobat he rarely stayed on top for the complete journey.

Ten horses or mules strung out in pairs formed the motive power. Both the leaders and the wheelers had a pair of lines, and branch lines ran from the leaders. The whip was seated beside the driver, and was boss of the outfit. He wielded a twenty-

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foot stock and a forty-foot lash of giraffe hide in a manner which required years of practice.

These things I learned later. The morning I took the job I reported to the stage tent and pretended I knew all there was to know about driving. The manager called over a hard-boiled Colonial named Jud Merlin. Jud, it seemed, was the whip of my coach. He had busted the head of his previous driver with the stock of his whip—so there was an opening for me. Now he appraised me with a distaste which seemed natural in all whips for all drivers.

“Hello, Slim,” he said, giving me a nickname which stayed with me as long as I was in Africa, “how long do you expect to drive a coach?”

“Until you knock me off with your whip,” I told him.

He stared straight in my face, and his little eyes gleamed with an unholy light. “That might be a hell of a long time, and then again it might be right soon. It depends on you.”

We started. I had handled horses all my life, but driving five teams strung out in front of a huge boat seemed like a big job. My fears proved correct. We had a full load inside and out—of the coach, I mean—and I never worked harder in my life.

Twice between the Rand and Pretoria we were supplied with fresh horses. At these stops Jud and I exchanged drinks of Cape brandy, I to relieve the pain of my aching arms, he because he liked the

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stuff and more of it. By the time we reached Pretoria both of us were feeling the effects. Rather hazily we landed our passengers and started back with a load of many nationalities.

At the top of a long slope just out of town Jud suddenly went crazy. He started his whip going from leaders to wheelers, and we were soon on a full run. I braced and tried to hold the team. It was useless. We roared and raced and rattle at break-neck speed. Bang! We hit the bottom of a draw and a rock at the same moment. The coach leaped high in the air, twisted like a thing alive. The weight of a match, it seemed to me, would have thrown us over.

Jud cursed. He cracked the whip, flailed with it. Away went the horses on their mad dash. I merely clung to the side of my seat and prayed. We made a record that day for the thirty-six-mile journey, but when we arrived at Johannesburg we found we were minus one Chinese and two hundred pounds of luggage. The luggage was missed

On one of our first trips we were held up by road agents, an experience which I had been secretly anticipating, but which proved fairly tame after all. In a narrow defile of the kopjes two bandits suddenly appeared. They were well mounted, and each carried a rifle and a vicious-looking Colt revolver. Both were properly masked with pieces of raw hide across their eyes. The leader advanced while his confederate remained out of range of our small guns and kept us nicely covered.

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"Sorry to interrupt the pleasant ride. All gents down and out. Hands up. Line up along the road like a picket fence, and the first man who makes a move gets punctured."

From our socks to our whiskers we were searched, and everything of value taken from us. One of the passengers, thinking to be facetious, called: "You forgot to look under my hat!"

The bandit whirled from the far end of the line. "All right," he said. "I'm coming back."

He walked up to the fellow, took off his hat, and peered inside. Then, grave as a preacher, he carefully replaced the hat on the fellow's head, pulled it down over his eyes, and smashed it there viciously with the butt end of his gun. The man under that hat dropped like a stuck steer, and was still unconscious at the end of the journey.

After searching the baggage in the boot the bandits apologized for having delayed us so long, and galloped away without a shot having been fired.

Not long after this I had an experience which made me sympathize with the fellow under that hat. The day had been particularly uneventful until Jud suggested that we change places. "Let's see you whip," he said. "It ordinarily takes ten years to learn the job, but you're a pretty smart boy."

"Sure," I agreed, and we shifted.

The first thing in whipping, I had learned by observation, was to throw the lash out beside the

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horses to straighten it. Next come a few twists around the head to find the end of the lash. This was as far as I got. Midway through that twist-around-my-head business the lash suddenly stuck. It happened to be round the neck of a passenger, and according to his story it didn't feel particularly good.

"Now, friend," I said, "let's not argue this. You're a little runt of five feet or so. If I lick you there'll be no glory in it for me. If you lick me every one will say: 'Serves the big guy right.'"

"According to your story," the little fellow answered, "either win or lose I come out pretty well. Let's get busy."

We jumped down from the coach and got busy. He was much too busy as far as I was concerned. Every place I hit he had just left, but he didn't have the same luck with me. He called off his blows by rote and system, and in fifteen minutes I felt as if I had been through a rock crusher.

"Well, that was a nice little entertainment, and every one enjoyed it immensely," he carolled when I staggered back to the coach.

Small consolation I got from Jud Merlin. "You fight like you whip," he sneered. "Not worth a damn."

Stage-driving became monotonous, even with a few drinks and some gambling at each end of the journey. I decided to quit and start out with a pick and a pan. A lucky evening at poker had increased my savings enough to buy a half interest in

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a questionable claim. I picked out the one I wanted, securing as a partner a hard-boiled Colonial named Bill Hassett, who had received his training in the Barberton goldfields.

Reluctantly surrendering my quarters in the stage company's tent, I moved to our claim. Bill was living in a pup tent about three feet wide and six feet long. Of course there was no room for cooking or eating inside, and after a few days of that terrific veld wind, laden with dust which resulted in more grit than food going into the mouth, I set to work digging a cave in the kopje. In a week we moved into our new residence, half tent and half cave.

The claim proved something of a disappointment. We made a comfortable living panning the specks of gold from the dirt and that was all. My partner became increasingly acid and quick-tempered, and it wasn't long before even the larger residence seemed too small to hold both of us. I decided to move on, retaining my interest in the claim, but allowing him to work it against the time I might come back.

Kimberley attracted me. I had seen the great free gold-rush; now I wanted to see how Africa's other great treasure was unearthened—diamonds.

The trip from Johannesburg in the ox-drawn transport took nine days, with a stop at Potchefstroom, the former capital of the South African Republic. Beyond, we followed the banks of the Vaal, as water was scarce. In this country of enor-

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mous ranches game abounded, particularly antelope, and each morning I had no trouble in securing meat for the day.

Kimberley was no longer a boom town. The first diamond had been found twenty years before on the banks of the Orange River. Two years later, in 1869, a native sold another huge one to a Boer for several head of sheep and oxen. The first rush began. Disappointment followed, but in 1870 the two De Beers brothers found diamonds lying loose in the first foot of earth on their ranch near the Karroo Desert, and people stampeded toward the diamond-fields by the hundreds and thousands.

Before I reached Kimberley the diamond industry had become well established under the leadership of Barney Barnato and Cecil Rhodes. Many 'pipes' of the precious gems had been located, and the mining of them had become an efficient industry. I had no trouble in securing a job as 'floor-walker' in one of the larger mines at the edge of Kimberley—the 'Diamond Hole.' A quarter of a mile wide at the top, this fortune-producing mine had already been dug so deeply that the sides were caving.

My job was unexciting. It consisted of watching the Kafirs, seeing that they worked steadily. In addition, I was expected to keep an eye peeled to see that the workers didn't hide diamonds in wounds made in their bodies—a fairly common trick by which they smuggled stones out to the 'I.D.B.'s'—illicit diamond buyers.

Urgent news came to me from Johannesburg.

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Bill Hassett had discovered a rich streak of pay dirt in our mine. Glad of an excuse to give up my uninteresting occupation in the diamond-mine, I hastened back to the goldfields. My partner met me, eyes blazing with excitement.

"We're rich!" he shouted. "I struck a big pay vein. No idea how big it is, but it's tremendously rich." He lowered his voice and almost whispered the next words, so great was his awe. "I've been offered eight thousand pounds for the claim. Shall we take it?"

"That's more money than there is in the world," I said. "Sure we'll take it."

There I was with almost twenty thousand dollars burning a hole in my pocket, more money than I had ever hoped to see. I made a firm resolution. I would keep away from the gambling-dens and the dance-halls. I would not spend that money wildly on drink and poker. Not much of it, that is. No, I would not be foolish with it; I'd be very, very wise.

High of resolve, I went out and bartered for a half interest in the Princess mine. It took all my stake, but, man, it was easy to double one's money in that town of free gold.

Two months later the Princess busted. So did I. Apparently in that land of gold and diamonds wealth was easier to lose than to gain. Chastened, down-hearted for the moment, I found consolation in the fact that even such leaders, such fabulously wealthy men as Barney Barnato and Cecil Rhodes were

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having that same experience—'going busted.' But Rhodes, at the lowest ebb of his fortune, was dreaming heroic dreams of an empire. In the fulfilment of those dreams, in that great drama of colonization, I was to play my small part.

## *Chapter V*

### HARD-BOILED MEN

BIG news circulated through the Rand in that year of 1889, news which made the ears of every true adventurer tingle. Cecil John Rhodes, already the most powerful man in Africa, was forming a company of mounted police to explore and subdue a great section of Matabeleland and Mashonaland and create an empire out of the wilds. Strong men were wanted, those without responsibilities and without fear, who would spend months or years in the wild, unexplored back country.

The adventure appealed to me. Rhodes was already my friend. I first met him during a street brawl in Kimberley when two of his former employees were pounding him in a dispute over wages. Not knowing Rhodes from Adam, I went to his aid merely because the fight looked lop-sided. We fought it out with the fellows, blow for blow, and were eventually victorious.

"What's your name?" Rhodes asked me, taking out his notebook.

"Sam Kemp," I responded. "What in hell is yours, and why don't you carry a gun?"

Looking through me with eyes which clinched up on the other side, Rhodes announced, "My name is Cecil Rhodes. I can use you later, Sam Kemp."

Now the time had come. That stocky man,

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flat-faced, blue-eyed, boorish, was planning to claim a mighty empire for his country and for himself. Gradually the whole plan became known. By dint of great diplomacy Rhodes and his side-kick, Dr Jameson, had persuaded Lobengula, the treacherous chief of the Matabele, to allow mining men in his country. To Rhodes was given the right to all minerals found in the vast domain and authority to exclude all other commission seekers, both of lands and mining rights. This grant was later exchanged for shares in the Chartered Company's Police valued at £120,000.

The British Government gave Rhodes a charter granting him administrative control over the country—merely a million square miles in what is now Rhodesia. All that remained was to make that control an actual, physical matter, a project which only such a man as Cecil Rhodes would have dreamed of undertaking. Even under his marvellous direction the cost in human life and suffering was terrific.

Now the empire-builder was gathering his Mounted Police, a hand-picked body of men, a corps of dare-devils which soon became the apple of his eye. They were outfitting at Mafeking, one hundred and fifty miles north-west of the Rand, the last outpost at the edge of the land of the Bechuanas.

That was all I needed to know. I was penniless. Life in Johannesburg and Kimberley had begun to pall. This desperate mission promised high adventure. Once, a few months after our first meeting, Rhodes had promised, "Stay with me, Kemp, and



STATUE OF RHODES AT KIMBERLEY



## HARD-BOILED MEN

I'll send you home a millionaire." Well, I hadn't stayed with him, and I wasn't a millionaire, but here was a chance to join one of his enterprises. With a little persuasion I found a travelling companion in a remittance man named Charlie MacPherson, and we hired our passage on a transport to Mafeking.

It took us nine days of deluge to reach the settlement. Long before we arrived we marvelled at the number of transports loaded with men and supplies which were heading north. The rough trails and roads were lined with them. Mafeking at last, and we found a settlement that was comparable to Johannesburg in the first days of the gold-rush.

The little frontier settlement had grown overnight into a very jumbled town. In addition to the hundreds of men who were attempting to join the Mounted Police there were miners, concession hunters, gamblers, and the usual predominance of human birds of prey. As always, Cape brandy arrived with the first man and continued to arrive with each load.

A thousand horses were being corralled for the police; many hundreds of oxen were gathered and extra hundreds, for it was known that the tsetse-fly was very bad farther north. Three years of provisioning for a thousand men was being rushed by transport, and as I watched the plodding oxen with their great loads I began to realize what a vast undertaking this was. I appreciated, too, the ability of that more or less mysterious man Frank Johnson, who knew something of the country ahead and had

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agreed to get the troops up to the Zambezi river for approximately £100,000. This sounded like a huge sum of money, but the risks were tremendous.

Few expeditions were ever sent into the wilds with less chance of success than the Chartered Police when they left Mafeking to take possession of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. Bets were ten to one that the Matabele under Chief Lobengula would allow our men to reach the heart of their country, then pounce and murder us all. It was well known that the old chieftain had a force of twenty thousand warriors who were itching to fight; against them the Chartered Police wouldn't number more than a thousand men, including non-combatants. No, we didn't have a ghost of a show if real trouble started. Yet there were many hundreds of hard-boiled men in Mafeking who were ready to take the chance.

No questions concerning their past lives were asked any of the applicants. Physical perfection alone was demanded, and man after man was refused because of some slight disability. Fortunate were those, perhaps, who were left behind. Physical perfection was not enough for that long trek north. Heart was required, the staunchest heart. There was no place for fear in that outfit, and yet many times fear ruled it.

More than courage was required. It took a smile from Lady Luck many times to pull one through. Sooner or later Lady Luck was sure to frown instead of smile, and that was the end. Burial-parties night after night—so commonplace did they become

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on that long trek north that they seemed a part of routine and were ignored, forgotten in five minutes.

But we are still in Mafeking, being examined from teeth to toe-nails by the harassed doctors, given a slip to the commissariat department for an outfit consisting of woollen socks and shirts, a corduroy suit of dark brown with knee-length pants, a wide-brimmed hat properly initialed for the Mounted Police, heavy shoes, and cloth puttees to protect us from the snakes.

My assignment was to Tent 10 in D Troop, and I was given my choice of what horses remained. These had been brought up from the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and were called 'salted' horses, which meant that they had been through a mysterious horse sickness and become immune to it. No one knew the cause of the disease, but all knew a horse when he had it—the nose and throat filled with froth and foam, the slow choking to death. A blotchy skin was the distinguishing mark on those which survived.

Out of the hundreds of clamouring men in Mafeking five troops were carefully selected, each troop consisting of a hundred men assigned to ten tents. In addition, scores of natives were recruited, forming a small army of Basutos, Matabele, Mashonas, Baralongs, Swazis, and Bechuanas. To each tent was assigned at least one native servant, who was supposed to do all the work. Truly, the white man was demeaned before the blacks if he as much as lifted a hand. Our particular factotum we named

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Limburger for obvious reasons. He was a faithful servant until he mysteriously disappeared in a native brawl farther north.

Talk of your hard-boiled men, that troop of Mounted Police was formed of the hardest-boiled characters I have ever seen. The nature of the expedition drew to it the reckless, the foolhardy, the adventurous. Yet in the worst of these adventurers were many admirable traits. Generosity and self-sacrifice popped up unexpectedly amid meanness and cruelty.

Captain Chamley Turner was in charge of our troop—one of the finest men who ever commanded a tough bunch on the edge of the world. Tall, ruddy, decisive, he had eyes of steel and a soul of the same metal. He never winced during the bad days ahead, never asked quarter for himself or his men. With long Army training, he had enough common sense to realize that army tactics would not work with the hard eggs he had under him. He treated the troopers decisively, yet gave them necessary leeway in small things.

The first lieutenant was of another calibre. He too came from the Army, but unfortunately he believed in rigorous routine, high-handed discipline. Rumours passed through the troop that this particular lieutenant would not last long on the trek north. The surmises proved to be correct. The lieutenant's end occurred soon enough in a mysterious manner.

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The second lieutenant was a wishy-washy, effeminate fellow whom we named Gussy, a compromise between Augusta and Gustavus. At least he was harmless. Cunningham was the sergeant-major, a splendid, stalwart fellow, well liked by every one, quite similar to the captain in disposition and his understanding of men.

Each troop had its own doctor, butcher, horse-doctor, farrier, and sky-pilot. The butcher of our troop was one of the very hard-boiled ones; he took to lying around the native kraals on the trek north, drinking Kafir beer, and mingling with the native women. He died before we were half-way through, an interesting occurrence to me, because I was offered his place, and thus was able to furnish our tent with the choicest cuts of meat as well as having an excuse for long private hunting expeditions.

The horse-doctor was a joke. He killed more horses than he saved. The same almost might be said of the sky-pilot and the souls he was expected to salvage. Poor man, he had as much chance in that outfit as a moth in a bunch of bats. It was almost fortunate for him that he caught malaria while we were establishing Fort Victoria and died after a week's illness.

"I want to die with my boots on," he told the doctor up there in the wilds. But even that small consolation was denied him. He was in his death-throes, poor chap, when some of the hardest yeggs of the troop stole into his tent and pulled off his boots. That was not to insult the poor fellow or to deny

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him his last wish; the troopers actually wanted his boots.

And now Jack Tomlinson! You must know him here—the finest friend and bravest companion a man ever had. For most of two years we were together. He saved my life more than once. His heart was stouter than those of the lions we killed together; his grit was endless. I have seen him bloody and beaten, knocked down, and continuing to fight from his knees until he was slugged into unconsciousness.

Quiet to a fault, he yet possessed a sense of humour which often saved the day. His philosophy was rare—and simple. It was expressed in two words which formed his favourite oath. After a night of fever, or when we bumped into an *impi* of ill-disposed native warriors, or when we were almost dead of thirst and exhaustion, out would rip his curse: "*Hellco vadis!*"

*Hellco vadis.* I asked him more than once what it meant. He always grinned, and his blue eyes danced, but he'd not tell me. At last I ferreted out his meaning, so typical of the man. "Hell, *quo vadis?*"—"Hell, whither goest thou?"

In stature Jack Tomlinson was shorter than I, but heavier, with broad shoulders and great muscular arms and legs. Born in Natal, he was only twenty-five years of age at this time, but he was old in the lore of hunting; except for that experience, *plus* his adeptness and courage, I'd not be here to-day.

Now I had my buddy and was quite ready to start

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from Mafeking. Still we delayed. Then occurred one of the most depressing experiences of my life.

The day was extremely hot. Not a breath of air stirred, and our troopers, drilling lackadaisically at the edge of town, were obviously wishing for some change, some exciting occurrence. It came.

We all saw that strange pale cloud at about the same time. It was fifty miles to the north and extended as far east and west as the eye could see. A mariner would have said that it was a fog or mist drifting in.

The mist became thicker until the kopjes were indistinct; higher and higher the cloud rose, although still resting on the earth. It thinned and thickened; gaps showed here and there, and it seemed to billow like smoke. Now the noise, louder and louder, and a few locusts fell around us. More flew past and settled—the advance-guard. Suddenly the swarm was upon us.

The whirr of billions of wings sounded like the roar of an angry sea. The sound was deafening, and it grew ever louder. The sunlight was darkened and it was twilight on the earth. Millions settled, and millions went over them to settle ahead. For a hundred miles back they were that thick; for a hundred miles there was no sunlight.

Locusts were ankle-deep everywhere, and still they fell, and still they flew overhead by the million. After three or four hours we began to hope we were getting to the end of them, but we found that the flight had just commenced.

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For three days and nights the swarm swarmed, and at no time in that period could we see forty feet ahead. The awful whirr of their wings drove us almost crazy. It was something which will never be forgotten, as any man who has been through such a swarm will vouch. If a person is jumpy at the start he's very apt to be crazy at the finish. The noise is indescribable; the feeling of the locusts falling around like leaves from a tree, the twilight of flying insects—and then utter desolation.

The flight was over, and we looked around us to find that the country had taken on a new aspect. Everything had been green and pleasant; now we couldn't find one green leaf or one blade of grass. The country was as bare as a ploughed field as far as we could see.

Fortunately, for some reason unknown to me, it generally rains after a locust swarm passes, and in a short time the veld is green again. But the mental strain of such an experience is never completely effaced. Even now at night I sometimes dream of it and wake up depressed and fearful.

## *Chapter VI*

### TROOPING NORTH

NEWS spread through the camp at Mafeking that Chief Lobengula of the Matabele had finally shown his treachery. Instead of furnishing men to help cut a road for us, as he had promised Dr Jameson and Cecil Rhodes, the crafty old warrior had assembled his fighting men. Would we start in the face of this news?

Orders came. One fine morning we moved toward that country where only two white men had ever been before—our famous guide, Frederick Courtney Selous, a noble man who died not long ago after an adventurous life, and the semi-mythical character named Matabele Thompson. We knew well that Lobengula was waiting for us up there. What we didn't realize was the months and years of hardship, of fever and pestilence, of attack by animals and the insidious creeping of the jungle. Vaguely we appreciated that of the members of that expedition many, perhaps all, would never see civilization again. That was the reason we started as we did—cheering and singing and bantering.

The Bamangwatos, under the guidance of the friendly chief Khama, had built a road for us across their territory. Such a road it was! Across the open spaces it was passable, but in the wooded areas our progress was slow and tortuous. Trees had

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been cut down, it is true, but stumps stuck up a foot or more, and over them the supply wagons jolted, banged, smashed, and stuck.

We were a small army in our moving, protected in front by mounted soldiers and with a well-organized rearguard, for we were in an unfamiliar land and expected treachery at any moment. At night we outspanned with the wagons in a circle round the fire. Sentries were posted—a goodly number of them—and warned to keep constantly on the alert.

Owing to the lack of water we followed a small river northward across the level tableland of Khama's country. Game abounded, but hunting was made almost impossible by the mimosa, which the Dutch called 'vack-um-beke,' or wait-a-bit, thorn.

The first natives we met, the Bamangwatos, were friendly and happy. The swarm of locusts which we witnessed at Mafeking had furnished them with an enormous amount of food. Calabashes full of the insects had been gathered by the women, transferred to long grass baskets, and stored for future use. Six months later those same locusts would still be considered the greatest delicacy in the kraal.

Along the river was a continuous string of native kraals, one so much like another that we wondered if we weren't wandering in circles. Always built in two rings, the inner one consisted of thorn-bush behind which the live stock was corralled at night, while the outer circle was made of poles bound with vines and creepers. Between the two circles were

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the huts of the natives, thatched with tambucki grass over which mud, already made into cement by the saliva of ants, was smeared.

The huts ranged to thirty feet in diameter, allowing plenty of room for the frogs, lizards, cockroaches, and numerous other nerve-soothing pets which lived inside. The floors were covered with goat or cow dung stamped down hard, but constantly, and be it said unfortunately, moistened and reworked. The owners seemed to become inured to the odour, for they slept on the floor, their heads raised a few inches by 'pillows'—beautifully carved pieces of wood with a neck hole hollowed out.

Jack Tomlinson was particularly inquisitive about the natives and their habits. "I'd like to be a Bamangwato man," he explained. "He never does a lick of work. He leaves that to the women, of whom he can have as many as he wants or can afford. He sits in the sun except when he's on a hunting-or war-party. That's what I call paradise."

Certainly it sounded like paradise for the man, but all was not rosy in it. The women were not handsome with their heads shaved except for a ring of hair in front, black bodies smeared with grease, the centre of a thousand flies, thick-lipped, gross. They generally sported a small breech-clout made of an animal skin with the tails of monkeys or polecats hanging from it. Stupid, greasy, bestial though these women were, some of our men found them so attractive that they paid for their clandestine love affairs with their lives.

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Tommy breezed into camp one day greatly excited. He told me confidentially that there were great doings at the next kraal. He couldn't make out what had happened, but the place was seething with excitement.

"Maybe it's one of those orgies I've heard about," he said. "Let's get close enough to see it."

We moved cautiously toward the kraal, found a hole in the outer ring of poles, and moved along the side of a hut until we could see a ring of natives on the ground and hear them singing an outlandish chant. There was something challenging in the noise, something depressing and threatening. My impulse was to return to camp immediately, an impulse which grew constantly stronger as the action in front of us developed.

A huge black native leaped to the centre of the circle. Never was a man more repulsive. Smearred with red and white pigment from his eyes to his toes, barbarically decorated with animals' claws, teeth, and bits of skin, he looked demoniacal. He leaped, he yelled, he sang. His actions became more and more frenzied. Now he was rising five feet from the ground in great bounds, rolling his eyes, blubbering, yelling. With startling suddenness he cleared the inner circle of spectators in a single leap. He pounced upon a man, dragged him to the centre of the circle. The ring of natives cheered. In the hut against which we leaned a woman moaned.

"Come on," I whispered to Tommy. "Let's get out of here. It's bad medicine."

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“Sure,” he agreed, “but I’ll come back later and find out what the excitement was all about.”

He did. It developed that the dancer was a witch-doctor seeking out the man who had murdered an old warrior. His wild frenzy, his leaping and jumping, had put him in touch with the spirits who kindly told him the guilty party.

The witch-doctor was infallible. The man he selected to atone for a crime always paid the penalty. If he picked the wrong man it was just too bad. But of course he never picked the wrong man. Naturally not. He could handle venomous puff-adders and black mambas. He could drive away the evil spirit of sickness from a feverish body. He could read the future and tell the past. Obviously it was simple for a witch-doctor to be judge and jury when a crime was committed.

Our own doctors were busy. We had reached the tsetse-fly country near the Limpopo, and that slender edition of the blue-bottle fly began its deadly work. The water, too, was bad, and in spite of constant warning some of the men drank without boiling it. Sickness was everywhere. Hundreds of blacks, even entire kraals, were dying of sleeping sickness, which carried off our horses and oxen by the score. Germ-carrying ticks were everywhere, producing grave, but not necessarily fatal, illness.

For a time our doctors wished to treat the sick natives, but orders went out prohibiting it. It was a wise regulation. Had our medicos competed with the witch-doctors enough trouble would have arisen

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immediately to have caused a general massacre of troopers. The natives were left to the exorcism of the witch-doctors—and death; our own men, treated scientifically, seemed to fare little better.

That first march of five hundred miles to the place where we founded Fort Tuli seemed at the time pretty hard going; later we realized that it was by far the easiest part of the trek. We had time to hunt, time to barter empty cartridges with the natives for honey, eggs, skins, and even gold. That took plenty of time too, for the blacks enjoyed two hours of bartering for one cartridge shell. Years later traders found these cartridges, filled with gold, hanging round the necks of warriors and belles.

Loaded cartridges the natives did not wish for. They were in great awe of firearms, and no amount of explanation ever persuaded them that a gun really killed; it was the noise which did the work.

The amount of honey which one shell would purchase was tremendous, and we thought the natives must have huge apiaries of some sort. Later we learned the truth. A 'honey' bird flew ahead of a hunter, attracted his attention, and eventually led him to the bees' storehouse. After taking what honey he wished the hunter was supposed to leave a reward of the sweet for the bird.

Another favourite native food was milk thickened in a calabash by time. A little of the whey was occasionally drawn off, and we found it very good. At first we could buy two gallons of it for a handful of

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beads or a thimbleful of salt, but prices soared when the natives found there was a demand.

The natives didn't eat eggs, so they purveyed them to us; they hated fish and caught them only at our instigation. Almost their favourite food—if food it can be called—was snuff. They were constantly taking it. Made of dried lizards, frogs, or similar things, it was carried in a small gall bladder. To indulge the native addict poured a good dose into a spoon of beautifully carved ebony, which was ordinarily carried in the lobe of the ear or in the tuft of hair, and transferred the odoriferous powder to his nose.

Native ears seemed formed to carry snuff-spoons. As a matter of fact, often the snuff-bags were carried there also, and the women found them a depository for rings and jewellery. The lobes were pierced by a bit of wood when the natives were young; constant enlargement took place until a well-formed adult ear was the size of a small saucer. This, of course, added to the beauty of the belles, but the men took more pride in their tattoo marks.

Each tattoo mark was supposed to indicate an enemy killed in battle; each one symbolized a bit of the enemy's flesh which had been cooked and eaten during a celebration after the fight. Quite a celebration it was, as we learned on two occasions farther north.

The warriors formed a circle round a fire, and each passed in turn before the witch-doctor, proudly bearing flesh carved from the enemy. The witch-

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doctor blessed the trophy, which was promptly cooked and eaten. Now the medicine-man went through his usual emotional frenzy, stopping only when he had gashed each of the warriors deeply with an assagai and rubbed ashes and red earth into the wounds. This produced large raised scars on the faces, necks, and chests of the warriors, making them happy indeed. Furthermore, the strength of the enemies whose flesh they had eaten had entered into the lucky fighters, so now they were all set for greater deeds of prowess. No matter if they resembled crazy quilts, their souls at death were certain to go into the bodies of crocodiles or snakes and live everlastingly amid feasting and gaiety.

Feasting and gaiety! Perhaps the blacks could enjoy these, but our little group of white troopers was holding no gala banquets and there was little gaiety. Tragedy was stalking the troop.

## *Chapter VII*

### DISAPPEARING SOLDIERS

INROADS ON OUR number were gradual at first. Here we lost two men from fever and dysentery and paused to bury them; there we stopped to search futilely for three of our companions who were last seen in a native village; a day's journey beyond—perhaps ten miles—we waited for malaria 'shakes' to leave a whole outfit.

We reached the junction of the Shashi and Limpopo rivers. At this point we were to bear north-east toward the Zambezi through wholly unexplored country. The five companies, reduced now to many less than a hundred men each, were ordered to separate and proceed at one-day intervals. Ten miles to the north A Troop, under Captain Heany, a resourceful, courageous American, was to begin the construction of a fort to be called Fort Tuli. Succeeding troops were to add to it as they came up.

At best, this famous Fort Tuli was only a stockade of poles held together with vines, useless against a possible raid of Matabele warriors. Yet the construction of that fort served a purpose. It kept us occupied in mind and body; it caused us to forget momentarily the rapid depletion of our ranks.

Apparently the easiest and happiest way to go was to spend too much time in a native kraal. The

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Kafir beer, a tasty brew of mealies, did part of the work. The native warriors, jealous of the attention paid their belles, did the rest. No amount of inquiry or threats ever produced our troopers or their bodies.

The hard-boiled first lieutenant, who had been thoroughly hated by the men of our troop from the first, disappeared. He was with two of his men at the time. According to their story he shot a lion in a *donga* and decided to get it out. The men advised him against it; the native guides insisted that it was a form of suicide—so they said. Mr Lieutenant, insufferably conceited, plunged in after the lion and was never seen again.

The next day twenty men were assigned to search that *donga*. We went over it foot by foot, but found no trace of the lieutenant. In the middle of it we came upon a pile of human bones, but quite obviously they had been there many months.

Returning to camp after our fruitless search, Jack Tomlinson winked at me. "Wonder who got his boots?" he asked.

Man after man was taken sick of fever and dysentery. Every night when we were served our rum the doctors put into it a good dose of quinine, of which we must have consumed barrels, but daily troopers passed through the shakes and fever. Some recovered, others had the Burial Service read over them.

Now came a tragedy which claimed several lives at once, a foolish thing to have happened, almost

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ridiculous in its proper setting, one of those incidents which begin so happily and end so terribly.

The high spirits of the men were at fault. After the miles and days of dry, arid veld that region around the Limpopo river seemed a veritable paradise. Wild flowers abounded, bird and butterfly life was gorgeous beyond imagination. Rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, sable antelopes, giraffes, quaggas—it would take a page to enumerate the varieties of game around us. Crocodiles sludged everywhere. So numerous were they in the Limpopo—or Crocodile—river that we were ordered never to go swimming nor to approach the banks without due care.

Familiarity bred contempt, of course. The troopers watched the natives frighten the crocodiles away by slapping the water with their cupped hands. What a native could do certainly a white man could do. Some of our men went swimming, taking care to make the necessary slapping noise often enough. Two men were lost one day down a crocodile's throat. Thereafter all swimming ceased, but the crocodiles had a much larger debt of human life, which they proceeded to collect.

A trader, keen for profits and appreciating the amount he might make could he catch our troops, had followed our trail up from the south. He caught up with us after A Troop had started north and we were awaiting our turn to advance. Unfortunately, the trader was on the opposite side of the river. There he outspanned his oxen and dragged forth his merchandise.

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"Hey, you chaps!" he shouted across. "I've got plenty of booze and tobacco over here!"

Our mouths watered. We looked at the river, swollen by recent rains, and looked at each other. Certainly there was some way to get across. We held a consultation, and a little red-haired man from E Troop declared that he would swim the river with a small rope. With it he promised to pull a larger rope over, make a crude suspension-bridge to which non-swimmers could cling and progress hand over hand.

He stripped, tied a long cord to one wrist, and plunged in, yelling and slapping the water. I can see him yet, his red hair bobbing along that muddy stream, head thrown back, mouth wide open in yells, his hands pounding the water while he propelled himself with his legs. His particular deity was watching over him, for he escaped the jaws of crocodiles and landed a quarter of a mile downstream. Out he came, his white body glistening as he raced up the bank toward the trader's wagon. There he stopped, shouting mingled abuse and invitation at us, and between words he gulped heavily from the trader's bottle.

"Pull across the rope!" we bellowed at him. "Pull across the rope or we'll murder you!"

Taking his own good time, the trooper eventually pulled across a heavier rope and tied it to a tree. The bridge was completed, and there was a grand rush to cross it, but wiser heads ruled.

"One at a time," they warned. "That rope

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sags so much that the crocs can grab a leg or two."

The crocs appeared unconcerned about it all, however, and soon twelve or fifteen of us were across. The trader, a hairy-faced man with a gigantic wart on his cheek, did a tremendous business. He couldn't bring out the liquor and tobacco rapidly enough. His profit on each bottle or package was three or four hundred per cent., but he reckoned he had earned it. That trek northward had been fraught with danger every step. Easily enough a raiding party of natives could have murdered him and taken all his goods.

Our men drank and smoked to their hearts' content. They sang and danced, became increasingly hilarious. The trader in some subtle way seemed to link them to that civilization which they had left so far behind them; his presence, the mere thought that he could bring up supplies, elevated their spirits. Never was there a happier afternoon than that on the banks of the Limpopo. The warm sunlight, the soft air, the gorgeous beauty of it all, were intoxicating; the trader's liquor was even more so.

The troopers began to load up for the return journey. They hung bottles of liquor around them like necklaces and tied big packages of tobacco to their shoulders.

Jack Tomlinson hadn't crossed the river with me, and after the third or fourth drink I became conscience-stricken. It seemed unfair that I should

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be having such a good time while he was out of it. Accordingly, I loaded myself with five bottles of liquor and a carton of tobacco and started back. Perhaps that meagre sense of loyalty to Tommy saved my life, for I recrossed the rope bridge soon after noon, arriving on the camp side soaked and breathless, but unharmed.

The others began to straggle across. The first two or three arrived safely. Suddenly a scream sounded from mid-river, a blood-curdling yell of fright and agony. A man dangled out there on the rope bridge, most of his body under water. Down-stream a huge green log turned over. It split in two, and suddenly became the gaping jaws of a crocodile. They closed. The man screamed again, releasing his hold on the rope. The light brown of the stream became splotted with darker brown.

Another log plunged into the air as if it were being tossed by a turbulent current. It split, and closed round a man at the waist, tugged a minute, and the man was left hanging to the rope—only half a man now.

For some strange reason the tragedy which had claimed the men in mid-river started a stampede among those on the opposite side. Perhaps they wished to discover the worst. Across the rope they started, pell-mell. Forgotten now were their precious packages of liquor and tobacco, forgotten the hilarity of the past hours, the hilarity which they hoped to continue through the night. The rope sagged into the water with the weight of their

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bodies, sagged deeply, lowering them toward dripping jaws.

Now the crocodiles were holding a convention of death. The river suddenly seemed alive with them. As though they had waited quietly all day for this moment, they pounced on our men, clipped them off the rope.

The screams of agony and fright, the shouts of warning, the futile attempts to frighten the crocodiles away with splashings of legs and hands, added to the horrible bedlam. On our side of the bank men ran up and down, shouting futilely, firing guns into the muddy water, swearing at their impotence.

The rope bridge was clear at last, but four men had paid the extreme penalty. Others were torn, maimed. The little red-haired trooper who had crossed the river so bravely that morning was now a little white heap on the bank, crying as if his heart had broken, swearing between sobs.

Men irreplaceable were gone, and the most dangerous portion of the trek remained ahead of us. Less than a week later we were doomed to lose eleven troopers and seventeen camp-workers in a five-minute period. The intervening time was not a happy one. We moved on up to Fort Tuli, and the daylight hours were spent supervising the blacks at work on the fort or in hunting. The nights were hideous.

Unlike civilization, or at least that part of it which quiets down at night, the African wilds leap into full life with the setting of the sun. A lion

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roars. It is not the roar one hears in the modern zoo, but an outburst which starts with a strange grunt or growl and swells and booms until the air vibrates. The very earth shakes, for the lion always roars with his nose to the ground. Immediately following the lion's roar comes a period of absolute silence, a fitting tribute to the king of beasts. Human ears strain to catch more sound; there is nothing except the beating of one's own heart.

Slowly, tentatively, the night noises begin again. Birds twitter and screech, hyenas howl, baboons bark. Beasts of prey move stealthily, and all the time jungle and forest seem to be creeping up slowly, insidiously, to clutch victims.

Our morale was not high in that camp at Fort Tuli. We had time there to count our losses, which were not small; time, too, to analyse the dangers and discomforts.

Immediately after nightfall always occurred the 'jigger parade,' when each man knelt before the fire and dug jiggers from under his toe-nails with a jack-knife. Next we complained of the day's encounters with venomous snakes and poisonous insects, or perhaps a chance acquaintance with a lion or rhinoceros.

The officers strove to raise our spirits. Rum was doled out, nicely spiced with quinine. Singing started, and every man was supposed to try his luck. The human voices, striving to drown the barking of baboons and the howling of hyenas, defeated their own purpose of cheerfulness.

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Suddenly from the corral came a terrific braying. A lion had smelled a donkey and the donkey had smelled the lion. We realized that probably before morning another of our faithful little pack animals would be gone, for of all meats the lion is fondest of zebra and donkey.

"Damn those baboons!" Tommy would mutter, half inviting me to go out and kill the nearest of a hundred barking baboons in an attempt to silence them all. But I had tried that once and would never try it again. The crying of a wounded baboon is like the crying of a baby.

Soon the men around the camp-fire dispersed. Wearied by the day's activities, they craved sleep, but sleep was not easy to woo.

Days in camp were not so bad. True, millions of stinging insects formed in clouds around us and we were constantly fighting them. For protection every trooper had let his hair grow on face and head in mattress-like profusion—an obstruction which the stinging insects could not penetrate, but which harboured other parasites to an uncomfortable degree. In appearance we were uncouth, almost horrible, but we were bothered far less by gnats and mosquitoes than the horses, which were stung unmercifully and goaded to utter wildness.

All were not heavy-hearted in that camp. The scheming of practical jokes occupied the hours of many troopers, and we had more than one good laugh. There was the day, for instance, when the bugler was thrown into the guard-house for failure

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to sound *réveillé*. He was one of the world's most conscientious men. Short, fat, round-faced, he took his work as seriously as the sky-pilot. Never was he a minute early or a minute late in sounding the calls, and he blew them with all the proper flourishes and lingering minor notes. Then came the day when he failed utterly.

We were all watching him as he stepped between the flaps of his tent and raised the bugle to his lips. His cheeks bulged and he puffed tremendously into the horn. No sound came. He took a deep sucking breath to try again. Instantly he choked and coughed. A veritable spasm claimed him. He doubled up in his agony and tears ran down his face.

Captain Chamley Turner, investigating the tardiness of the call, found him in that condition, and ordered that he be thrown into the guard-house. There the cause of the dereliction in duty was discovered. Some practical joker had filled the throat of the bugle with native snuff, that horrible combination of dried frogs, lizards, and worse things. The long-drawn breath of the bugler had sucked the mixture into his throat and lungs. No matter if he almost died from the effects, the troop had a laugh on him for many days.

One of the worst jokers in camp was an American named Forrestal. He was a short, heavy-set fellow and very proud of his country. "I can lick any damned Britisher, by God, or any naturalized American in camp," was his customary boast after the second drink. No matter that many Britishers

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proved to him that his boast was idle, he continued to make it. One of his favourite stunts was to bring harmless snakes into camp and turn them loose in the tents.

"Snake!" The cry, laden with fright, sounded in the middle of the night. Out sprawled a tent of troopers in different stages of undress. A general search began, but generally it took many shivering minutes before the serpent was discovered and killed.

When Forrestal couldn't find snakes for his favourite joke he would sneak to a neighbouring tent after the camp was asleep, poke his head between the flaps, and bellow the feared cry, "Snake!" Before the troopers could leap from their beds Forrestal was back in his own tent, apparently sleeping soundly.

This procedure became a little monotonous, and one night our tent went on guard. Two men faced the opening, flat on the ground. When Forrestal poked his head between the flaps to let out the yell they caught him by the ankles and pulled him over backward. Now they, in their turn, made use of pretence. Shouting that they had caught a native who was attempting to steal, they pummelled Forrestal unmercifully and tossed him into the brush beyond the camp. Thereafter the camp was surprisingly free of snakes.

Occasional raids by 'driver' ants brought both curses and blessings. First thousands of white ants would suddenly pounce upon the camp, going

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through wood, leather, everything except iron. After them came the driver ants, which we welcomed because they cleaned out every white ant, and, in addition, ate every cockroach, flea, and louse.

“Driver ants coming!”

The cry sounded through camp, and every man, dropping whatever he was doing, rushed to his tent and threw out everything edible. It was absolutely futile to try to turn aside one of these processions of ants, for they went straight ahead in spite of everything.

One other thing could not be stopped—as we learned at the cost of more than a score of men—an elephant stampede.

## *Chapter VIII*

### STAMPEDE

A GENTLE wind was blowing that day from the east. It was hot in the camp, almost suffocating under the light canvas roofs. Most of the men were drowsing, drugged by the hot, moist air. Never was the camp more still.

Suddenly an elephant screamed close to the eastern edge of the camp. It was a wild trumpeting, a weird, unearthly sound, truly blood-curdling. A high-pitched violin being sawed wildly, a buzz-saw snarling at a knot, an insane woman screaming with too taut vocal chords—only many times louder than any of these sounds—it pierced to the very marrow of one's bones.

After that first trumpeting there was utter silence for a moment before the cry of rage was taken up by other elephants. With a terrific outburst of screaming hell broke loose. A herd of fifty elephants appeared at the edge of the camp, eyes wild, tusks gleaming, trunks tossed skyward, little red mouths agape. A human shout of warning sounded. A single gun was fired. It was too late.

The elephants charged. Straight across the camp they went, fifty mountainous beasts, blind with fury, irresistible in their might. The ground shook and shivered. Bedlam reigned. They struck the first line of tents. Down went the fragile shelters.

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Human cries sounded as echoes to the wild trumpeting, cries of fear and agony. Little black figures appeared, dodging and racing toward the woods, the pathetic figures of men. They seemed mere specks compared with those huge, charging pachyderms.

Onward swept the elephants. I had leaped to the door of my tent and stood there watching them, paralysed with surprise and fear. Next to the first line of tents were the supply wagons, forty or fifty of them.

“A barricade!” I thought. “That’ll stop them.”

Over those wagons the elephants pounded, crushing them and tossing them aside as if they were baby-carriages. Food and ammunition, bedding and barrels, became a conglomerate heap beneath those great pads.

Another cry answered the trumpeting. It was the neigh of horses, frantic with fear. They had broken loose, and they too were charging through the camp.

The elephants were unswerving, bearing straight toward me there in the door of my tent. The thump of their pads was like an earthquake. It was time for me to run. Or perhaps already it was too late. I leaped out, picked a course, and started. I was headed off by the huge cow elephant who was leading the charge. Bigger than a warship she seemed, more terrifying than a volcano. I ducked back and cowered behind a neighbouring tent. A second elephant became tangled up in the ropes

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beside me. He fell heavily on the tent, crushing to death three men inside. I could hear their dying cries. The elephant rolled toward me and staggered to his feet. I felt his breath on my face. The tiny eyes, gleaming with wickedness, stared into mine; his trunk was aloft, his red mouth agape.

How long that beast and I stared at each other I'll never know, but it seemed an eternity. Suddenly he trumpeted and charged, not at me, but over me. It was his wild cry which broke the spell. I dived headlong as that great grey body thudded past.

Behind came others. Sprawled there in the wreckage of the tents, it was entirely a matter of luck if I escaped alive. Elephants seemed everywhere. Instead of fifty there were five hundred, surely. Cowering on the ground, I saw tent after tent go down.

Shots were fired promiscuously, men shouted, cried with fear, shivered behind meagre shelters, or raced futilely in an attempt to reach safety. A fellow-trooper, half-naked, leaped out from a neighbouring tent and started away. He was caught in an elephant trunk, flung high in the air. For a long moment he seemed to hang against the sky, warped there limply. At last he came down, landing on the back of the elephant immediately behind the one which had tossed him. He was still very much alive, for he slid down the hind-quarters to the ground. Instantly he was knocked down and stepped on by a cow which

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followed. Now he was a sodden, inert mass on the stained ground.

Another man almost naked flashed along ahead of the elephants. His white body seemed to have the speed of an arrow, and the elephants behind him scarcely moving, yet they swept over him, trampling him down.

Straight across the camp thundered that elephant stampede. It reached the quarters of the natives beyond and smoothed their habitations as if a gigantic steam-roller had passed over them. The blacks shrieked, prayed, dodged—and died.

The crashing, rumbling, trumpeting elephants had passed beyond the camp and left it a place of ruin and death. Except for the receding noise of the stampede there was utter silence for a long moment. Then men began to crawl out from their cover and gaze at each other, wide-eyed, white-faced.

Captain Turner, who had been striving valiantly to turn the elephants aside and miraculously had escaped death himself, immediately began first-aid work. There was plenty to do. Eleven white troopers and seventeen natives had been killed outright, most of them smashed to a pulp by those behemoths; many more troopers were badly wounded, of whom three died within twenty-four hours.

That whole wild stampede hadn't lasted more than four minutes, but with the breath of death blowing in our faces it had seemed a lifetime to all of us. It took weeks to straighten out the camp again and

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attempt to recapture the horses and oxen. Many of these were never found—an irreparable loss at a time when the tsetse-fly was doing its worst work.

Captain Chamley Turner himself read the Burial Service that night over the eleven mangled bits of flesh which had once been men. All of us attended the service; all of us felt that Captain Turner did not read the service in any ordinary manner. He flung those words from him as if he were angry, as if he were challenging the African gods, defying them to do us more harm than they had already done.

We moved from that ill-fated camp, our route still north-east. Behind us we left Fort Tuli, its vine-entwined posts a flimsy defence in time of trouble, but nevertheless destined to become a real outpost.

Our progress was tortuously slow. There were days when we seemed not to progress at all, in spite of the fact that troops A and B ahead of us were supposed to have prepared our way. Often too tired to erect our tents, we slept when and where we could. One night I threw myself under a wagon with two other men. In the morning one of my companions was gone. Diligent search failed to discover him, but we found lion tracks leading to the wagon. No one had heard an unusual sound or commotion that night, no cries, or the noise of a struggle. Yet my companion had been dragged away for lion food.

It was enough to give one the creeps. Whoever heard of lions behaving that way? True, often

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enough they stole a donkey from the corral, and once in broad daylight his Majesty charged our caravan in full sight of a hundred men. One great pounce from the tall grass took him to the shoulder of an ox. For only one second he seemed to rest there, yet the ox fell over dead, his neck broken and all the hide ripped from the shoulder, while the lion escaped unscathed from a dozen shots.

Hunting on the right flank of our troop one day, Tommy and I stumbled on an *impi* of Matabele warriors. There were at least five thousand of them under the command of an *induna*, or head man. Cowering low in the brush, we had a vision of an attack upon our little outfit, an attack which would annihilate us.

Real warriors were these Matabele, huge, muscular men, carrying gaily-coloured shields of ox-hide which covered them from head to foot. Each man carried an assagai, or six-foot spear with a loop of raw hide near the centre of the shaft. A well-trained warrior, using this loop adeptly, could throw one of the spears with deadly accuracy up to forty or fifty yards. This was in hunting only; in battle the Matabele kept their spears in their hands, and also wielded vicious knobkerries with a death-dealing bulge on the end.

Fiercest of all African natives, the Matabele craved war with a natural appetite. Their desire to fight was augmented by a rule of the tribe that no warrior could marry until he had killed an enemy in battle. This, plus the honour of being beautifully tattooed

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as a reward for obliterating the enemy, made the Matabele pretty tough customers.

Tommy and I, watching that *impi*, were far from happy, but the war-party slid past silently, not molesting the camp. We learned afterward that they were on their way to punish a tribe of Mashonas for cattle-stealing, an excuse the Matabele worked to death.

Although the Mashonas outnumbered the Matabele by at least ten to one, they were no match for Lobengula's fierce warriors. They lacked that greatest of all fighting assets—courage. The Matabele had a singleness of purpose, a wild ferocity that the poor Mashonas couldn't combat. Long since they had given up fighting and turned their attention to the raising of crops and cattle. Always in mortal terror of the Matabele, they built their permanent kraals far back in the granite hills which abounded in this region. Generally a notched pole was required to climb the last bluff, the final protection to the kraal. In spite of these defences the Matabele raided the Mashonas often, stealing cattle and women, murdering the men in cold blood.

The strength of a good Matabele warrior was astounding. We had one in camp who acted as an interpreter for us—the strongest man I've ever seen. One day a huge transport wagon became mired. Cunningham, the sergeant-major, pointed out the wagon and suggested that the Matabele raise it. The black patted the wagon on which was loaded at least

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two tons of provisions. He crouched and crept under it, a giant of a man whose head looked no bigger than a fist on his shoulders. He braced his feet and arms and slowly raised himself. The muscles on each side of his backbone stood out like ropes; his arms and legs became corded.

Up rose the wagon, clear of the mud. The Matabele grinned and looked around, still holding one end of the wagon on his back. For several seconds he stayed there, supporting that great load, then shifted slightly and moved it to one side. Straightening himself casually, he claimed some salt for his labours.

At the opposite end of the scale to the Matabele in appearance and actions were the Bushmen, little jungle creatures often barely three feet tall. Occasionally one reached the 'mammoth' size of four feet, but except for variation in height all of them looked alike—naked, scrawny, ageless.

Tommy and I stumbled upon two of them one day and cornered them nicely. They had crept up to our camp and were watching the strange white men. Knowing they were well hidden in front, they had not concealed themselves sufficiently, and Tommy's quick eyes located them in a bush. The men in camp were making so much noise that the sensitive ears of the Bushmen did not hear us, and we were reaching for them before they knew of our presence.

Less than four feet tall, weazened, emaciated, they were surprisingly sinewy, and we had a tussle on our hands for several minutes. It was like holding two

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wild cats, but by keeping them at arm's length we eventually marched them into camp.

Two frightened little things, outlaws of the jungle, they thought they were doomed to death. When Tommy and I systematically spent days in gaining their confidence and friendship they couldn't understand it. Previously their tribe had dealt only with the natives, all of whom killed Bushmen on sight.

The poor jungle creatures, hunted on all sides, were as wary as wild animals, rarely visible by day and living in trees at night. Their language was a strange gibberish, which no one pretended to understand; their weapons were bows and poison-tipped arrows. They were not particular in their food habits, and often were guided to a meal by vultures which were picking at the remains of some animal which a lion had killed the night before.

Our two Bushmen we named Salt and Pepper. To us, despite their misshapen bodies and queer intelligence, they were almost like dolls or small children, and we developed a protective affection for them. Every night after a successful hunting expedition they disappeared, and we decided that they had unselfishly carried their share of the kill to their kin somewhere in the jungles around us. As a matter of fact, they probably retired to gorge themselves in private; they could digest their own weight in meat, it seemed, in twenty-four hours.

The greatest game-trackers and guides in all

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Africa these two little fellows were. Unerringly they led us to the particular game we sought, even though we had seen no track or trail. When we took them into strange country their talents did not desert them. Always they had a perfect sense of direction, an uncanny feel for the jungle and the wild life it contained, the strange sixth sense.

Orders concerning hunting expeditions were strict. A hunter must not leave camp without at least one white companion and two native guides. The proposed hour of return must be announced. It was tremendously easy and just as deadly to become lost in that region of immense forests and vast morasses which bordered the Limpopo. Other dangers abounded—attack by animals, poisonous snakes, encounters with natives. Such things made it foolhardy for any man to leave camp unaccompanied.

Jack Tomlinson and I had escaped all serious illnesses thus far on the trek; our capture of the Bushmen had furnished us with wonderful guides, so we were the first hunters of Company D to be given permission for long trips after game. At the heels of the faithful little blacks we set out, determined that hippos would be our first quarry.

Tracks which looked as if they had resulted from heavy pails of concrete being dropped in the mud led us to pools where ugly snouts and eyes stuck above the water. We fired carefully and often. Down went the huge beasts, disappearing completely. We began to wonder at our marksmanship, and questioned the ability of our Martini-Henry rifles, but

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soon we learned that it was only after the carcasses began to fill with gas that they rose.

The weight of these hippopotami was tremendous. Two that we shot scaled approximately five tons, and were fourteen feet long. It required six natives to carry a single hippo hide back to camp for the use of the transport drivers, who tanned it and made it pliable, finally working it into whips. The flesh tasted quite like beef, and was considered a delicacy by troopers and natives.

Tommy had the bright idea of hunting hippos in a native canoe. We knew as much about those crude, blunt-nosed affairs hollowed from logs as we did about battleships or Hindustan temples, but we started out bravely. We had drifted a few hundred yards down-river when suddenly Tommy stood up.

"A hippo as big as a mountain!" he announced excitedly, pointing to the rushes along the river-bank.

We aimed and fired simultaneously. The next thing we knew we were both drowning. When we rose sputtering to the surface of the muddy river the canoe had drifted down-stream. We swam after it, but Tommy suddenly had another idea.

"Crocodiles!" he gasped. "If we wounded that hippo there'll be five hundred of 'em here in a minute!"

If he said any more I didn't hear. Through my mind flashed memory of that horrible day when we lost four troopers down the gullets of crocodiles, and I splashed for shore with every atom of strength I

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possessed. Tommy followed more slowly, and I was sure some croc would get him.

When he crawled up the bank I saw what had delayed his progress. He still carried his rifle, which he proceeded to dry with the aid of much rubbing and the sun. No word was spoken for several minutes, then he vouchsafed a single remark.

"Glad you let your rifle sink," he said. "The damn' thing kicked us both overboard."

During the week we chased hippos we often stopped to swim in pools which looked particularly clean and inviting. This was strictly against orders, issued because of the treacherous crocodiles and water-snakes and because bathing in the cold African water often produced fever. The lure of the water was irresistible, however, and after struggling torrid hours through creepers and bush we stripped to the skin and plunged in.

We were caught at it one day, not by the officers of the troop, who would have punished us mildly, but by a worse group. Our clothes and guns were resting on the bank while we cavorted in a pool only knee-deep. Suddenly we heard cries and looked up. Out of the heavy growth advanced fifteen or twenty black belles. Before we could seek cover they had surrounded us. Steadily they advanced, their faces expressing mingled awe and curiosity. Thoroughly embarrassed, we stared back at them. Out into the pool they marched until they could touch us. Then slowly, gravely, they rubbed our white skins to see if the colour were fast. Obviously they believed we

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had smeared ourselves with some pigment such as their husbands and brothers used for ceremonial dances. When they found that there was no black skin underneath they clucked away in their outlandish gibberish, but we never discovered whether or not they approved of our particular colour design.

## *Chapter IX*

### THE LORD'S ZOO

WE didn't find our first lion; he found us. Stalking through head-high grass, we stumbled on to him. He wasn't frightened. We were. He stared at us nonchalantly from a short—too short—ten yards' distance, then stalked majestically away. Both Tommy and I had forgotten that we even carried guns.

Chagrined at our first meeting, we determined to meet the king of beasts again and do the proper business with him. We had no false ideas concerning such a hunt. Men had said in our presence that the lion was a cowardly animal, that he would flee from man if given a chance. In the years I spent in Africa I learned the utter falsity of such statements, which are often repeated to-day. The lion is surely the most courageous animal of the world. Ordinarily he doesn't court trouble, but when attacked or followed he will turn and fight. Crouching low, his tail swinging from side to side, he snarls once. Then it is time to use the rifle quickly or pick out the nearest tree, for his Majesty has a certain deadly notion in his mind.

To-day there are several ways of hunting lions, most of them quite safe, but in those early African days there were only two methods—the white man's and the native's. The white man's way was to hunt

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on foot with two native bearers. He took the chance of being mauled or killed, but he enjoyed all the thrill of the hunt. His guns, much less powerful than modern weapons, made perfect marksmanship necessary. It was sheer suicide to wait for a lion to get within twenty feet as some hunters claim they did and then shoot him through the heart. I have seen a lion advance fifty feet after a clean shot through the most vital spot.

The native method of lion-hunting was safer, but it offered no excitement. It consisted of a dead fall, a deep pit with sharpened sticks in the bottom and covered with bamboo or brush. A piece of zebra meat was the bait. When a lion dropped into the pit he notified the entire community with his roaring, inviting the natives to come out and fight him with their spears and knobkerries. The wise natives did not respond immediately to the challenge, for a wounded lion can call plenty of healthy mates around him in fifteen minutes.

Occasionally when some lion had been feasting on the natives for a long period of time and all other methods of catching him had failed the blacks organized a spear hunt. Two or three hundred of them surrounded the lion and closed in. Eventually the lion was cornered, and the natives pounced to spear him to death. Occasionally he escaped; more often he was killed, but two or three black women were left widows at the same time.

The 'boma' method of lion-hunting, popular with safaris of recent years, consists of building a corral of

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mimosa-thorn, very thick and concealing. A dead zebra is laid twenty-five yards away, and the hunter waits for the lion to come to the bait. This method requires little of that quality known as courage. Another method is to stand on a platform high in a tree, waiting for the lion to claim the zebra bait. On a beautiful moonlight night this is probably good for the health, and the only danger which the man encounters is falling from the tree. This should be called the safety-first method.

The real sporting method, even to-day, is to organize a party of native beaters. These form a line across the heavily grassed *dongas* and move forward, singing. Their songs are supposed to drive away the evil spirits, but the vocalizing is really a form of whistling to keep up courage, for the grass is sometimes ten or twelve feet high and almost anything is likely to be hidden in it. At the end of the *donga* where the white hunters are stationed a rare treat is apt to occur. I have seen jackals, hyenas, wart-hogs, and several kinds of antelope come out. The thrilling moment comes when four or five lions appear at once, as they all may charge.

The bite of a lion seems to have a curious effect which the natives describe as a numb feeling like that which follows the smoking of *dakka*, or wild hemp. There is no hurt to it, they say, but after several narrow escapes I have no desire to prove that fact.

The first of these escapes occurred at the heels of Salt and Pepper during the fifth day of our lion-

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hunt. Meanwhile our expedition led us into another interesting experience.

All that day we had been following our two Bushmen guides through the thorn-bush. Wearing at last, we turned back. As we approached the river-bank we moved cautiously, hoping to find a hartebeest or sable antelope to console us for our futile hunt. Instead of such game, however, apparently we had registered at a national convention of monkeys.

Salt and Pepper grinned over their shoulders and raised their fingers, signalling for silence. We moved forward cautiously. Excitement ran high in that political convention of monkeys, and a dozen of the delegates were attempting to gain attention at the same moment. They were electing a chairman or nominating a President, that was it, and each delegate had his idea of the proper key man.

After many nominating speeches and vitriolic answers, in which the character of each of the nominees was apparently laid bare before all the monkey world, the key man was chosen—a male larger and more muscular than the others, one who had remained proudly silent during the harangues. He accepted his election, and immediately climbed a tall tree which hung over the bank of the river. The Vice-Presidential nominee followed, and clutched the leader firmly round the waist, or hind-quarters. The Secretary of State followed, and soon there was a string of monkeys reaching from the top of the tree almost to the ground.

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Now the bottom monkey began to swing, and soon the whole chain was in motion. Larger and larger became the arc, until the monkey at the end of the sinewy rope gripped a tree branch on the farther side of the stream. The bridge was complete, and those who had taken only a vocal part in the formation of it crossed over on the backs of the builders. Prominent in the procession of bridge-walkers were the mother monkeys, some of them with two or three young clinging to the various parts of their anatomies.

All were across the stream now, but more trouble lay ahead. The monkey on the far side climbed up high enough to allow the remainder of the chain to swing itself across in turn, but there was mutiny in the ranks. The key monkey on the near side didn't want to let go. He was sure he would drop into a crocodile's mouth, or at least get a bath, which was almost as bad. He vetoed all arguments of both Senate and House and clung to his position.

Chattering, swearing, cursing in monkey dialect, the argument rose to fever-heat. At last, weary of the strain of hanging on, or exhausted by the arguments of his constituents, the Presidential monkey on the near side cast caution to the winds and released his hold. He swung across in a smooth arc, carrying the whole string with him. As soon as he felt *terra firma* on the other side he pranced around and chattered his joy. Peace was established in the ranks; again he was the party leader who led his followers through the jungle of uncertainty.

About sunset that same day the Bushmen showed

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us their method of catching monkeys. The one we called Salt had disappeared for an hour. When he came back he brought with him from camp a small gourd filled with honey. With many grimaces and grins he cut a hole in the top of the gourd with my knife.

Now he led us into one of the most beautiful patches of jungle I had ever seen. Trees rose higher than a hundred feet, covered with creepers as large as a man's body; bushes and smaller trees bore mulberries as large as walnuts, and monkey-nuts by the wagon-load.

Here Salt placed the gourd on the ground and concealed us in the creepers twenty feet away. In a few minutes the monkeys began to chatter around us, growing more curious each moment. Finally one of them went to the gourd, sniffed it, and thrust in his paw to get a handful of honey.

It was time for us to appear on the scene. The startled monkey didn't think to open his paw and draw it from the gourd, but leaped for the nearest tree, carrying the gourd with him. As even a monkey can't climb a tree very rapidly with only three hands and burdened with a heavy gourd, the agile little Bushmen had no trouble in knocking him down. Salt would have speared him to death, but I begged for the little fellow's life, and finally ransomed him with a cartridge, which the Bushman had been coveting all day as an ornament.

The next day we resumed our quest of lions. About noon we broke into a clearing about fifty

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yards across, carpeted with waist-high grass. Like a dozen other spots we had examined, it looked like an ideal habitat for lions. This time the lion was there.

Directly across the clearing we sighted him, his head raised watchfully, his eyes staring into ours. Talk of your buck fever—lion fever is far worse. My gun jerked to my shoulder. I fired quickly. The lion half whirled, and I knew that my bullet had struck him. Certainly now he would seek the bush, as wounded lions are supposed to do. But this lion was made of sterner stuff. He charged straight at me, bouncing up and down, half-way across the clearing in a couple of seconds.

Frantically I jerked the ejecting level of my rifle, but the shell had stuck. I clawed at it with my finger-nails, but couldn't budge it.

"Shoot!" I shouted to Tommy. "My gun's jammed!"

Apparently Tommy had been watching the situation develop, for his gun snarked beside me; a second later it sounded again.

The lion didn't hesitate. He was within fifteen feet of me now, and from that distance released himself like a steel spring. He sailed through the air, snarling, his mouth a yard open, it seemed, his eyes blazing horribly, ears flat to his head. Instinctively I threw myself to the ground at the left. In doing so I raised my right hand, which held the rifle. The lion missed me by inches, but sent the rifle flying.

There on the ground I tried to squirm away,

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momentarily expecting a messy death. Nothing happened. I rose to my feet and stared wildly behind me, ready to run. Tommy came toward me, his leathery face cut with a grin. That grin bothered me.

"What the hell was the matter with you, missing a lion at fifty feet?" I demanded.

"Didn't miss him," Tommy reported. "You'll find I hit him with both shots."

"And when'll I find that?"

"Right now. We'll skin him."

The lion was dead in the grass not twenty feet away—a splendid tawny specimen, one of the best I have ever seen. Over seven feet long, he was unlike most of the lions in the thorn country in that his mane was long and beautiful and his hide smooth and unscarred.

While the Bushmen were skinning the lion I examined my rifle. It was worthless for ever, the barrel badly bent from the lion's blow. Next we studied the carcass to analyse our marksmanship. My first shot had hit at the base of the ear and penetrated the head. One of Tommy's bullets passed into the bottom of the heart and the other one through the intestines. This particular lion, therefore, had charged fifty feet with a bullet through his heart.

As this was the first lion which was shot in the vicinity of Fort Tuli we proudly carried its skin back to camp and presented it to Captain Turner, who, in return, issued me another gun. Our Bushmen

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desired the meat, but when they went back to claim it they found rumours of our kill had reached the natives and they were holding a general celebration over the carcass. Very wisely Salt and Pepper retreated into the bush.

Success in that lion-hunt whetted our appetites, and we decided to chase rhinos, of which we had already seen both kinds, the black and the white, or 'square-jaw.' The latter was quite rare, and for that reason was our particular quarry. Early one morning we made our way to the junction of the Macloutsie and Shashi rivers, where Salt and Pepper picked up an indistinct trail.

A few hundred yards ahead we suddenly sighted the grey barrel bulk of a so-called white rhino. As usual, his back was covered with birds picking ticks from the folds in his hide, and they sounded the shrill alarm.

The rhino moved into action. He snorted and twisted his tail, jumped ten yards one way and ten yards the other. Always his snorting was louder. Suddenly he got our scent. Up went his tail, down went his head, and he charged. His stubby little legs carried him with amazing speed, crashing his huge body over bushes and through the grass.

"Shoot and make for a tree!" yelled Tommy.

Good advice, for that was a cyclone coming at us, and it took all my nerve to keep from climbing a tree first and shooting afterward. We fired at his eyes, but the rhino didn't hesitate. Tommy and I reached the same tree at the same moment. It

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was obvious that both of us would not have time to climb, so I leaped another twenty feet and caught the bottom-most branches of a sprawly ebony-tree. As I swung up into it the rhino roared past, almost hitting my dangling legs. Behind him were three others which we had not seen. The crashing and snorting was enough for a whole army of rhinos.

"I know I hit him," Tommy announced. "Let's follow him."

The Bushmen guides had disappeared, but the trail of crushed bushes and crumpled grass was too obvious for anyone to miss, and in a short time we caught sight of the rhinos again. We identified the beast we had shot, and crawled within easy range. When he turned to face us we fired, and he dropped. The other three great brutes snorted and pranced, then made off to our right.

Cautiously we moved forward and found our rhino—a great, three-ton specimen—already dead. One shot had passed cleanly into his eye and entered his brain. Of the other three shots we could find no trace. Probably they had mushroomed from his tough hide.

It was only five days later that we realized how fortunate was our rhino-hunt. If those four beasts had charged a second time in our direction we might have taken a ride on the tip of a bony horn, as two of our fellow-troopers did. Perhaps our example or the taste of rhino steak had spurred them into it; certainly they fired into a herd. Three hours later they were brought into camp by their guides so

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badly torn and mangled that one died within twenty-four hours and the other was invalided back to Mafeking. The survivor explained that he had been tossed twenty feet by a rhinoceros which had appeared suddenly out of the bush while he and his partner were following the trail of one they had shot. The other trooper had been caught in that wild charge and trampled underfoot.

That night after the Burial Service I saw Tommy looking at me strangely. I knew what he was thinking, because the same thoughts about Lady Luck were in my head.

Our hunting for the next few days was notable for its variety. We shot elands and carried their spiral-twisted horns to camp as trophies. We found impalas, two kinds of gazelles known as Thompsons and Grants, and the wildebeest, which is about the size of a cow, but with short upright horns. We brought down koodoos, gorgeous in their light-brown coats and five-foot spiral horns. Even more beautiful was the sable antelope, whose reddish-brown skin shone as if polished.

Many other varieties of game we shot, but the greatest experience of all was just ahead. As we became accustomed to the country Tommy and I extended our trips. One noon, many miles from camp, we worked our way up to the top of a kopje and turned to survey the country. Immediately our breaths caught in our throats.

The level veld stretched for mile after mile, and it seemed that every square rod of it was occupied

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by some wild animal. The country literally teemed with game. Distinctly we could see great herds of elephants, giraffes, many varieties of antelope, zebras, quaggas, lions, hyenas, jackals, rhinos.

For four hours we remained wide-eyed on the top of that kopje. We attempted to count small sections of the vast herds, but gave up at last; counting was impossible.

"Two hundred thousand at least," hazarded Tommy.

He wasn't far wrong. The remarkable part of it was that the beasts seemed totally unafraid of each other, even those which ordinarily were mortal enemies. Lions stalked between rows of antelope, which kept their distance, but appeared unalarmed. Elephants moved heavily, close to the zebras, hyenas and the tiny dik-dik were side by side. It seemed that the beautiful yellow light of day, a time when few carnivorous animals hunt food, was protecting all that vast herd. A general armistice had been declared; each animal enjoyed the tranquillity of the veld.

I know of no explanation for that vast congregation of game. Occasionally an explorer finds huge herds of animals migrating because of lack of water or feed. In such migrations there are occasionally thousands of animals, but the myriads we saw were not migrating.

"It's the Lord's zoo," Tommy vouchsafed at last. "There He has gathered the finest animals in Africa to parade before His eyes."

## BLACK FRONTIERS

All afternoon we remained on that hill-top, and when we returned to camp that night we discovered we hadn't fired a shot all day.

To a few of our chosen friends we told what we had seen, and they insisted that we take them to the hill-top the next day. On that second trip we found game in plenty, but not in limitless numbers. Again and again Tommy and I returned to the hill-top, but we never enjoyed a repetition of that first sight. Apparently the armistice in the animal world had ended. The Lord's zoo had been disbanded.

## Chapter X

MAN *v.* BUCK

OLD Lobengula, conveniently forgetting his promise to help us reach the Zambezi, sent word that he intended to betray us if we advanced farther northward. "Only death lies ahead for the white men," was the threat his envoy brought.

The chieftain's treachery produced momentary dismay. A council of war was held. The officers knew that it would take the envoy ten days to return to Bulawayo, the hill-city of Lobengula; it would require another ten days for the chief to organize his *impis* and descend upon us. It was decided to ignore his warning, to defy him, to push on as rapidly as possible two hundred and fifty miles north in the wilderness and build a second fort, to be called Victoria.

The bugle sounded, followed almost immediately by the transport drivers' cry, "Upstandt!" and the pistol-like cracking of whips. The Kafirs started the fires for a last cup of coffee, while the forelopers forced the oxen into their yokes and inspanned the wagons. Horses were saddled; they whinnied and champed impatiently. Now came the terse orders of Captain Turner, the swish and thud of the long whip-lashes, the creaking of leather, the banter of men, often blasphemous, generally bitter.

We were on the way once more, driving our little

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white barb deeper into the heart of Africa for Cecil John Rhodes. Overhead vultures wheeled and circled, V-shaped against the blue sky—watching, waiting for the rustle of Death. Hyenas and jackals prowled beside us as if certain of impending disaster.

We discovered now that our horses were not well salted after all. Frothing, choking, numbers died of the dread horse disease which became epidemic. Already short of mounts due to the losses in that wild elephant stampede at Fort Tuli, it became necessary for many of the troopers to proceed on foot. Being one of the youngest of the outfit, I was given this doubtful privilege. There was compensation, however, for Tommy and I could loiter along, investigating the country and hunting.

The terrain was strange and we dared not stray too far from the wagons. Always we carried with us some biltong, or dried meat, cut in strips a foot long and an inch in thickness. One chew of this nourishing food would last for hours. Bread, when we had any, was baked in an anthill. Before we could get our teeth into it we had to moisten it with water from wooden canteens which we carried over our shoulders. Fresh meat was cooked on a spit over a fire when and where we wanted it. As a matter of fact, considering the amount of walking and physical punishment, we ate but little. The sticky heat of Africa robbed us of our appetites.

That same heat made sleep restless and unrefreshing. Our blankets were sewed together at the bottom and sides to keep out the snakes, but often we



RHODES' FIRST OFFICE IN BULAWAYO



## MAN *v.* BUCK

threw them off in the middle of the night and sat before the embers of the fire, talking to kill time or to drown the depressing night noises.

Looking back, it seems a wonder we came through as well as we did. For twenty-five years or longer hunters in Africa have had their safaris boasting cooks, carriers, the most protective outfits of clothing, and many of the comforts of civilization, including splendid stocks of medicines and first-aid equipment. Most important of all, each hunter has natives at his side carrying weapons which range in power from the crashing elephant gun to the deadly automatic pistol.

In our long trek we had for each trooper but one Martini-Henry rifle, not to be compared with the modern weapons in power or accuracy, and no small arms whatever. Our clothes were tatters, our boots mere shreds. Mosquito-netting? Anti-venom? Skin lotions, water-coolers, antiseptics? Tobacco, smoked or chewed, had to answer most of these wants for us. Surprising, the uses of tobacco; chew it for thirst, smoke it to drive away insects, apply it to snake-bites or insect stings to draw out the poison, and—most glorious of all—watch its smoke curl upward in the African night and temporarily forget that you are in the Matabele country and may be attacked by ten thousand warriors in five minutes or five days. Forget, too, that long, leathery Colonial whose courage and wit you had learned to appreciate and whose mangled, lifeless body had just been brought into camp on a litter.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

Tragedies around us in the animal world constantly reminded us that we too were fighting for life. One noon Tommy and I were sitting in the shade beside a sluggish stream as was our custom during the middle of the day. Except for the occasional cautious pad of some animal in the jungle behind us there was no sound. Drowsily we watched birds and butterflies cut gorgeous patterns above the river.

Tommy nudged me. Out of the tangle of creepers twenty paces to our right a small Thompson gazelle stepped noiselessly. She paused at the river-bank, staring and sniffing as if half aware of our presence. Onward she moved toward the water, lifting her dainty hoofs high. At the water's edge she paused again. Apparently she saw no danger, but a few feet from the bank lay the crocodile. Only his snout and eyes were above water, like a gnarled snag in the stream.

The gazelle lowered her head to sip the water. A splash, a swirl, and the crocodile's huge tail flailed out in one mighty blow. The gazelle dropped, and instantly the crocodile, jaws wide, seized her.

Tommy and I shot at the same moment. The crocodile's armour was not bullet-proof, even against the soft-nosed .45's. His white belly turned skyward and his short legs jerked spasmodically.

"Let's see what he has inside him," Tommy suggested. "Suppose he's caught any other gazelles this morning?"

We dragged the carcass to shore, ripped open that repulsive white belly, and examined the contents.

We found huge turtle-shells, hard as rock, totally undigested, the bones of unidentified animals, slowly disintegrating, and a great mass of digesting food. Finally, to our disgust, we found somewhere in that huge interior a gold bracelet and three gold bangles. Obviously some black belle had recently furnished the crocodile with a dinner.

When we had identified the trinkets Tommy turned on the croc. Urged by an impulse of disgust and hatred, he delivered a resounding kick under that bony jaw. The result was surprising. Apparently the kick disturbed some reflex, for that death-dealing tail flailed out once more. Tommy and I leaped for the bush, more frightened than we cared to admit. We didn't return to that croc either, but from that day on we wasted a good many bullets on his cousins and neighbours. We dug up their eggs from the sand too, but after an attempt to eat them we felt as if young crocodiles were kicking around inside us.

One evening I shot a reed buck on the bank of a tiny river. It dropped like lead, and with a whoop to Tommy I went forward to examine it. Just as I was stooping the dead buck came to life. In one leap it was on its feet and charging me. There was no opportunity to use my rifle, which I dropped. In self-defence I seized the buck by the horns.

Immediately began a wrestling match, Kemp *v.* Buck. Kid Buck was more than I had bargained for. Most of the time he was on top of me; occasionally I would get the upper hand, but for such

a frail-appearing animal he certainly had plenty of strength and knew how to use it. I tugged and twisted at his head; he braced and pushed.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Tommy. He was running in circles round us, at first in fright and then in sheer enjoyment. "I'll wager on the buck!" he shouted. "A sovereign on the buck!"

"Help me!" I choked. "He's too much for me!"

"Cover my wager?" Tommy demanded. "A sovereign on the buck?"

I tried to swear, but I had lost all breath; I strove to drop the buck and get away, but he was on me again in a second.

"Shoot him!" I managed to gasp. "For God's sake, shoot him, Tommy! He's got me!"

A derisive shout from Tommy was the only answer. The noise aroused the buck into more furious endeavours. He charged fiercely, bearing me over backward.

"I win!" yelled Tommy, as he leaped forward and struck the buck at the base of the skull with his rifle.

For several moments I lay on the ground. There was no breath left in my body, no strength. I waited until I was well rested, then rose to my feet and made for Tommy.

That wrestling match with the buck was just a preliminary to the bout Kemp *v.* Tomlinson, which lasted for the next ten minutes on the banks of that little river. A head taller than Tommy, I wore him

down at last. Carrying him to the river-bank, I stuck his head under water.

He twisted and squirmed and fought, but slowly, methodically, I counted the bubbles which rose to the surface of the brown water. The first fifteen came rapidly enough, but before the twentieth I felt that Tommy had paid the full price for the entertainment he had enjoyed that afternoon.

## Chapter XI

### DELAY AND DAKKA

OUR progress reached an *impasse* on the Buby river. It was imperative that we hasten northward through that hostile country lest Lobengula's warriors descend upon us and annihilate us; it was just as imperative that we wait in the very midst of it for several days. Now wasn't that a hell of a fix? The troopers swore and grumbled. The officers set their lips a little tighter, ordered an increase in sentries, sent scouting expeditions to watch for any movement in the country around us.

The delay was necessary because we were almost entirely out of supplies. Our food had lessened until it consisted only of mealies, which we had to grind between rocks before we could make porridge. Of our clothes almost nothing remained. Many of us had no socks or shirts, and the corduroy outfits which had been so trim when we started were rags. Shoes and boots had been patched and tied together so often that they were worthless.

To remedy these conditions transport wagons had been sent up from the south. Already they were well on their way toward us. The officers had to choose between pushing forward in that wild country without supplies and waiting there amid the dangers. They chose the latter evil.

Something must be done to while away those hours

## DELAY AND DAKKA

of waiting. We spent a day filing the metal sights from our rifles and inseting ivory beads—this for better visibility at dusk and to prevent the disconcerting gleam of the sun on metal during the day. We looked for more trouble, and found it. Here, suggested Tommy, was an opportunity to indulge in a little *dakka jag*. “Just to see what it’s like, you understand.”

We had watched elaborate ceremonies of *dakka*-smoking among the natives and knew the procedure. A hole the size of a large pipe-bowl was made in the ground; from it led a tunnel two feet long in whose end was placed a hollow reed which the addicts could take between their lips while prone. The bowl of the earthen pipe was filled with *dakka*, dried leaves of wild hemp, plentiful in that part of Africa. An ember was applied to the bowl, and the first native took his place at the stem. He inhaled deeply, so deeply it seemed that the smoke must come out of his toes. It wasn’t long before he rolled to one side to dream of gorgeous happiness. Immediately another native took his place, followed by a third and a fourth. The expression on their faces was always beatific, and Tommy and I were curious about their sensations.

Bribing two natives to construct the proper sort of pipe in the earth and to furnish us with a sufficient amount of *dakka*, we were ready for the orgy. Who would take the first puff? Tommy and I looked at each other and grinned like two schoolboys in front of their first highball.

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"Reckon you better puff first, Slim," Tommy suggested. "I have more brains than you and will keep them longer."

I threw myself on the ground, supported my chin on my elbows, and closed my lips around the reed stem. One great puff I took. The smoke was acrid. It tore at my lungs. I choked and sputtered. Tears came to my eyes. I took another puff. This time the smoke seemed softer; it soothed the roughness of my lungs. A third and a fourth puff I took, then a fifth, which was a long-drawn sigh.

A balloon floated in front of me, a huge purple balloon of infinite softness. It burst suddenly without noise. Out of it flowed gorgeous streamers of all colours, strangely like the flash of the birds we had watched over the rivers. Next came beautiful women, ivory-skinned, black of hair and black of eyes, lithe and graceful. They moved forward, smiling softly, extending their arms. I reached for the hands of the nearest, but my reaching was a strange thing, for my arms were limp at my side and I knew it.

Another balloon burst. This was a huge black one, and from it night flowed over me. All was peaceful and quiet, a peace as deep as Nirvana.

The next morning Tommy marched a weazened, emaciated native up to me. The fellow's skin was drawn tightly over his skull; his ribs protruded, his legs and arms were merely hinged bones.

"Horrible example number one," Tommy announced to me. "This is what *dakka*-smoking

## DELAY AND DAKKA

does to a fellow. I've rounded up ten or fifteen others that look just as bad. How about it?"

I raised my head weakly, shook it, and then was sorry that I had jumbled my brains again. "Don't need any object-lesson," I said. "Beautiful dreams—bah! What's the use if you realize all the time you're powerless to move?" Sudden anger smote me. "What about you?" I demanded. "Didn't you see it through like you promised?"

"Two puffs were enough for me," Tommy declared. "I had to keep sober enough to drag you back to camp. Couldn't leave you out there as a juicy meal for some lion or hyena."

That was my first and last attempt at *dakka*-smoking. It was not a vice to which white men became addicts. Other troopers, hearing of my experience, tried it and without exception never returned to it. Something in the nervous make-up of a white man demands that even his dreams be of action; apparently the blacks are content to lie log-like and watch visions parade by—and they are some visions, I'll swear.

Just as *dakka* aroused our curiosity, so, in a different manner, did the baboons around us. We didn't like them a little bit, particularly at night when they made the hours hideous with their barking—one of the worst of all sounds in the African jungle. We didn't admire their habits. Far from being the playful creatures whose antics amuse the children in modern zoos, the baboon in Africa is ferocious and cruel. Often he sneaks into native

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kraals and kills women and children. He is always ready to pick on some weaker animal, and we had seen one attack a calf immediately after it had done suckling and tear open its stomach to get at the milk inside.

Despite its innate cruelty, the baboon will never fight unless cornered. Then he becomes a veritable demon. At the same time he is so advanced in the scale of intelligence that killing him seemed to us almost as bad as murdering a black native in cold blood. We heard at this camp and several times later during the trek, always from native sources which seemed creditable, that baboons occasionally took native women as wives. There was much talk, as there is even to-day, of creatures roaming the jungles half baboon and half native.

Tommy and I often teased baboons by pretending to attack their kopje homes. We were at this childish sport one day and playing hide-and-seek with a huge male baboon who was wild with anger at us when we saw a leopard slinking along through the thorn-bush fifty yards away. Tommy raised his gun, took a quick bead, and fired. The baboon leaped away like a shadow, and the leopard somersaulted. Instantly he was on his feet again, heading for thicker brush. We were on the point of giving up the trail when he appeared and ran beside us—a strange performance. We both fired this time, and the animal rolled over dead.

“I thought leopard-hunting was dangerous,” scoffed Tommy. “That was like shooting an ordinary house cat.”

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"Perhaps this one wasn't feeling well," I answered. "Anyway, we won't have to tell the other troopers how easy it was."

At that moment the baboon appeared again, sneaking through the thicket toward us. When he perceived that we saw him he began to beat his sides and bark—a queer sound like raucous mirth.

"Why's he laughing at us?" demanded Tommy. "Not every man gets his first leopard so easy."

Proudly we skinned the beautiful animal and carried the trophy back to camp. Some of the natives came forward and examined the skin.

"Cheetah," one of them said. "Cheetah!"

We called for an interpreter and found that we had not killed a leopard at all, but one of the pets of a neighbouring kraal—a cheetah or hunting leopard, a prize which takes infinite patience to capture and months to train. For days we were ridiculed by our fellow-troopers and disliked by the natives, but what worried us most was whether or not that baboon knew we had killed the prize tame cheetah of the nearest kraal.

Cheetahs were plentiful in the Transvaal and in Bechuanaland, but not many of them had been trained to hunt. Most of them were slaughtered for their skins, and the chances are that if you have a beautiful leopard-skin which you prize highly it once covered a cheetah. The real leopard-skin is more glossy and highly marked; its value is tremendous.

Less than two days after our experience with the cheetah we brought down a genuine leopard. Our

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orders for that day had been to shoot some eland for camp meat, and we were stalking a herd when we saw the huge cat-like animal sneaking along a dry *donga*. Sending our little guides on ahead to a small thicket, we moved slowly in on our quarry which the Bushmen declared was in the thickest of the brush. Now to drive him out!

While we were discussing ways and means of driving him out the leopard took matters into his own claws. Without warning he charged. Both of us fired and crippled him, but he was able to crawl back into the brush. We moved closer, and out he came, leaping straight at us. Again we fired, but not quite quickly enough. His last great leap reached Salt, who was standing by my side. Sharp claws raked desperately, baring the little fellow's shoulder and ribs. Fortunately, that leap was the leopard's dying convulsion.

The example of the leopard's courage caused us to watch for more of the animals, and we soon discovered they were the greatest hunters of all. One morning about six o'clock we saw a beautiful specimen lying flat on a large tree limb above an animal trail; at five o'clock that evening we passed the same way and he was still waiting. We felt that his patience merited a reward, and neither Tommy nor I had the desire to kill him, although we knew that the same night he might raid a native kraal or even pounce on one of our troopers.

Over the camp-fire that night we indulged in a general argument, attempting to decide which

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African animal was most perilous to hunt. Thus far on the trek we had lost men to lions, rhinoceroses, crocodiles, and elephants, and all of these beasts were supported in the argument. The wild buffalo, which charges men at sight, was given a large vote, and the leopard was not far behind.

The consensus of opinion in our camp was that in ferocity and ability to deal quick death the beasts should be ranked: lion, buffalo, elephant, and rhinoceros. The great Selous agreed with this rating, and later Theodore Roosevelt placed the lion first, but considered the leopard of remarkable ferocity and vitality. Sir Samuel Baker put the elephant first, then the rhinoceros, buffalo, and lion.

Tommy and I maintained that the peril of hunting any animal depended entirely upon circumstances. At times the wounded animal would run; at other times he would charge, and there was no telling which course he would take. As we became more experienced in the wilds our conviction grew. We held plenty of respect for the rhinoceros, lion, and elephant, but the baboon is a mean customer, a wounded giraffe has death-dealing hoofs, and the larger antelopes are equipped with frightful horn daggers. The whole matter narrowed down, we were convinced, to the time, the place, and the beast.

Our proof came within a week. We had a close call with a charging rhino, so close that Tommy thought I was killed. The rhino thought so too, and to his mistake I owed my life; he had merely knocked over the tree behind which I had jumped. We were

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both shaken by the close call—Tommy had missed death by two feet and a split second himself—and we called off hunting for the day.

Traipsing in, we met a wart-hog in the low brush. He was a huge fellow with twelve-inch tusks. His sides were well fattened, and with the smell of bacon in our nostrils we both fired. Our marksmanship was terrible. The wounded wart-hog charged us. There was something ludicrous in that charge after the one we had just been through—a row-boat instead of a battleship. The rhino had weighed at least three tons; the wart-hog weighed perhaps two hundred pounds. Yet, undaunted, he snorted and crashed toward us like his huge brother of the jungle, just as ferocious and red-eyed and determined. He was temporarily a killer, too. Needless to say, we side-stepped quickly and were glad that our second shots brought him to earth.

The coincidence of two charges aroused some fancies in Tommy's mind. "Do you suppose Old Lady Luck is deserting us at last?" he asked. "Charged twice in one day—it looks as if we were the next in line for the poison."

"Forget it," I said. "Let's get this porker back to camp. There's good meat on him."

In camp we cut the choicest slabs from the wart-hog and then turned him over to the natives. It was always amusing to watch the blacks tear at a carcass, and Tommy and I needed something cheerful to quiet our nerves. We lined the Kafirs up and gave them the signal: "Go!"

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The blacks leaped forward, pounced upon the carcass, and commenced their feed. Into their mouths went any bit they could tear loose or hack away with their crude knives. When they reached the entrails the real struggle commenced. Often enough two of them would start on opposite ends of a long strip and race toward the centre of it, exactly like two chickens fighting over a worm. In fifteen minutes there was nothing left of the slaughtered animal, and some of the blacks' abdomens protruded like toy balloons.

## *Chapter XII*

### THE VICTORIA TREK

CAPTAIN TURNER called Tommy and me to his tent and charged us to extend our expeditions and make better use of them. We were to keep our eyes and ears alert for possible movement of the Matabele warriors and take careful notes of the lay of the land. These notes would be valuable for future expeditions; more important, they would inform the officers of strategic points in case of attack by Lobengula's black hordes.

The country was criss-crossed with game trails and paths of natives. Often at early morning or dusk we half imagined we saw black shadows moving toward our camp; more than once we sensed human life close to us in the brush. Finally we came on a group of Matabele warriors carrying their long shields and assagais. Again our minds held visions of the camp being obliterated by Lobengula's warriors, and we were relieved to count only twenty very young warriors. We circled back to camp as rapidly as possible and reported to Captain Turner.

"Probably spies," he said. "No reason to expect attack yet. Dr Jameson has men in Lobengula's kraal, and no report has come that the warriors are on the move. By the way," he added, as we turned to leave, "I wouldn't talk about what you have seen. The men aren't too happy as it is."

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He was right. The conditions in that camp fifty miles north of Fort Tuli were not cheerful. The troopers were openly rebellious at the long period of inaction. Why give Lobengula time to get his warriors completely organized for wiping us out? We needed the supplies badly enough, but it was better to live without them than to die with them. Where were the damn' transport wagons, anyway? No one had heard from them for days. Probably they had been captured by a black raiding-party and never would arrive.

More days we waited, and the feeling of unrest rose higher. It was as if fear came slithering out of the jungle, a noisome thing, slowly, insidiously creeping over that handful of troopers, smothering their courage, their cheerfulness, even their obedience to orders.

Relief came at the right moment. One morning excitement surged through camp. The transport wagons were approaching from the south. Creaking, jolting, they appeared at the edge of the clearing. A cheer and a rush of men greeted them. The oxen, we noticed, were thin, exhausted; obviously they had been driven far and with killing rapidity. But here they were at last, dragging vital supplies which would allow us to push northward another two hundred miles.

A wave of cheerfulness caught up the men, overwhelming the forebodings of the past days, momentarily obliterating all fear and depression. Vegetables! The transport wagons carried vegetables. The mouth

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of every man watered, and there was a rush for the commissary. Even when the vegetables proved to be dried cakes about four inches square we were not wholly disappointed. We knew that almost every vegetable which grows under the sun was pressed into those cakes, and when we put them into hot water they would swell up like balloons, but still the taste of the vegetables was there, and it was odd what a craving we had. Soon a dozen kettles were simmering, and the troopers stood over them, sniffing ecstatically.

In that same consignment were several boxes of canned beef, 'bully beef' from Libby, McNeill and Libby, Chicago. It struck some of us as rather odd in that country where game could be knocked over with a stick that we should be furnished with canned meat which had come half-way across two continents and traversed at least two great oceans. At least the beef lived up to its name—it certainly was 'bully.'

Oddly enough, I heard more of that same canned beef this winter—forty years after we left it as unfit to eat. Major Frederick Burnham, African explorer, fighter and writer extraordinary, told me that he found those little square cans at our camp three years after we left them. He was scouting in the first Matabele war; hungry, tired, without food, and afraid to fire his gun for fear of attracting black warriors, he considered the canned beef he stumbled on a veritable godsend. So much for the bully beef! Long may it endure.

Clothes and shoes were issued. Our tatters were

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discarded, and with them was shed much gloom and ill-temper. Odd how tattered clothes make a man's very soul tattered. Fresh clothes, fresh food, and we were eager to push forward again. We were more than a match for Lobengula and every damn' warrior he had at his command—we were sure of that.

The last afternoon in camp we spent watching the antics of an African albino, the only one I ever saw. He was so repulsive that he was fascinating. His hair was almost red, but it was kinked in negroid fashion; his eyes were watery and a pronounced hue of pink; his skin the colour of a man with leprosy. We could readily understand why he was considered an embodied spirit by the natives and even took precedence over the witch-doctors. He realized his power fully, and in spite of his awful appearance there was something of majesty and command in his bearing.

Again the bugle sounded, the oxen were yoked to the transports, hippo-hide whips cracked, troopers swore and cheered in the same breath. We were on the move once more, starting northward from our temporary camp to some unmarked spot far to the north, where we were to erect another fort which was already named—Fort Victoria.

Ahead of us was Dr Jameson, the little bald-headed man whose courage exceeded that of any person I ever knew, almost the only man who could possibly have made a success of that long trek of the Mounted Police toward the Zambezi. With Dr Jameson was Frederick Courtney Selous, the great

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guide, using every trick he knew to help our progress through the jungles and forests. Weary miles ahead lay our goal, and on our left a great black thunder-cloud was gathering—the warrior hordes of Lobengula.

Watchfulness was the order for day and night. We outspanned soon after mid-afternoon; sentinels were posted and a few picked men sent out to reconnoitre the country close at hand. Jack Tomlinson and I were assigned to this duty, and we both relished the rôles of scouts, exaggerating our caution. Our watchfulness revealed no black enemies, but rewarded us in escape from peril.

It was Tommy, for instance, who saw the python coiled around the trunk and branches of a tree which overhung the animal trail down which we were moving. It was a huge snake, but almost invisible in the big timber. At sight of it we shot. Down came the serpent, twisting and writhing convulsively in repulsive, muscular coils which could crush into a pulp an animal the size of a horse. Stretched out, our python was horrible for every inch of twenty-six feet.

Salt and Pepper, who were always with us on the trails, warned us constantly against the puff-adder, whose protective colouring was almost perfect. Great was our surprise when that piece of rotten wood beside the trail suddenly swelled up, head and body, and became a snake whose venom is one of the most poisonous in the world.

Even worse than the adder was the black mamba.

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Not more than six feet long, the mamba strikes like a flash without warning, without cause. A man who lets those long fangs touch him has to be sitting on an antidote, so to speak, to survive. Even then he is in for a long, hard fight against the poison.

Every night hyenas gathered in the shadows around the camp-fire and emitted their horrible hysterical cries. Occasionally we saw them in daylight, both the red and the laughing hyena, the latter almost six feet long, high at the shoulder, and sloping toward the tail. We hated them. They seemed to be waiting pestilence or war so that they could gnaw at our bones. Nothing could we find in their favour. They ate their own kind; they were garbage collectors even worse than the vultures; they were slinking cowards always up to some game of depredation, striving to crunch in their tremendous jaws the bones of some weaker animal, or even attacking a sick man or small child.

Hunting, exploring, fighting the insects, wild animals, and pestilence, we pushed forward. Each day's trek, small though it might be, was a definite advance. At last we reached the selected site for Fort Victoria, a strategic point north of the Tokwi river. Here we cleared a few acres of land and erected another of those flimsy stockades of poles. With thought of Lobengula and his warriors foremost in our minds we worked rapidly, even though we realized that the fort would be swept aside like a cobweb if the *impis* descended upon us.

## Chapter XIII

### THE DANCE OF DEATH

“VOLUNTEERS wanted for a dangerous mission!”

Captain Chamley Turner issued the call. Tersely he explained the situation. Word had come up from the south that some effort must be made to parley with Lobengula, whose *impis* were preparing for battle. If the parley accomplished nothing more than to delay the descent of the black hordes upon the troopers it would be worth while.

“All volunteers will be given special consideration and honour,” Captain Turner promised.

The troopers discussed the matter thoroughly. Lobengula’s kraal was the hill-city of Bulawayo, a name retained by the city to-day. It would require a dangerous, difficult trek of two hundred miles to reach it. Once there the chances were that Lobengula would order or allow his bloodthirsty warriors to murder us. His reputation for treachery and cruelty was unsurpassed.

“Volunteers wanted!” repeated Captain Turner that night at roll-call. “Twenty men to go to Bulawayo. Please step forward.”

Our company had been greatly reduced in numbers, but there remained more than eighty Mounted Police. Unlike story-book accounts, not a single one of those eighty-odd men responded to the call.

Captain Turner’s face became stern. “Line

## THE DANCE OF DEATH

up!" he called. "Hit or miss. Now! Count off! Every fifth man step forward."

We counted, each man hoping that luck would not desert him. It came my turn to call out—"Thirty-five"—and I knew that I had another experience ahead of me, perhaps my last.

The party was to put out immediately in charge of a sergeant who knew enough of the native language and customs to get along, particularly the forms of politeness. He was a Colonial of consummate courage, and wise in the ways of the forests and jungles, a man who kept his head in tight places—in short, a splendid man for the dangerous and delicate mission.

We were to make the trip on foot, and eight natives were assigned to us as interpreters and camp-workers. Additional blacks were loaded with salt, bright calico, old trading rifles, knives—anything which might bribe Lobengula. Money, of course, was of no use, and of gold the natives already had plenty, both in jewellery and carried free in porcupine-quills at their necks.

At dawn the little expedition moved slowly and reluctantly out of camp. Only fifteen miles we made the first day, and at night we camped amid some old ruins of which we could make nothing. Covered inches deep with moss and creepers, they bore many strange drawings of birds and animals. The natives in our party could not enlighten us as to their origin. That weird place added to our feeling of desolation and peril. It wasn't a happy camp, nor were the ones which followed.

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Gradually the natives became more numerous around us, and we realized we were nearing Lobengula's headquarters. The procedure at each native kraal was always the same. We advanced slowly and noisily with uncertain grins on our faces and a few presents in our hands. None of the natives had ever seen white men before, and at sight of us the women and children screamed and fled. The men, although plainly frightened, refused to admit it, and insisted that the women return. Meanwhile the males advanced, received our presents, and inspected us curiously, their faces depicting neither friendliness nor hatred.

Gradually the women returned, and soon their demeanour changed from shyness to coquettishness, or perhaps their love-making was too obvious to be called coquettishness. Their greasy bodies, the myriads of flies hovering around them, the kinky, weirdly shaped top-knots of hair, and huge earlobes—we did not find them particularly attractive. The best way to avoid their attentions, we found, was to give them a handful of beads, which kept them amused and interested until we had left.

We noticed in all the kraals that the word 'mama' was used to denote mother, and we decided that this word or something similar was probably the first one uttered by all babes, black, white, or yellow. Another word which was common, and which the American negroes must have brought from Africa, was 'piccaninny,' to denote a small child.

At night we made it a point to camp some dis-



STATUE OF RHODES AT BULAWAYO

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tance from the nearest village. Even there rest was not serene. For long hours of the night we could hear the throbbing of log-drums: *bomb-bomb-bomb*—a strange rhythmic beat like the pulsating of a gigantic heart. Through the forests and jungles around us messages were being relayed with great rapidity, messages about us, orders concerning us. What they were we could not tell, but the sound of the drums was infinitely depressing.

The night of the ninth day from camp found us at the main kraal of King Lobengula, the hill-city of Bulawayo. There could be no mistaking the huge kraal of beautifully woven huts surrounded by mealie patches and teeming with people. Twenty thousand guests could be housed there, it was said, and great storehouses were overflowing with ivory, gold, and food. Before many months that great kraal would be a smoking mass of ruins, its treasure-houses fired; but none of us foresaw that. The village with its thousands of native guards looked immense, impregnable.

At the outer gate of Bulawayo we waited—wondering, fearing. Three *indunas*, or head men, appeared. After proper exchange of salutations they ordered us to remain where we were that night. Perhaps, they added, Lobengula would see us the next day.

We pitched camp at the gate and waited. From our position we could see the thousands of natives moving around the kraal like ants whose hill had been disturbed. Scores of slaves were in evidence,

## BLACK FRONTIERS

some of them frightfully mutilated—victims of recent raids of the Matabele.

With nightfall hundreds of natives came to see us. Unlike other blacks whom we had seen, they were distinctly unafraid. Huge, haughty, glowering, they sized up our little party and gradually surrounded our camp. We could see their fires beyond us, and realized that we were a small white spot in a great black ring. There was not much joy or sleep in camp that night.

Dawn never came more slowly or ominously. Slate-grey clouds in the east became red, a veritable blood colour. Brighter and brighter they glowed as the sun's rays strove to penetrate them. The red changed to yellow and the sun appeared.

We were already up, expectant, anxious. Nothing happened. All morning we waited, the target of curious and insolent eyes. Warriors bumped into us, and we smiled at them. They leered and laughed, and we laughed back.

Hours passed. We cooked our lunch and strove to eat it, and always hundreds of rolling black eyes were upon us. No head men appeared. We realized perfectly that they were in parley with Lobengula, deciding our fate, and we began to doubt if we would see the treacherous chief at all. More likely that black ring around us would close like a steel trap.

Word came, brought by an old, barbarically decorated *induna*. We were to proceed to Lobengula. He had granted us the *indaba*, or long talk.

Loading ourselves with presents and prayers, we

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followed the envoy into the inner kraal, a foul enclosure where flies swarmed around myriads of bones and vultures soared overhead—a place without sanitation of any kind, filthy beyond words. Under a mimosa-tree sat Lobengula, the black tyrant over that empire of thousands of square miles.

If we had been the least bit sure of ourselves we would have laughed at sight of him. Outside of a circus I have never seen a man so huge and fat. He was sitting on a stool, but it was invisible, for he overflowed it all round. He appeared as large as a small ox—six feet four in height and weighing almost seven hundred pounds. The fat fell in folds over his half-naked body, and perspiration ran in rivulets continually from head to heels. The gleam of little eyes, deep-sunken in fat, the huge flat nose, the dark colour, made him appear utterly bestial. In front of him several slave-girls filled enormous bowls of Kafir beer, which he poured down his gullet with astonishing rapidity.

He wore no clothes except the usual breech-clout, which consisted of a beautiful leopard-skin. The ring of hair on his head was larger and more ornamental than that of the other natives. Around his huge neck were gold rings, and his arms and ankles were decorated with bangles—emblems of his kingly state. Occasionally natives approached their tyrant. Ten paces away they dropped to the ground and squirmed forward to his fat legs or crossed beyond. Except for a few favoured *indunas* all must crawl before his Majesty.

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In the near background we could see the king's wives watching us curiously. Gradually they edged forward until they stood just behind Lobengula. The royal ladies were certainly a sight to see. The bigger and fatter they were apparently the more desirable. We understood that a method of choice in marriage was to place the candidates in a line, and those whose bodily profiles extended farthest both east and west were the choicest belles. Most of Lobengula's wives certainly took prizes in those two directions, only a few of the younger ones not having reached balloon-like perfection.

Lobengula's assorted queens were not quite as greasy as the commoners; they were allowed the royal prerogative of anointing themselves with crushed herbs and flowers instead of ordinary grease. Their headdresses too were higher, and their aprons larger. Here it might be noted that an apron the size of a handkerchief was considered full dress by any black lady. Generally made of some animal skin, it was tied to the waist and open at the sides.

Gradually the curious kraal silenced itself for the *indaba*. The head men had drawn a hundred feet away, and behind them at least two thousand warriors arranged themselves in a great circle. Each black bore his assagai and shield, and to our eyes they appeared not only ready for instant use, but also as if they had been used successfully many times before.

Our place was in the centre of this little tea-party, close to Lobengula, at whom we gazed with a respect

## THE DANCE OF DEATH

which we felt for the moment. At a signal from the tyrant our sergeant stepped forward and made a honeyed speech. The chief grunted an answer. We filed past, presented our gifts, and were invited to sit in the filth.

That *indaba* seemed interminable. Our sergeant praised Lobengula to the sky; Lobengula smirked and replied with the same kind of talk about the white men, a parley just about as truthful as a meeting of modern diplomats or a women's afternoon gossip party. From time to time Lobengula lifted enormous bowls to his lips and drank; rather, he gurgled beer in the great gulps of an animal.

When we joined the Mounted Police in Mafeking we had been warned never to show fear in front of a native, no matter what the circumstances, but as this *indaba* progressed our men certainly displayed nervousness, to put it mildly. A short distance to the right of the chief was a steep bank; below was a pool of water alive with crocodiles. We knew already that those crocodiles were executioners for Lobengula. Another method of execution was practised on the sick, who were placed far away from camp in huts which were left open. If the invalids were alive the next morning they would recover, according to the witch-doctors. Remembering this tale, I glanced around. I didn't see any natives who looked convalescent, and I decided that the hyenas had done their work well.

Other accounts of Lobengula's amusements flashed through my mind as the *indaba* continued.

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A victim was tied fast to a stake on an anthill. By morning there was no trace of the sacrifice to the chief's cruelty except the bones. Another method reserved for those who defied his authority was to slash the victim with assagais and allow the cruel beaks of vultures to tear him to pieces, strip by strip.

My peace of mind was not increased when I noticed that several of the natives around me were minus an eye, a nose, or an ear or two, and I surmised, which was true, that these little articles had been given to Lobengula as a 'benefit' by those who did not suit him. Such a happy time I was having at that *indaba*, and all my comrades looked quite sickly yellow.

Kafir beer was passed by the slave-girls, but we partook of very little, deciding that if we lost our heads we would do it in a more sporting manner than through beer. The flowery talk was finished at last, and with much saluting and smirking we were herded back to our quarters for the night.

Soon presents were brought to us in the shape of titbits of game, sour milk, and honey. Then came an invitation to the native dance for the next day. The invitation did not please us greatly, for we knew that the celebration very likely would be at our expense. The natives work themselves to a tremendous pitch of excitement at such dances, and trouble generally starts—murderous trouble.

Sleep that night was noticeable by its absence; it seemed that every one wished to prolong the last

## THE DANCE OF DEATH

hours of life as much as possible. Next morning none of us left camp, but mid-afternoon we were herded in front of Lobengula's pretentious hut. Except for the slave-girls who passed around Kafir beer the affair was a stag party. This did not increase our peace of mind. Ceremoniously we were placed on the edge of a circle of natives not far from Lobengula. Immediately things began to move.

The musicians took their places across from us, carrying their instruments: drums of hollow logs split lengthwise and covered with stretched skins; smaller drums with the thews or sinews of animals drawn taut; rhino-horns with finger-holes cut in them; wind instruments made of bamboo reed.

The music started. It was not harmonious, but there was a strange surging in it, very slow at first, but rapidly increasing in *tempo*. Singing began, apparently the same words over and over again, in splendid time with the music.

One set of dancers went into the ring. All were naked with the exception of headdresses decorated with horns. Pigment was smeared over the huge, muscular bodies in every colour from white to dark red. An elliptical white decoration, much like a representation of the evil eye, seemed the most popular. Each warrior carried his assagai and club.

The stamping of feet began, raising an enormous amount of dust and odours. Spears and clubs were swung wildly as the dancers became more excited. Each moment they leaped a little higher and yelled a little louder. Now it was a bedlam of whirling,

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howling, naked men. Solo performances began. One warrior broke out of the ring and gyrated according to his own weird fancy; back he leaped and rejoined the ring while another took his place. Perspiration ran down the dancers in streams, and still they continued. When almost exhausted they left the ring to drink beer in preparation for the next dance, and another group took up the fantastic whirling.

Far into the night the dance continued. If the warriors looked horrible by day, in the gleam of the firelight they were demoniacal. Suddenly we realized that all the dancers were in the ring at the same time, yelling a deafening chorus, throwing their spears here and there, wild with excitement, drunk from the beer. The climax arrived.

Six or eight of the tallest and most highly decorated of the warriors leaped straight up in the air, shouted, lifted their war-clubs and spears and charged our party. They brought their spears down with a flash against our chests.

*"Bulala amadota!"*—"Kill the white men!"

There have been other times in my life when death was only a hair's-breadth away, but that scene will remain in my mind as the most horror-inspiring of all. Those men intended to murder us—there was no doubt of that. Just one little motion from Lobengula, the wink of a gleaming eye, the nod of his porcine head, or the lifting of his fat hand, and we all would have been spitted on the assagais of African warriors.

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Lobengula gave no sign. The warriors retired slowly to the centre of the ring. More beer was passed, and in the early hours of the morning we were led back to our quarters. As we neared the edge of the outer kraal it took force of will not to turn and run for the jungle. That, of course, would have been sure death, and we stuck together.

Next morning came word that the *indaba* was concluded for ever. Lobengula was our friend—for five minutes at least. We were to go back immediately to the main party and report to our captain that wonderful friendship of Lobengula the king.

As a matter of fact, time showed that our mission had merely postponed the day when the black horde of King Lobengula would descend on the whites.

## *Chapter XIV*

### RUINS

THE first few miles of our return trip to Fort Victoria were traversed with much more rapidity than dignity. Our minds still teemed with visions of those black warriors who had obviously longed to push their assagais through our chests. It was almost impossible to believe that they were not still chasing us, wild with blood-lust. Perhaps that clump of mimosa-thorn ahead would debouch a band of them; perhaps the shadows of that ebony-grove concealed a war-party. It was almost too good to believe—the fact that we were returning alive, unscathed, from the greedy hands of the black tyrant.

The reaction from the strain of the past few days took the form of light-heartedness which was almost childish. We laughed. We cheered. We told and re-told what we had seen, and our spirits rose constantly higher as the distance between us and Bulawayo increased.

We selected another and longer route to return to camp, and began to notice things which our perturbed state of mind prevented our seeing as we approached. Waterfalls in abundance, beautiful in both sunlight and shadow; gorgeous little pools alive with fish through which crocodiles sludged lazily; the most brilliant of flowering shrubs, thousands of

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gaily coloured butterflies, the most spectacular of birds.

We stopped at several small kraals and did some profitable trafficking, exchanging fresh meat for porcupine quills filled with gold, or for claws and other curios. One day we brought in a reed buck, but the natives wouldn't touch it. As it had cost me personally several hours of stalking I wanted to know why. A taste convinced me that it was far inferior to other antelope meat.

Determined to give the blacks a feast, I returned to the hunt, taking a couple of hunters and native guides with me. Amid the 'vack-um-beke' thorn one of the natives grunted and stopped, pointing to what seemed a group of dead trees a quarter of a mile away. The trees moved, bending and turning in a grotesque way as if a wind-storm were sweeping them. Giraffes, of course, blending with the scenery in such a manner that it was almost impossible to distinguish them.

We pretended to ignore the herd and approached at a quartering angle to within two hundred and fifty yards. The beasts were eating the twigs and leaves of bushes, their tongues, almost a foot long, tearing the vegetation away. A few of them were ground-grazing, their front legs straddled so wide in their effort to reach the grass that they appeared ludicrously awkward.

It was time to shoot. I elevated my sights and fired at the largest, who fell. The natives let out a yell and raced forward. The other giraffes took off,

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their heads and necks stretched straight ahead and the hind legs overlapping the front ones. The noise they made was like a bunch of Southern negroes playing the bones—split hoofs clacking together. Perhaps this tune was given to the giraffes in recompense for their absolute dumbness in every other way.

Our particular quarry had been killed instantly, and I resolved never to kill another. His large, bright eyes and beautiful skin belonged to something alive, not dead. Obviously he was inoffensive, depending entirely upon his acute 'four-direction' eyesight to escape danger.

That night a bunch of the neighbours were called in for the feast. Kafir beer flowed freely, the natives gorged themselves, and the giraffe-skin was handled and displayed proudly. From the conversation I knew that a good many breech-clouts would come from our kill.

We didn't wish to arrive at camp empty-handed, so we spent our last day in hunting. Our game consisted of a klipspringer and a steinbok, two dog-sized members of the antelope family found on the kopjes and in the assagai grass. We also brought down a kongoni, of which there were scores wherever we went, always on guard to warn other animals, and blessed with telescopic eyes for that purpose.

Loaded with these trophies, we reached the edge of the camp and yelled our triumphal approach. No cheers greeted us; a few troopers slouched forward, silent, dispirited, half-sick.

## RUINS

Things had gone badly in camp. Captain Turner and all the troopers felt when we left them that we were likely never to return. As the days passed and there was no news of us fear was replaced by the conviction that twenty troopers had been lost, and certainly they could not be spared.

During this period of partial funk malaria of the worst form had hit camp. Although the men were literally soaked in quinine large numbers of them came down with the dread disease. Dysentery was rife, and there seemed to be no cure for it except chance and time. Certainly when the final pay-day came at the end of the trail there would be a great many poor fellows who would not collect their money.

Burials became a part of everyday life. The troop chaplain, himself sick and worried, read his services very rapidly over a grave in the black soil. The body, generally wrapped in canvas, was lowered with businesslike precision. Not only white troopers but many natives were dying. If, as often happened, a black died outside of camp he was buried where he fell, without services, without delay. Within the camp the services—and even the natives were given a ‘Christian’ burial—were so hurried that they became almost secretive.

Now the sky-pilot himself was unable to get out of bed. He’d die before morning, the troop doctor reported. That was the night four troopers stole into the tent and took the boots off the dying man, not in disrespect, as I’ve said before, but simply

## BLACK FRONTIERS

because they wanted the boots. Poor chaplain! From the first day of the long trek he had been out of place in that wild crew of troopers. But at least he had been able generally to arrange a 'Christian' burial for the dead. Now who would do it for him?

Two troopers left camp the next day to hunt. They had their guides with them, three experienced natives. None of the five ever returned. What became of them?

We strove to keep busy. When our hands were occupied and our legs moving our minds did not dwell on misfortune. Fortunately, Jack Tomlinson and I suddenly found a new and priceless subject of interest and conversation. We stumbled on the great Zimbabwe ruins.

As far as I have ever been able to find out, we were the second or third party of white men to visit those strange relics of another civilization, so ancient that their origin is lost in the cobwebs of time. We didn't find them in a single expedition. For days we had stumbled upon strange mounds and walls covered with hieroglyphics, but we had no idea of the appalling extent and magnificence of the structures until we decided to make a business of exploring them.

For centuries men had searched for the ruins. The Queen of Sheba, it will be remembered, bore to King Solomon a great store of precious stones and loads of gold—the gold of Ophir. Where did these fabulous riches originate? Da Gama set out in



RUINS OF THE TEMPLE AT ZIMBABWE



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1498 to search for the trove. He landed at Mozambique, and saw gold in the hands of the Arabs. From that day forward Fort Ophir, as it was called, became the starting-point for Portuguese adventurers in search of the source of King Solomon's treasures. Nothing was discovered, and gradually the quest ceased. It wasn't until 1871 that a German explorer, Karl Mauch, was reported to have located the ruins, and Adam Renders 'rediscovered' them in 1878. We troopers were the next white men to see them.

On the day set for our exploration Tommy and I moved off at dawn on foot, heading south and east of camp. We traversed fifteen miles in rapid time, and quite suddenly the great ruins loomed above us.

The sight was magnificent, awesome. Overgrown with creepers and entangling vines, they looked like great green-bearded giants, something apart from the realm of man. We thought ourselves quite hard-boiled and *blasé*, but for a long time we stared at those great edifices without moving.

As we advanced up the kopje we realized that it was a place of great defensive strength. Reaching the Acropolis, or Hill Ruins, one of perhaps a hundred all told, it took us many moments to find the entrance. Through it we moved slowly and warily into an astounding maze of recesses, passages, walls, and caves so covered with vines and creepers that it was difficult to tell what was underneath.

"Look out!" yelled Tommy, suddenly.

I leaped back, and a black mamba slid away. Our

## BLACK FRONTIERS

investigations proceeded more slowly. We found more ruins, more tangles, and many more snakes. The place suggested Death, not new, fresh Death, but age-old Death. An air of rot and decay pervaded everything, a feeling which smothered us as the creepers smothered the ruins.

On the highest point of the hill we found several round look-out towers which commanded a view of the country for miles around. For an hour more we wandered along the sunken passages, always careful not to proceed too far, for the air was foul, the blackness Stygian, and we had no idea what was ahead of us in the way of abysses, wild animals, or snakes. Later several primitive crucibles with gold adhering to them were found in this weird series of caves.

Just across the valley on a second hill we found even more enormous ruins, surrounded by double walls about thirty-five feet high, and at least fifteen feet thick, made of stone without mud or mortar. Inside the walls was a conical tower of solid stone almost three hundred feet across. This, we guessed, was a general meeting-place for those who had built the great structure, and perhaps used by them as a fort in case of attack.

Scores of other ruins were lying around us, some of them extending for at least a mile over the hill-top. Their magnitude and the struggle with vines and creepers soon tired us, but so impressive were the ruins that we left them reluctantly.

Back at camp that night we related what we had

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seen, and during the days which followed all the troopers went to inspect the ruins. After that for many nights we had a subject for discussion around the camp-fire—the origin of the once great city. About as many ideas were advanced as there were troopers in the camp, and I learned later that even scientists disagree on their origin.

According to one theory the great edifices were built by the Semites and South Arabians who lived there as miners, producing fabulous wealth in gold. Others claim that the Jews and Phœnicians who lived around the Red Sea in Biblical times were responsible for the fortifications, protecting the Ophir of Solomon. Another theory that either the Bantus, the original black race of Africa, or the race of Isilugwaan, who preceded the Zulus, built the great structures is not tenable personally, for in the miles of Africa I traversed I did not see a single building of stone which the natives had constructed.

Around the camp-fire we eventually agreed that the Jews or Phœnicians must have been the engineers for the great fortifications if they were not the actual builders. Later this belief was strengthened by the discovery of small ruins extending all the way to the east coast, with figures of human beings, crocodiles, and birds chiselled out of the walls.

In passing, it is interesting to note that this district, then a thousand miles from the end of the rail and hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement, is now producing tens of thousands of pounds' worth of gold yearly. The ruins themselves have

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become accessible by rail and road, and an hotel has been constructed.

I wish that I could have told Tommy, standing there among the ruins that day, with his keen eyes alert for snakes, his swollen, stinging face for once quite awe-stricken, what civilization would do to that wild country. I can hear his answer: "*Hellco vadis!*"—the perfectly fitting response.

## *Chapter XV*

### FINIS TO D TROOP

LIFE at Fort Victoria resumed its round of hunting, eating, sleeping, punctuated by the occasional death of a trooper through dysentery, fever, or accident. The next major excitement was the crushing of a neighbouring native kraal by a herd of buffaloes which three of our over-zealous hunters stampeded. Through the kraal surged the buffaloes, knocking down huts, trampling inhabitants, and making a wreck of things in general. Seven natives were killed in the stampede and scores badly injured.

Tommy and I had already learned that while a buffalo looks like an ox, there the resemblance ceases, for a buffalo is mean all the way through and as quick as the ox is slow. If a man thinks he'll climb a tree to escape a buffalo charge his only chance is to be at the foot of it when he makes up his mind. Against such a charge guns are not of great service, for the wide, flat horns, joined in front, make a flat mass of bone—a natural armour-plate. These horns slant out and down, ending in a sharp upward curve—a scimitar which kills a man in rapid order.

The hand of every one is raised against the buffalo, and he will soon be extinct. Perhaps that is well, for no matter how peaceably inclined a man or an animal may be he is not safe as long as the buffalo is

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near. Even lions are afraid of him, and will not attack one unless starving.

When Tommy and I decided to try our luck hunting them we took two native guides in addition to Salt and Pepper. Six hours from camp, about mid-afternoon, came the warning cry: "*Hamba garshla, bwana!*"—"Go easy, boss!"

We froze in our tracks, and a second later three huge buffaloes appeared at the edge of a near-by papyrus swamp. They had not noticed our scent, and moved toward us, their massive horns glistening in the sunlight, their black bodies smooth and muscular. We expected them to sight us and charge, and were looking apprehensively for trees to climb, when they turned at right angles. Tommy signalled, and we both fired. Distinctly we heard the peculiar *phatt* of bullets striking flesh.

The buffaloes hesitated. Even now they had not scented us, and they moved forward, the wounded one lagging. Against my inclination and the advice of the natives, Tommy announced that we would trail the herd.

It was fully two miles before we caught sight of them again. The wounded one was having trouble, and we sneaked forward to end his misery. He fell after one shot and the two others thundered past us toward a papyrus swamp.

We advanced to claim our kill, and were less than thirty yards away when the big beast leaped up and charged. Two shots reached the vital point at the base of his neck. He crashed to the ground and

## FINIS TO D TROOP

slithered along it, coming to a stop at our very feet.

Proudly we advanced and claimed our trophy, vaguely realizing that in this, our first buffalo-hunt, we were much more fortunate than we had reason to expect. If, instead of fleeing, the herd had charged us, as they do nine times out of ten, we might have joined the hundreds of other buffalo victims under the black soil of Africa.

The excitement of our buffalo-hunt was soon forgotten in the turmoil which followed orders arriving from the south. Company D, or what remained of it, was to be combined with A, B, and C Companies to fill the gaps in their ranks. D Troop, which we had privately considered the bravest, most gallant troop of the entire Mounted Police, was to exist no more.

The news came like a thunderbolt. The D Troopers began to analyse it. They considered that the orders for disbandment amounted to the termination of their enlistment. Many of them, wearied and sick of the long trek, took their discharges and hurried southward, vowing never to enter that region again. Others determined to stick with their comrades, a decision which cost many loyal men their lives during the Matabele wars.

Jack Tomlinson and I decided to ask for our discharges and escape the irksome discipline. At the same time we would stay with the Mounted Police if permissible, working as free-lances, hunting

## BLACK FRONTIERS

and exploring as the whim seized us, doing all in our power to assist the expedition, but at the same time maintaining our independence.

Captain Chamley Turner gave us our discharge papers at Fort Victoria on September 30, 1891. Before we left his little tent he offered us three thousand morgens of land, the allotment which Cecil Rhodes had decided each trooper should have.

Three thousand morgens of wild African land, almost ten square miles of it! Again Tommy and I went into conference. What were ten square miles of land when we had explored and hunted over hundreds of miles? Jungle, forest, and veld, the habitation only of wild animals, we were convinced that it would be at least two generations before it would have any worth, and where would we be in two generations? As a matter of fact, it was less than a decade before that land had great value.

We returned to Captain Turner. "Have you picked out your allotment?" he asked.

"No, we don't want it."

"What are your plans?" Captain Turner insisted.

Tommy explained that we had nothing definite in mind. We should like, he said, to push northward with the troopers. Captain Turner nodded enthusiastically.

"Why not catch up with Captain Heany? He can use you. I'll write a letter telling of your services and experience. If he takes you on you can

British South Africa Company's Police

DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE

1612 to certify that No 458. Trooper S. Kemp

is a member of the British South Africa Company's Police

and is discharged on the 21st of April 1890 at the age of 24 years

and that he served in the above mentioned Police for 6 years

and is discharged at his own request

CHARACTER  
Very Good

J. P. De Wet  
Magistrate

Fort Victoria  
21st September 1891

SAM KEMP'S DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE FROM CECIL RHODES' MOUNTED POLICE



## FINIS TO D TROOP

be attached to the police in some unofficial manner where you will be of great value."

That was exactly what Tommy and I desired. We stuck our discharges and our letter to Captain Heany in our pockets, packed hastily, and proceeded northward, loyal little Salt and Pepper still at our sides.

Two days later we caught up with the advance companies. Captain Heany seemed delighted that we had decided to join his outfit, even in an unofficial capacity. He promised to use us in exploration work and to furnish us with food and clothing. The arrangement seemed perfect to us, and we pushed forward with the troopers toward the spot where Fort Charter was to be built.

Northward the country became more heavily timbered and the vegetation more beautiful, apparently because of the abundance of water. The growth was so heavy that we were often forced to hack and chop our way through, delaying our progress to comparatively few miles each day. At night the wagons were drawn up in a circle with the livestock in the centre; fires blazed to discourage the lions which roared around us. The men no longer gathered over the embers to argue and complain; wearied to the point of exhaustion, they threw themselves in their blankets soon after nightfall.

During the days the unexpected constantly happened. One noon hour a trooper, resting in the shade of a mimosa-bush, suddenly found a black mamba at his side, coiled and ready to strike. The

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fellow was both smart and courageous. He didn't move. After many minutes of waiting he called in a low monotone: "A mamba is right against me."

A passing trooper heard the call and reported the situation. I was detailed to shoot the mamba, but Captain Heany vetoed the plan, pointing out that if the mamba were not killed instantly he would strike. He suggested that we formed a life-line on the far side of the man. Four of us advanced, hand in hand. The fellow on the ground very slowly extended his arm. The nearest man caught it, and suddenly the four of us gave a jerk which nearly yanked the man's arm from its socket, but landed him several feet from the snake, which flashed away.

Two days later a fellow-trooper and I, on guard duty, sat on top of an anthill which overlooked the camp. Suddenly Captain Heany's little fox-terrier came barking and yapping toward us. We had begun to tease him, when a rumbling noise sounded under us. Actually the ground shook like an earthquake. From the entrance of the anthill at our very feet a lion jumped. Apparently his Majesty had been awakened by the dog's yapping, for he stared at us, his head almost against ours, and if ever I saw surprise on an animal's face it was there. He made no motion to charge; certainly we made no motion to shoot. Slowly, majestically, he stalked into the brush, that little fox-terrier still barking at a safe distance behind. As he moved

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slowly into the bushes we moved rapidly into camp.

The fifth night of that trek from Victoria to the spot where Fort Charter was to be erected we lost two natives to lions. The sixth night we lost a third servant. We wondered at the time why the lions preferred black meat to white. Perhaps the explanation which cannibals farther north gave us was correct: the white man is too salty for epicurean taste.

Despite our slow marching it took us only seven days to reach the selected site of Fort Charter, named in honour of our little force, eight hundred miles from the beginning of our trek at Mafeking.

Jack Tomlinson and I, relishing our new freedom, immediately began to hunt. We killed another lion, and once more Tommy's wisdom probably saved my life. An easy shot through the shoulder had brought down the great beast, roaring thunderously. I was so interested in watching that gaping mouth and the blazing eyes that I didn't realize the menace of the roars. Tommy did.

"Make for a tree!" he shouted.

Not knowing what danger was impending, our native guides and I ran. We climbed quickly, climbed high. Up there in the branches we waited. Nothing happened.

"Why the funny work?" I yelled to Tommy.

"You'll see in two minutes," he promised.

He was right, only perhaps it was three minutes before the other lions arrived. Seven of them

## BLACK FRONTIERS

gathered round the wounded beast, and then, it seemed, began to search for us. I hate to think what would have happened if Tommy's warning had not put us in the trees.

From my perch I shot at the head of the wounded lion, and the roaring ceased. The other lions sniffed around a few moments more, then slunk away.

## *Chapter XVI*

### IN THE NAME OF CECIL RHODES

IF the blacks had their king and tyrant, Lobengula, we troopers also had ours. Cecil John Rhodes, of course. It was for him we had undertaken this long, dangerous trek, it was his name which magically held the troopers together, kept them from mutinying and deserting. It was odd the feeling the troopers had for Cecil Rhodes. Many of them had never seen him and knew him only by reputation, yet they seemed to understand him as a man of heroic visions.

Heroic visions—that was the answer. In the name of his visions, in Rhodes's dream of a great empire subdued, explored, and civilized, connected by bands of steel, we troopers found our goal. In a strange, abstract way we admired and loved that silent man who combined the practical knowledge of a tycoon with the dreams of a poet or a Kubla Khan. In return, it might be noted, Cecil John Rhodes loved his troopers, that little band of five hundred men who started so bravely northward. To the end of his days our men remained the apple of his eye.

Next to Cecil Rhodes the troopers admired Dr Jameson. Here was a little fellow of Napoleonic size and of Napoleonic brains. Runty, bald, bespectacled, he was a human dynamo of courage and

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activity. No man had ever seen him daunted, and that was saying a great deal in that land of constant peril; no man had seen him uncertain, and that was more, where life itself was uncertain.

And now suddenly, unexpectedly, that second great man appeared in our camp at Fort Charter. He arrived one morning soon after sunrise, accompanied only by one trooper and two guides. We couldn't believe it was he, that little sunburned man on horseback, but there he was, casual, unexcited, taciturn. He surveyed our camp with those quick eyes of his. He counted our troopers, realizing perfectly that we were what remained of the five hundred men who had started from Mafeking eighteen months before. If he noticed how thin our ranks were he gave no sign.

He studied the little fortress we had built, and was silent; he checked our depleted food-supplies and equipment, and still was silent. He went to Captain Heany's tent, and again, according to the reports which came out, he was silent. Later he called in the sergeant who had led our little expedition to Lobengula's kraal at Bulawayo. The sergeant had followed us northward for a few days and caught us at Charter. Now he had made a complete report of our expedition, but yet Dr Jameson was silent. He accepted the report, and not a facial muscle expressed surprise or satisfaction.

A second day he was with us in camp, moving around among us. His eyes saw and didn't see. They gave the impression that he was wrestling with



WHERE JAMESON KEEPS COMPANY WITH RHODIS



some great mental problem. On the third day he left as suddenly as he arrived, moving southward. Undoubtedly he was hastening back toward the beginning of the trail, back to Cecil Rhodes to report. Tireless, fearless, he would race those weary miles. Then some morning he would probably appear in camp again as quiet and taciturn as ever.

What was he planning for us? Were we to remain indefinitely there at Fort Charter, or to proceed northward? Had the expedition proved a failure? Did he have secret news that Lobengula was about to attack us? Certainly something was troubling him, but no man knew what. Captain Heany seemed to be as much at sea as any of us. We must wait, of course, even though the ranks grew thinner week by week.

Never was there a camp so noisy at night as our little Fort Charter. Through the months of our trek we had become accustomed to the night-long roaring of lions, the crazed barking of hyenas and jackals, the weird cries of baboons—that is, as much as one may become accustomed to outlandish, terrifying noises. But there at Fort Charter were new and strange sounds. Night birds in the thorn-bushes—we could identify them—and the trumpeting of elephants miles away, the heavy pad of the rhinoceros, the sneaking advance of leopards, the squeaking and creaking of myriads of insects. But many strange sounds we couldn't identify.

## BLACK FRONTIERS

Jack Tomlinson and I conceived the idea of spending a night on an animal trail which led to water. Perhaps from such a point of vantage we could discover the makers of some of the strange night noises. The place we chose was five miles from camp, where a giant camphor-tree hung over the river-bank. In front a strip of sand perhaps thirty yards wide extended along the river; behind was thick timber and brush—an ideal spot from which to watch the night life of the jungle.

Our tree perches were not as easy as we had expected, but after the second hour we forgot any discomfort. The soft night wind carried away our scent, and in the green-white glow of the moon on the river-bank we saw a menagerie such as few men have ever seen.

Soon after sunset the procession of jungle and forest inhabitants commenced. Down came many varieties of gazelles, stepping noiselessly and gracefully, stopping to listen often. They were the first to sample the water. Several elands followed, and at their heels filed kongoni. Above us and around us in the trees, even in the one we occupied, monkeys chattered and played. Thousands of night birds called. In the river were gentle splashings as fish gulped insects from the surface. We could see the silver ripples they created widening into the shadows. Now a black streak cut the water—the wake of a crocodile coming shoreward to take his place where a single mighty flail of his tail could stun some land animal into his maw.

## IN THE NAME OF CECIL RHODES

A shadow shifted on the sand-spit; it was a leopard advancing warily. In the distance sounded the low rumble of a lion, a roar which constantly increased in volume as he approached, silencing every other sound except the splashing of fish.

Scores of animals came down that trail in the night to saunter along the edge of the stream. Some crossed over the water, others went back into the brush by a different path. Apparently we had picked a one-way street in the animal world, but we saw plenty of traffic. In the strange white light all the animals seemed ghost animals.

The lion we had heard in the distance appeared. A lioness and two cubs followed him to the stream's edge. After they had drunk the lioness lay flat on the sand and the cubs played around her, jumping over her, rolling, pawing, and cuffing like a pair of kittens. Their play made us a little ashamed of one or two of our safety-first lion-hunts, even though we realized that those same cubs when they grew up would very likely raid a native kraal or steal an ox-driver from some wagon which followed ours through the wilds.

The lions disappeared suddenly, and a huge black shadow moved along the river. It was a rhinoceros out on a nocturnal prow—stolid, and impervious as a battleship. Two other shadows moved forward, stopped, and slunk away—cowardly hyenas. An hour later a pair of hippos sludged heavily into the river and crossed it.

Toward dawn came the time of the smaller

## BLACK FRONTIERS

animals—dik-dik, koodoos, sable antelope, steinbok, and reed buck. More gazelles appeared, moving daintily, and a small herd of zebras. The hyenas returned, sniffing and searching for some carrion, hoping that a tragedy had happened on that populous river-bank.

A typical African dawn broke. The bank of grey clouds to the east became fiery-coloured. From the river rose grey clouds of mist, pink-tinged, heavy. The swamp-lands around us were covered with similar miasma, which disappeared quickly before the advance of the sun-god. For a few moments there was utter silence. All life seemed to cease. Suddenly the day birds took up the cry where the night birds had ceased it. Now not a single one of the hundreds of animals we had seen that night was visible. We had been in a ghost world which suddenly disappeared.

That day, while we were resting in camp from our nocturnal vigil, a hunting party returned with a trooper of E Company frightfully clawed and broken by a leopard—one arm fractured and crushed and most of the flesh torn from both thighs and legs. The leopard had attacked in his customary manner, leaping from a tree, catching the man's arm in his mouth, and raking off the flesh with his powerful hind legs and claws. The man eventually recovered, but after that even a black-and-white flecked patch of jungle gave him the jumps.

Such an occurrence as that was a challenge to Tommy and me. We had assumed a boyish bravado

## IN THE NAME OF CECIL RHODES

of vengeance about animal life. For every attack on our troopers some animal of the same species must pay the penalty. That same afternoon we set out with our guides, determined to bring back a leopard-skin.

With that strange, unerring instinct of theirs, our two little Bushmen took us straight to a *donga*. They seemed to smell the leopard, for they pointed and gesticulated excitedly.

"Slim, you take the other side and I'll take this one," Tommy ordered.

The two little Bushmen boldly entered the *donga*, clapping their hands and calling out. Apparently the leopard realized he was cornered, for he edged out of the grass and made straight toward me. I fired at a distance of not more than fifty feet, hitting him in the hip. With a snarl he retreated into the *donga*, but soon reappeared on the other side and charged for Tommy, who gave him another shot. This one rolled him over completely, but he scrambled to his feet and slunk back into the grass.

We called the Bushmen out, afraid that the leopard was so badly wounded that they might stumble on him unexpectedly. Our warning was just in time. The natives had barely reached the edge when the leopard sprang. He caught the nearest, sinking his teeth in Pepper's shoulder and using his hind feet in cruel, flesh-tearing manner.

Tommy shouted, I swore, the little black screamed. We couldn't shoot for fear of killing the black, so I

pulled my sheath-knife and raced forward. At least ten times I stabbed that leopard, and still he clung to our little guide. Finally I slit him open from shoulder to hind-quarters, but it was a full half-minute before he rolled over dead.

We rushed little Pepper back to camp on a sling hastily constructed of sticks and vines. His shoulder was crunched and his legs and thighs badly mutilated, but he was fortunate to be alive at all. Tough little fellow that he was, in ten days he was up and around again. Always the rapid recovery of wounded blacks astonished us; their nervous systems seemed made to endure pain stoically and heal wounds almost overnight.

When we returned for the leopard we found that it was a male weighing about a hundred and fifty pounds. We skinned him and triumphantly bore our trophy into camp, presenting it to the trooper who had been so badly maimed.

Ever since that wild day at Fort Tuli when the elephants stampeded our camp and killed more than a score of men the hunters of our troop had been itching for an elephant-hunt. For one reason and another—principally because of a certain respect for the huge pachyderms—the hunt had been postponed from time to time. Tommy and I had delayed in the hope that we could organize a larger party. In the end only he and I went out with our two Bushmen guides.

At least only the four of us started, with a week's provisioning. To our surprise we had not proceeded

## IN THE NAME OF CECIL RHODES

a mile from camp before a dozen natives joined us. Others came, and still more, until we had quite an army of followers, all blacks who preferred the excitement of an elephant-hunt to the drudgery of fort-building. We soon learned that the natives expected all the elephant meat they could carry, one of the greatest possible rewards. For this problematical prize they paid a price. The 'vack-um-beke' thorns tore their black hides to ribbons, and as they advanced the sum total of the conversation seemed to be the oft-repeated phrase, "*I cauna muchla, bwana*"—"No good, boss."

We walked for hours, and finally found elephant tracks which crossed a heavily timbered region, rank with vines and creepers, into sparser growth.

"*Tembo, bwana!*" one of the natives exclaimed excitedly.

We saw them—four elephants idly flopping their ears under some acacia-trees. We approached from the right or down-wind direction, but the huge animals were uneasy. Their trunks were twisted like the letter S and feeling the air; their ears were straight out from their heads, and their eyes moved rapidly.

A bull sensed our presence, and as he turned we fired at a spot between the eye and the ear. He dropped, apparently stunned, but instantly lumbered to his feet again. Now came the crucial moment. Tommy and I were reloading frantically. Would the herd charge? If so we were almost helpless in a tangle of six-foot grass.

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Fortune was with us. The four elephants crashed away to the right, heading for a region of bigger timber. We followed, encouraged by the sight of blood on the grass. Hours later we sighted our bull. He was alone this time, standing under a tree. Again we crept close and fired, this time aiming at the backbone. The shots reached home. Like a huge building must topple in an earthquake, so that elephant quivered and fell. Racing forward, we fired two more shots into the great body.

Immediately we held a celebration, in which the natives joined. Had we known at the time how lucky we were perhaps our celebration would have been even wilder than mere dancing around that mammoth body. Certainly it was one of the luckiest elephant-hunts on record, a case once more of fools rushing in where wise men feared to tread.

We estimated that our kill weighed close upon seven tons. His great pads were fifty-four inches in circumference, his ears as large as a dining-room table and yet sensitive to the slightest sound.

We examined his trunk carefully—one of nature's most marvellous pieces of handiwork. Strong, flexible, it could pick a pin from the floor or uproot a great tree. With equal ease it could toss a man seventy-five feet or catch a fly from the air. The trunk is the elephant's dearest possession, and when he charges he protects it by holding it back over his head. When seeking a scent it feels the air in snake-like gyrations, and in picking up man-odour it is efficient for two hundred yards.

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Happy as we were at our kill, the natives were happier. They pounced on the great pachyderm and cut off hunks of meat—their reward for the hours of trailing through the flesh-tearing thorns. Tommy and I contented ourselves with the tusks, curving pieces of ivory which weighed almost sixty pounds each. Our little Bushmen could scarcely carry one apiece, but eventually they got them back to Fort Charter, where, unfortunately, they were left.

After little Salt and Pepper had brought the tusks into camp for us they disappeared. Tommy and I knew perfectly well that they had gone to slice more meat from that great carcass, and we expected them to return in the morning, well bloated. They never came back. Some party of Matabele warriors or Mashonas probably caught them beyond the camp and murdered them in cold blood. Tommy and I regretted their loss bitterly. We had developed a real affection for the little Bushmen; they, in return, clung to us for protection and used their wonderfully acute senses for our benefit.

Encouraged by the success of our elephant-hunt, other troopers decided to try it. Two days later Tommy and I were hunting eland for camp food when we heard a shot far to our right. A moment later came a terrific crashing of bushes, followed immediately by the trumpeting of elephants—that terrible scream which makes the shivers run up and down the spine. The ground shook as if a dozen locomotives were steaming toward us.

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Nearer and nearer came that rumble and roar. We were directly in the path of the stampede, and there wasn't a real tree within a quarter of a mile. It was hopeless to attempt to run; our cue was to drop behind some small bush and pray. If the elephants either saw or smelled us it would be time to call the burial squad.

Seconds can be hours in the African jungle. On came the elephants, milling, trumpeting, pounding the ground until our whole world seemed to vibrate. They came into sight, at least forty of them, including cows with calves. In the lead was an enormous old cow, headed directly toward us.

When the herd was sixty feet away I was tempted to raise my gun and shoot. Such a course would have been futile, but at least it would furnish some nervous relief. Fortunately Tommy stopped me. We were still down-wind from the herd, and they hadn't raised our scent, otherwise we would have been trampled to death in four seconds.

Almost against us the elephants stopped—utter chance that they were forty feet short instead of forty feet beyond. The old cow was tossing her trunk in the air, feeling the wind. Already she was suspicious of us. Suddenly another idea struck her. She bore off to the right and the herd lumbered after her. Spread somewhat fan-shaped, the trailing beasts swung so close to us that we could see every little crease in the hide, catch every gasping breath, hear their body rumblings.

## IN THE NAME OF CECIL RHODES

For many minutes more we cowered behind our bush. Then, shaken more than we would admit even to each other, we circled back to camp and waited for the hunters to come in. Our language to them would not bear repetition.

The next week a trader appeared at Charter. He had followed the long, tortuous trail we had cut from Mafeking, and was the second itinerant we had seen since we started the trek so many months before. The visit of the first had resulted in a major tragedy—the death and mutilation of a number of our troopers by crocodiles. This one brought only comedy with him.

He was a sandy little fellow, probably of Scottish descent, for he made us pay ten prices for every article we bought from him. A pipe worth half a crown in Johannesburg cost the equivalent of a sovereign, a small plug of smoking tobacco fourteen shillings, and everything else in proportion. Scotch whisky at approximately forty-five shillings a pint seemed to the troopers the cheapest thing he offered; at least they bought most heavily of it. Money meant little to our gang, for we had no use for it in the wilds.

In spite of great profits the trader had his worries. He complained bitterly that the natives were stealing him blind. Mocking the care with which he guarded the wagon at night, black shadows crept forward, black arms reached under the tarpaulin. The trader first appealed to Captain Heany for protection but the Captain could do nothing. Next he asked

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some of us troopers to go on guard for him, but we shrugged our shoulders. Finally one volunteered, a long, leathery Colonial, whose hair was grey at the temples from long years in Africa.

"If you'll give me a pipe, a plug of tobacco, and a bottle of whisky," he said, "I'll guarantee absolutely the end of thievery for three days."

The trader scoffed, then, finding the old-timer sincere in his proposal, he finally agreed. "Only you get your pay at the end of the three days, not at the beginning."

"Good."

The Colonial climbed on the trader's wagon and began to spout the native jargon which he had picked up during his years in Africa. In a few moments scores of curious blacks had gathered round him; more came every second. When the old-timer saw that he had their undivided attention he made an announcement.

"Your black gods are great," he said. "Your medicine-men are great. Your magic is great. But the white men have greater gods and greater magic. Watch carefully, and I'll show you what the white spirit will do to anyone who comes near this wagon."

He pointed to his mouth. It dropped open suddenly. At the same instant his false teeth dropped down into his hands. He shrieked, and his toothless mouth gaped even wider.

The teeth were gone. So were the natives. They remained away from camp for several days, and not

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one of them could ever be bribed to go near that trader's wagon. The old-timer had won his plug of tobacco, his pipe, and his pint of whisky. Incidentally, he had seriously delayed construction of the fort.

## *Chapter XVII*

### THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

ONCE more came orders to move. This, we were given to understand, was to be the last march. It would take us only to a spot to be known as Salisbury, eighty miles north—the end of the long trek which had started at Mafeking almost two years before.

We figured quickly. Salisbury must lie fully one hundred and fifty miles south of the Zambezi, and that, we had been given to understand at the beginning of our trek, was our goal. Why had our destination been changed?

With our ranks so depleted by disease the answer should have suggested itself. We had reached the limit of white man's country. Beyond, the land sloped to the Zambezi, forming a region of great swamps, a breeding-place for malaria. Salisbury was to be the outpost. For the time, at least, it marked the limit of white man's encroachment on the wilds.

Mighty man! He had come hundreds of miles through the forests, velds, and the jungles of Africa; he had laboured mightily to construct a road; he had fought fierce animals and held back thousands of warring natives. Now his way was blocked by a little striped mosquito. Mighty man!

For the last time we loaded the transport wagons. Oxen—thin both in body and numbers—were

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pushed under their yokes with much swearing and shouting. The hippo whips cracked, and we were off on the last leg of that eight-hundred-and-fifty-mile trek, the last twist of the little white barb which Cecil John Rhodes was pushing into the heart of Africa.

Inspired by the fact that this was our final march, we moved with unusual rapidity. It seemed no time at all before we reached the spot which had been selected for Fort Salisbury. There was built the largest fort of all; there we were assigned our *rôles* for the great drama which was soon to be enacted in that country.

In the final analysis we troopers of Cecil Rhodes' Mounted Police were merely stage-setters for the Matabele wars. In the course of our scene-shifting we trekked almost a thousand miles and lost almost one-half of our men. For a back drop we had the African veld and jungles and forests; against it we erected the flimsy, almost make-believe forts of Tuli, Victoria, Charter, and Salisbury—scenes for various acts of the drama.

Already the actors were rehearsing. In the kraal of Bulawayo King Lobengula was grimacing and chortling alternately. He was the huge rum-soaked villain. Around him moved thousands of warriors, ready for a sudden and overwhelming descent upon the whites. The heroes too were rehearsing their parts in the book of wilderness, learning how to hunt, to trail, to shoot accurately, to die undaunted.

Soon enough the drama would unfold with Scene

## BLACK FRONTIERS

One near Victoria. Successive acts would follow, with the climax in Captain Wilson's heroic last stand, which resulted in his murder and the annihilation of every trooper in his command; or perhaps the climax would be the burning of the great hill-city of Bulawayo and the flight of Lobengula under the angry red sky. The drama would end as we have been taught such dramas should end, with the overthrow of the forces of blackness, the triumph of the whites. Meanwhile hundreds of men, black and white, would die horrible deaths.

At Fort Salisbury Jack Tomlinson and I were ordered to assist in establishing a line of communication southward. At fifty-mile intervals down the long trail toward Mafeking were to be stationed two men and four horses. Housed in strong lion-proof cabins, each man was to ride relay two nights a week, once north and once south, carrying mail and dispatches.

Our station was the second one south of Salisbury, and there we were cooped except for those wild rides. At all costs the dispatches must go through on time. The routine galled us, and riding at night through lion-infested country was not pleasant. Twice during the next five weeks I lost my horse and pack-animal to lions. Once I remained in a tree almost ten hours while lions moved around under me. One of them concluded he would wait for me to come down, and was still there at dawn. When he moved away I spent hours walking to the next station.



WHERE WILSON AND HIS COMRADES WERE FIRST BURIED  
AT ZIMBABWE

Their remains were later placed under the Shangani Memorial near the  
tomb of Rhodes in the Matopo Hills.



## THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

Because of the night riding it was necessary to sleep during the day, but many days sleep was out of the question. Wild animals gathered in numbers around the cabin, attracted, I suppose, by the smell of horses, human beings, and cooking. Baboons and jackals were always near by. One day we saw a hyena's head sticking up through a hole in the floor. He had dug in from the outside, but a bullet stopped his digging. He was one of the worst-smelling hyenas in the world, and we couldn't tie him to a horse's tail and drag him into the brush quickly enough.

On those off nights when we slept in the cabin lions often came to scratch the walls, moaning in that peculiar manner denoting hunger. Leopards padded across the roof of our shack, tried to claw through the rafters to reach the frightened, snorting horses. Gleaming eyes stared at us through the eight-inch windows. The result was that neither day nor night did we rest well.

Occasionally word came to us that one or another of the relay riders to the south had been killed during the course of duty. One by one they passed out of the picture and others replaced them. Still Tommy and I were held to our task.

One more experience with a lion on a narrow trail, an experience which left me flat on the ground without my rifle, while my horses dashed wildly through the brush and the lion licked his chops over my prostrate form, convinced me that I didn't like my job. I wrote to Captain Heany to that effect,

## BLACK FRONTIERS

pointing out that I had not failed to ride the mail, sick or well, during the entire time at my station.

The letter produced effect. Four days later two other troopers rode up to our cabin. They had been ordered to send us back to Salisbury and to take our places. We wished them luck—Lord knows they needed it—and rode away.

At the camp in Salisbury the next night the troopers held a celebration in our honour. They explained that they were very happy that we had returned to them. They explained also that it was Jocko's birthday.

Jocko was a little baboon which the troopers had caught below Victoria and kept as a mascot. He was a runty little fellow, always getting into trouble, always shedding his hair, an ornery, scrawny pest. Yet the troop apparently had some affection for him. Certainly it was not for me to feel insulted that my homecoming and Jocko's birthday should be celebrated in the same event.

The *pièce de résistance* of the banquet was a 'three-decker,' a concoction dear to the heart and stomach of every trooper. It consisted of alternate layers of meat and pastry, saturated with thick gravy. After days of sparse diet at my relay station that three-decker certainly looked delectable to me.

A heaped plate was placed in front of me, and I ate avidly, not noticing that the men around me were only making a pretence. I cleaned my plate and passed it back for more.

"What is that meat?" I asked.

## THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

Now had come the moment for which the men had waited. The corporal sitting across the camp-fire from me took his pipe from his mouth and slowly emptied it. "Did you like it, Slim?"

"Great. What was it?"

He deliberated a moment, while the men got red in the face, bursting with suppressed laughter.

"It was Jocko," the corporal announced gravely.

Through my mind passed a vision of Jocko, particularly his rear end like Joseph's coat of many colours. I had sampled every kind of game in Africa, from lion's heart to crocodile steak, but somehow the thought of Jocko, half bald, half hairy, weazened, and dirty, upset me. I made for the back of the tent, and for many moments remained in the darkness, my head close to the ground. Jack Tomlinson joined me. We simply couldn't keep Jocko down.

When Captain Heany called us back to Salisbury he had definite work for us. We were to explore the country, make maps, report the movement of native tribes, locate strategic points of defence.

Tommy and I were delighted. Here was work in which we revelled. We set out immediately. The region was the most beautiful we had yet seen. Hot days, cool nights, and an abundance of rain made the vegetation grow rank. As usual in such regions, animals and birds flourished.

Strange natives crossed our paths. We had become accustomed to the Matabele, Mashonas, and even the wary Bushmen, but the first time we

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stumbled on an itinerant tribe of Barotses we were astonished by their weird appearance, particularly the women, whose lips hung to their chests, certainly as large as dinner-plates. Such beautiful appendages, we were told, took years to develop with heavy weights. Their hair too was grotesque, being arranged in the shape of a pyramid high above their heads and held there by reeds or metal bands.

We made a note of the appearance of this tribe, and a few days later recorded the discovery of another group of blacks whose affiliations we could not determine. They were remarkable in that their upper front teeth had been knocked out, allowing the lower ones to grow to a large size. Their mouths looked much more like those of gorillas than of human beings. Ferocious as they appeared, this tribe was friendly, and offered Tommy and me the choice of their girls as wives. We had difficulty in explaining that we couldn't settle down, not even with such gorgeous, big-toothed belles as they offered us.

Now we had a veritable 'buffalo day'—three separate buffalo-hunts during a period of eight hours. Twice we got our buffaloes; the third time the buffaloes nearly got us. During that last wild charge one of our native guides had his arm broken and Jack Tomlinson missed death by a few inches.

We returned immediately to camp with our wounded guide and submitted our notes and reports. Captain Heany immediately suggested a more comprehensive programme for us.

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"If you will volunteer for the task," he said, "I'd like you to explore westward fully two hundred miles. The country is said to be settled by Mashonas as far as Victoria Falls; there are reports that it is now being overrun by Matabele raiding-parties. We'd like to know just what is happening."

"You want the two of us to go?" Tommy inquired.

"No, I'll issue a call for volunteers and make up a party for you."

He issued the call that night, but volunteers did not appear. The idea of walking into the midst of Matabele raids did not appeal to the men. A second call for volunteers was issued; again no one reported. Tommy and I determined to go out alone, but just before we left camp a sinewy, hard-boiled little corporal appeared with a trooper at his side. The two had decided to join us.

Even now we could not start. Captain Heany insisted that we have an odd number of men, explaining that in case of disputes we would have no tie votes. Eventually the fifth man volunteered, a big auburn-haired fellow with a perpetual flow of cheer and profanity. Four Mashona porters were assigned to carry our extra food and ammunition. Pack-donkeys were furnished us, but we decided to leave them behind, as they were too slow-moving and only attracted lions.

Captain Heany produced a crude map of the country, showing nothing except that the Zambezi river made an enormous bend within one hundred

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miles of Victoria Falls, or about three hundred miles from Salisbury as the crow flies. With that point in the river as our destination we set out one morning, striking due west.

As the crow flies! That term does not apply to travel in Africa. We soon discovered that our three-hundred-mile jaunt was apt to be several times that long. Two miles, three miles, sometimes four miles of marching was required to gain one.

We pushed on steadily, and a week out from camp suddenly came upon a veritable maze of trails, running in every direction. Some were worn a foot deep by the countless human beings who had travelled over them for centuries, others were made by animals, and they too zigzagged to miss every stone and tree-trunk.

Hit or miss, we followed these trails day after day, making notes of the lay of the land and the water. Game was plentiful around us, but we shot only what we needed for meat. Occasionally we stumbled on kraals, and the native Mashonas always were friendly, giving us beer, chickens, honey, fruits, and sour milk. We found no Matabele raiding-parties nor evidence of them in smouldering kraals or mutilated Mashonas.

At last, travelling through a region of huge baobab-trees, we reached a river which the Mashonas called the Hanyani river. Several days beyond was a second, the Umfuli. Both ran north and emptied into the Zambezi. We had been a little over two weeks on the trail, and thought we must be two

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hundred miles from camp. The little corporal and all of the porters wished to return, but we enthusiastically out-voted them.

Votes meant nothing to the native bearers. One of them came to me. "*Mena bamba kraal, umkoos. Maninge savensa, picannini scoff.*" "I am going home, boss. Much work and little to eat on this job." In spite of our orders to the contrary, he and two others sneaked from camp that night, and we never saw them again.

A new ambition seized us. We had progressed so well that we determined on an attempt to reach Victoria Falls. A friendly native informed us that in a week we could reach a place called Wankie, where the Zambezi made its huge southward bend. That, we decided, was a feasible route, and we pushed forward.

The country changed. We traversed miles of greenery, above which the heat-waves danced layer upon layer, distorting everything. Animals moved warily through the head-high grass, making every foot of advance uncertain. The air was filled with mosquitoes, gnats, and other insects, and our ears grew tired of the steady drone. Millions of butterflies fluttered around us. The little swampy pools were fascinating. Water-lilies, orchids, and other gorgeously coloured flowers made them spectacularly beautiful. Among the blooms multi-coloured fish flashed, and above them birds of all hues circled and dived.

Buffaloes and wart-hogs, ready for battle, appeared

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along the edges of swamps. Behind us sounded the shrill cries of elephants and the sobbing moans of lions. Bush-bucks burst out of thickets in full run, making such a racket that it seemed as if a herd of elephants or rhinos must be charging.

It had become impossible to estimate distances, and we had no idea how far we were from camp. We were utterly lost, out of the world, yet quite happy. It seemed that suddenly we had become an integral part of that jungle. Time ceased to matter, distance ceased to concern us, our comrades back in Salisbury were part of another life.

As we approached Wankie the country became rougher, and we were forced to *détour* to the south, because of great cañons running at right angles to the Zambezi. The distance was more than doubled by these long *détours*, but we reached Wankie at last—a kraal whose inhabitants, to our joy, were friendly and made much of us, filling us with milk, goat's flesh, and fresh fruit. From them we learned that our plan of going to the Victoria Falls by boat was not feasible because of the many rapids.

Once more we held conference, and decided to push on to the falls at all costs. After three days of rest in Wankie we started out, attempting to follow the river-bank. We soon found that this route too was impossible. Some of the bluffs along the river were five hundred feet high, and we couldn't scale them. Southward we turned again, making another *détour*. Several days beyond Wankie we heard a strange, vibratory rumble in the air.

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“The falls!” shouted Tommy, elated, and the natives stood grinning at him, nodding their heads.

Two distinct tones the falls had. One was the steady roar of the Niagara and other waterfalls; the second was a booming sound like a number of cannon fired in salvo. The sound became more deafening as we approached, until the very air shook with it.

We were on the east side, and saw the mile-wide Zambezi drop completely out of sight into a cleft only a hundred yards wide and five hundred feet deep, a great gash supposedly of volcanic origin. Huge clouds of spray and mist rose, beautifully tinted as a rainbow. Other rainbows hovered above the edge of the falls, shifting and shimmering as the mist blew one way and then the other.

Below us the cañon wound away in the shape of a letter S, a swirling, tumultuous expanse of rapids and smaller falls marked by columns of mist which rose high above the river as the air, taken down with the spray and water, was released under pressure. Fully two hundred feet high some of these mist columns spouted, shimmering in all colours.

Since that day thousands of people have seen the Victoria Falls and described them. I can add nothing. To us who had traversed the miles of strange jungle and were among the first white men to see that magnificent spectacle came the feeling that we were too minute in the Creator's scheme of things to count at all.

We had hoped to cross to the north bank of the river for our homeward journey, but it was the rainy

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season and the river was too high for the native canoes. We waited a week, hoping that the water might recede; rather, we used that as an excuse for watching the ever-changing falls.

It was time to retrace our steps to camp, much as we would have liked to bask in the sun of that Elysian paradise. In spite of our resolve to hasten, our progress was slow. It seems to me now that all of us in that little party had a God-given conviction that nothing could happen to him in that paradise; that he had every right to bask as long as he wished amid the sunshine, the lush growth, and the marvellous beauty of flora and fauna.

After a short day's travel we generally pulled up at some small stream at night, made our camp, and slept soundly, despite the myriads of animals which prowled around our beds, wildly curious. Except for snakes we had no fear. In a strange way we seemed to have become a part of that animal world, prowling as a lion prowls, killing only when we were forced to it by hunger.

Three months and a half we were on that exploratory trek, and yet it was with real regret that we reached Salisbury at last. We were received as ghosts, for Captain Heany and the troopers had long since been convinced that we were gone for ever. Search-parties had been organized, but they quickly realized the futility of seeking for us when they couldn't guess within a hundred miles where we might be.

In camp we became the centre of interest.



THE EASTERN CATARACT, VICTORIA FALLS



## THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

Thousands of questions were asked us after we made our complete report to Captain Heany. Those troopers who had refused to volunteer for the expedition now seemed seized with a wild desire to explore the land, driven by man's insatiable curiosity about the unknown.

To avoid the constant questioning Tommy and I decided to organize an elephant-hunt. It proved a most unsatisfactory affair. We took with us four other troopers and a number of native guides and bearers. No difficulty was experienced in finding a herd of twelve pachyderms; the difficulty came when they stampeded us. All of our troopers escaped with their lives, but two of the blacks were killed, one tossed seventy-five feet and trampled to death, while the other was mangled beyond recognition. In return for these two human lives we brought down one huge bull whose tusks were worth a small fortune. We bore these to camp as trophies, but we bore also two mangled black bodies.

That night Tommy and I suddenly realized that we were sick of hunting. We had known all the thrills of it, we had missed death by inches more than once, we had seen our comrades, black and white, go down before the charges of infuriated beasts. Our toll of game killed was enormous, ranging through the animal world from the largest elephant to the smallest dik-dik. Of some of our kills we were ashamed, of others we were proud. But now we were through. Probably it was that gorgeous expedition to the falls, through that

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paradise where all beasts lived in luxuriant happiness, which had for ever satiated our desire to kill. Yes, we were through.

What should we do now? What did the wilds offer us since the thrill had left the hunt? Should we return to civilization?

More than two years Jack Tomlinson and I had spent with the Mounted Police. Now, we decided, was the time to seek civilization again. But unknown to us the greatest experience of all lay just ahead.

## *Chapter XVIII*

### THE TRAIL OF FOOLS

TOMMY suggested the project to me. Together we took it to Captain Heany.

"We should like to strike directly eastward to the coast," we announced. "Passing from here straight across the Portuguese territory. Can it be done?"

Captain Heany answered with a vehement "No!" He added, "That country is supposed to be the worst in all Africa for malaria and sleeping sickness. No white man has ever made that journey, and I don't think any white man ever will. Even the natives keep away from the region. It's pure suicide to undertake a thing like that."

Tommy and I possessed the bravery of utter ignorance. Had we known one-tenth of the suffering which faced us we should have gone peaceably southward on the trail we had built from Mafeking. Instead we talked up our expedition, attempted to gather recruits, explaining that we hoped to cross that huge unexplored territory in five weeks. Yes, in five weeks we would be sniffing the ocean air. What a dream that was, and what a price we paid for the vision we had created!

Eventually two other troopers, carried away by our enthusiasm, agreed to join us in that trek to the coast. Now came the difficulties of securing porters and guides. No black wished to make the trip, not

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only because of the malaria and sleeping sickness which was reported to strike down every man who entered that district, but also because of the slave-trade which annually claimed thousands of black victims on the Zambezi near the coast which we hoped to reach. It was only by elaborate promises of protection and huge rewards that we secured six native bearers.

Gradually we accumulated provisions, enough, we thought, to last for three months. Biltong, of course, was the basis. We were told that game would probably be scarce ahead of us, because of the enormous amount of insect life and the extreme heat. To our packs we added three pounds of quinine for each man. Now we were ready to start.

Once more Captain Heany protested. "Men," he said, "if you have any love of life at all don't attempt that fool journey to the coast. It's two hundred and fifty miles on a line—at least four hundred the way you'll have to go. Since you first came to me I have gathered all the information available, and I know that country you hope to cross is impossible. It's a hole of pestilence, an impassable quagmire."

We were adamant. Lady Luck had always been with us and she would not desert us now. Captain Heany shrugged his shoulders. "You're a couple of damn' fools!" he announced curtly.

After swearing at us he surreptitiously added to our equipment a large roll of mosquito bar and about fifty pounds of compressed vegetables. He also

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undertook to pay our black bearers with bright calico, beads, and salt when they returned from the coast—if ever.

We made a final visit to the troop doctor, who checked us over for the last time. Tommy and I knew that we were as hard as nails, but we wished to have a report on Frank Shaw and Jack Dunn, our new companions. One weak or sick man on the transverse might cost the lives of the whole party. To our joy the doctor reported that our two recruits were good hard-boiled troopers, physically perfect.

“*Sakka bonna zanka!*”—“Good-bye, all!”—and we started one dawn of the first week in January 1892. Four troopers and six porters made up the party; unknown to us was an eleventh member. His name was Tragedy, and he did not remain hidden long.

Our plan, conceived in ignorance, was simple. We would strike straight east and hit the spot where the Shiré river emptied its Congo water in the Zambezi. From that point it would be easy, we believed, to follow the Zambezi to the coast. Surely five weeks would be plenty of time for such hardened travellers as ourselves to complete the trek.

For several days our travel was comparatively simple, the ground sloping steadily from Salisbury to the Zambezi. The nearer we approached the river the heavier was the timber and vegetation, until it became a constant struggle with sheath-knives and muscles and twisting bodies to make our way through.

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Heat! We thought we knew it, were hardened to it, but before this we had really had only a taste of it. The temperature rose constantly as we proceeded; each day was like plunging into an open door of a furnace, except that the heat which hung above the great morass of waving grass was a damp, debilitating heat. The sun was terrifically near, terrifically hot. To remove our head-covering for fifteen minutes was to invite sunstroke. Even our natives wilted under their protective mass of kinky hair. Our bodies were soaked in perspiration. In this we whites were not as fortunate as the natives, for their pores were twice as large as ours and provided more rapid evaporation. To protect us somewhat our bearers made long, narrow mats of grass, which we wore under our shirts against our spines—supposed protection from fever as well as from sun.

Each day was alike. At dawn great clouds of miasma rose from the morass around us—fetid clouds in which we could almost smell malaria. Slowly the sun, a great red ball of fire, pierced these billowing waves of wraith-like mist. Now the enervating heat began, and it continued throughout the long day, until again at night the swamp mist rose around us.

Mosquitoes settled over us by thousands. Around our heads gnats and other stinging insects formed dark clouds. We mentally thanked Captain Heany for giving us mosquito bar, but even this protection proved inefficient. After a mile or two through the tangle the netting over our hats and faces was always torn to pieces.

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We had assumed that we were more or less immune to malaria, for we had all had light attacks on the long trek from Mafeking and we were keeping well fortified with quinine. The shakes hit the four of us at the same time. Fortunately these were light attacks, and after three days of alternate chills and fever we pushed on again.

To our surprise we found game was abundant for a time and fish plentiful in the slow-moving streams. We shot antelopes for meat in order not to touch our reserve supply of biltong; other denizens of the jungle we ignored.

For another week our progress was slow but fairly steady. Suddenly we hit the morass of the Zambezi. This was not white man's country. Somewhere far ahead the river moved slowly, smooth as oil, through this region of great swamps in which fever and pestilence was rife.

A new peril faced us. The second day in the Zambezi slough found us unexpectedly in a region of open spaces dotted with green, slime-covered pools. The heavy vegetation was behind us, and we hoped to travel more rapidly now. We moved in single file, two natives in front of us picking a path through the rotting vegetation and quaking ground, our pack-carriers in the rear. Suddenly the leader emitted a shriek of fright. Already he was half-submerged in the earth. He sank with startling rapidity and had disappeared completely before we could remove our belts to form a life-line.

We camped beside that hole of death and searched

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for the native's body. It was useless. We had entered the region of 'sponges'—those sink-holes of rotted vegetation, sand, and mud. The top crust was generally from three to seven feet thick; underneath, deposits of fine quicksand seemed to be bottomless. Water constantly seeped up through the mass, making a slimy sponge which absorbed anything which trod on it.

With that black carrier's dying shrieks in our ears we pushed forward more slowly. In spite of our care other members of our little troop were constantly sucked down. Each time the rescue was difficult and hazardous. Terror of these sponges gradually overwhelmed us, and at last, rather than attempt any passage which appeared dangerous, we would *détour* far around, requiring extra miles and extra days.

Once more we entered a region of heavy growth. Trees were tied together with rank ferns, vines, liana, and creepers. Underfoot were tangled thorn masses interspersed with orchids and other poisonously beautiful flowers. We hacked and chopped, gradually forcing a passage; as soon as we had advanced green walls behind us closed again immediately. We seemed to be in a great green mouth which was slowly chewing and swallowing us.

The sun disappeared. Only in rare clearings did we catch a glimpse of the godhead, yet the heat remained terrific, a moist and fetid heat like the breath of some subterranean giant.

Night fell rapidly; fifteen minutes after sunset

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came pitchy blackness. Even now there was little surcease of the terrible heat.

For an hour or two after sunset came that period of awesome stillness in the jungle. Then the hideous night noises began. Millions of frogs croaked in a thousand pitches, crocodiles with their weirdly muffled sounds, and scores of other animals, night birds, and insects joined in the awful chorus. Most of us lay awake long hours thinking of the smallness of man in that immense jumble of nature, wondering if we would ever see civilization again.

The night passed. We rose wearily in a blanket of yellow fog. Another torrid day to be faced, and after that another and another.

One night we witnessed a scene taken intact from inferno. We had pitched our camp in an opening hacked from the vines and creepers, and our little camp-fire was flickering. Suddenly one of the native carriers leaped to his feet, his eyes rolling in excitement. His black finger pointed toward the blacker wall beyond us.

We strained our eyes, temporarily blinded by the glow of the fire, and perceived the cause of his excitement. Through the foliage to the east glowed a pink light, indicating a second fire. Instantly we were on our feet, our guns in our hands. By straining our ears we could catch a faint rumble of voices. There seemed only one thing to do: locate the peril before peril located us. We pushed forward through the tangled growth, striving to make our progress as

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quiet as possible, but slipping and stumbling as we advanced.

After less than three hundred yards of progress our startled eyes beheld a fantastic picture which only a Doré could portray. Surrounding a red, flickering fire squatted a group of sixty naked blacks, men and women. The red light gleamed upon white teeth which were filed to sharp fangs, upon rolling eyes, upon thick black torsos so short as to appear deformed below enormous anthropoidic skulls. The upper lips of the women had been enlarged and were pierced lengthwise with six-inch rings which gleamed against the black bodies. The language we heard was a guttural, bestial rumbling seemingly without sense; communication was accomplished largely by frightful grimaces of the face and motions of the short muscular arms.

For a long moment we were fascinated by the eerie scene. Jack Tomlinson broke the spell. "Let's have it out with them," he suggested. "They'll find our trail in the morning and follow us. Better face them now than have them kill us from the bush to-morrow."

He pushed forward noisily, and we followed. As suddenly as if springs had uncoiled under them the blacks leaped to their feet and faced us. We moved into the circle. One of the older men mumbled an order, and the circle closed around us, each warrior clutching an assagai or knobkerrie. Close to the fire we waited helplessly while our bearers strove to establish communication.

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It turned out that the blacks, stupid beyond belief, could yet understand a few phrases of the Mashona tongue; they could understand too the proffer of beads and geegaws. Obviously our white skins surprised and awed them immensely. The leader of the tribe, a little old man bent double with disease, hobbled toward us, touched our faces, and accepted our gifts. We accepted his smirks and grimaces as signs of friendship, and settled ourselves beside the camp-fire.

For an hour we held a confab, striving to find our location in the jungle wilderness, discussing the best way to reach the Zambezi, and what we could expect when we reached the river. It was slow, futile work.

"At least ask them for a guide," Tommy suggested to the black carriers.

Again followed a long period of rumbled words, blank expressions, negations. At last our carrier turned to us. "*Lungela*"—"All right," he said.

We remained round the camp-fire that night, fearing to sleep lest the blacks murdered us. We had more than one creepy moment when some curious jungle man or woman, thinking we were asleep, rubbed fingers over our faces to find what made our skins white.

No unfriendly act was committed during the long night, and in the morning the whole tribe escorted us for the first mile of our journey. The task of guide was then delegated to a young brave, a fellow almost as broad as he was tall, with muscles running rope-

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like over his naked body. He was adept at picking the easiest way through the jungle growth, and our rate of progress increased materially under his guidance.

It was this fellow who led us two days later to a camp of the Mananasas, a few of whom had wandered far from their homes south of Victoria Falls. Here again we met a new style of headdress, for this tribe wore their hirsute masses on top of their heads in the form of enormous hornets' nests. The Mananasas warriors were a cowardly lot completely under the thumb of the Matabele, who had taken thousands of slaves from their kraals, and they kow-towed humbly to us, offering us the best their camp contained of food, skins, and girls, but of information and advice concerning distances and trails they gave us nothing.

Led by our ape-like guide, our progress toward the Zambezi was rapid for a few days, but suddenly the fellow disappeared, apparently convinced that his work was done. Thereafter our progress was tortuously slow.

Frank Shaw came down with malaria. From the first things looked bad for him. The warning chill was severer than usual, and the shakes which followed tossed and racked his body as if he were riding on a springless wagon over a rocky road. Such shakes are terrible things; no one who has not experienced them can appreciate their violence. We placed him under a mulberry-tree and took turns fanning and nursing him.

In spite of quinine and more quinine he rapidly

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passed into unconsciousness. The fever mounted and delirium seized him. He raved about fox-hunts in England, about his home and father, and finally about the white ants which he believed were eating him alive. For six hours the delirium continued.

The night which followed was a long one. We still hoped that Shaw might survive. Physically he was the finest man of all the five hundred troopers who started from Mafeking. Six feet tall, and with the V-shape of an athlete, he could out-fight, out-lift, out-wrestle any man in the company, and was a glutton for punishment. Yet there he was, warped under a mulberry-tree, doomed because of the bite of a few little mosquitoes.

Jack Tomlinson and I were working over him at dawn when he gave a last tremendous shake and was still.

"*Hellco vadis!*" muttered Tommy. He rose and moved slowly off into the thick tangle. I moved away in the other direction. We had no desire to face each other.

After an hour of lonely thought it occurred to me that Shaw should be buried immediately, and I moved back to the mulberry-tree. Tommy was already at work. In a neat little pile beside the trooper's body were his wallet, his watch, and small personal effects. On top of it was a note which Shaw had written days before, giving us the address of his father and requesting us to forward his things if ever we reached civilization. It occurred to me at the

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moment that Shaw had had a foreboding of death. The answer came quickly: in the pockets of all of us were similar messages.

We buried that fine specimen of humanity under the mulberry-tree where he died. An hour later we struck out eastward again.

Our self-confidence was shaken. Shaw's death brought with it a doubt that we would ever reach the coast, but the thought of turning back apparently did not occur to us. We pushed forward as we were able; some days it seemed that we barely moved at all. We were all suffering from light cases of malaria again, but we did not stop to rest our aching bodies.

Days of stubborn struggle with nothing of heroics in them. The impression that we were consciously fighting great odds, braving danger, and staggering forward with the last gasp of breath would be false. Rather we entered a period of animal-like dumbness and stupidity. It did not seem to us that we had ever lived anywhere except in that sunless jungle where we squirmed. Our clothes had been torn from our bodies until they were mere rags; we were a mass of bruises from head to foot; the attacks of insects had swollen our faces until we could barely see from slits of eyes. Undoubtedly we were near the portals of death. But at such a time there are no heroics; there is only the will to live. The mind undoubtedly is dulled, perhaps as a preventive to insanity. Suffering ceases to be suffering in the accepted sense; the entire being seems concentrated

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solely on the preservation of life. No heroics, understand, just a slow advance day by day, hour by hour, an obstinate refusal to wait for death.

Jack Dunn was a true fighter. Small, sinewy, he had the fighting heart of the Irish. One morning when we had difficulty in waking him he merely asked for an extra dose of quinine. Obviously his progress that day was of one in a dream. The next day he shook with severe chills.

"Better stop and rest up, Jack," we mumbled with swollen lips, really hoping, I think, that he would refuse. He did.

For two more days he struggled ahead in that green twilight, leaning heavily on the shoulders of two of the native carriers. The third night as we stopped to camp Dunn fell in his tracks. We immediately covered him with a tent of mosquito bar, but it was too late. He went into such shakes that it seemed that the flesh must be jarred from his bones. We hovered over him, forcing quinine down his throat, while around us the mosquitoes—some almost as large as house-flies—and other poisonous insects stung us unnoticed. Jack Dunn died the next morning amid horrible convulsions.

We didn't pause long at this second grave, for it wasn't a cheerful sight, that black, gulping hole in the heart of the jungle dug with knives and assagais. We called our bearers quickly. Only three of them came. The other two had disappeared mysteriously. We wondered if they too had fallen victims to malaria or sleeping sickness and had crawled back in

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the dripping jungle to die. The remaining blacks could not or would not tell us.

Two whites left now—utterly lost. Somewhere ahead must be the Zambezi—ten miles, fifty miles, a hundred miles. We refused to discuss distances as we pushed forward.

It was Tommy's turn next. He said nothing, but I saw him take enormous doses of quinine. When the shakes hit him he sneaked off like a hurt animal. My heart sank. Tommy and I had faced death together many times before in front of charging animals, Lobengula's warriors, disease, and exhaustion. But this was different. If good old Tommy left me there in the rotten heart of the jungle I knew I too would die. But that was only part of it. The worst of it was thinking that my pal, the man I loved most in the world, was approaching the gates of death. Prayer had meant nothing to me during those hard years in Africa; suddenly prayer meant a great deal.

There was little I could do for Tommy, except pray. I brought him boiled water and fed him quinine. I sat beside him and fanned away the stinging mosquitoes and poisonous insects. That was at night. During the days he would not stop; he tottered ahead.

Steaming day followed steaming day, and Tommy fought his fight and won it. Gradually the fever left him and strength returned. He was ready to take care of me.

My attack came more suddenly than the others.

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The first chill was in the middle of the day; by night I was unable to move; the next morning I was raving. For nine hours, Tommy told me, I ranted and swore, fought lions single-handed, and pleaded with the Kafir natives back in the distillery at Pretoria to stop shaking me. Three days of lethargy followed, during which I knew nothing of what went on around me. At last I was on my feet again, and, supported by Tommy and the natives, pushing forward a short distance each day.

Time had ceased to mean anything to us. Probably we were both more or less irrational, for looking back on the days which followed I recall nothing except the slow, creeping advance, the tripping over jungle creepers, the long hours of rest under bushes and enormous ferns. Certainly we did not hunt, for wild life fought shy of this pestilential place. We had no desire for food. A little biltong at sunrise and again at sunset was more than enough for us.

Day followed day, and there was no outstanding occurrence during any of them; we were minute specks moving across a vast expanse of jungle, and whether we arrived or not seemed nobody's business.

## Chapter XIX

### CANNIBALS AND SLAVES

LIFE began around us again. We saw a few birds in the air, gaily-hued. At night we could hear animals moving again, and even imagined the muffled sound of crocodiles.

“The Zambezi!” announced Tommy. “We’re almost there!”

We were. The next afternoon we came to it suddenly—a broad ribbon of water moving sludgily to the sea. In front of us, beyond the head-high grass, was a narrow strip of sand. We saw it, and strove to cheer as we pushed forward. We were in the sunlight once more, the glorious, blinding sun. After endless weeks of green, dank jungle the yellow rays were intoxicating. We glanced at each other and grinned our happiness—two hair-covered, emaciated men, clothed in tatters, barely able to stand. We stared back over that thick green growth we had penetrated, we watched the river crawl toward the sea. God willing, we would soon be following it.

Our first move was to tear off our rags and leap into the river—a foolish move in our weakened condition, but one which brought no bad consequences. Thoroughly cooled at last, we carried our tatters to a hill of driver ants and left them there. Wrapped in our blankets, we waited until morning before we reclaimed our clothing. Every garment was free of

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the lice, fleas, and other insects which had tormented us for days.

New courage and strength flowed through us. We thought no more of our companions left back there in the maw of the jungle; our minds considered only the future. If we pushed down the river we would surely find a kraal and secure boats to take us toward the coast. Around the very next bend of the river was a kraal, or perhaps the one beyond that. As a matter of fact we had struck the Zambezi far above the Shiré tributary—an error of more than forty miles, as we later discovered.

The second morning we started down the river. Wading for hours knee-deep in water with uncertain sand and mud underneath is not easy work, but compared to hacking and fighting our way through the jungle it seemed simple indeed. Our progress was not rapid, and we had to keep a wary eye on the crocodiles which cavorted around us, but the sun and air, the cool water around our legs, made us quite joyous.

We were trudging down the shallows, perhaps ten or twelve miles from the spot where we had first seen the river, when suddenly we had visions of ourselves being boiled or baked for food. The cannibals, thirty odd of them, had undoubtedly been watching us for a long time, but we had the surprise of our lives when they leaped from the river-bank and surrounded us. Fang-toothed, long of hair, naked, they were ugly of body and ugly of disposition. Waving their spears, rumbling threats whose tone we

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understood if not the words, they herded us up the bank. Already we were proffering empty cartridge shells and bits of mosquito bar for ransom, and our native guides, weak with fright, were expostulating and pleading with every sign and word they knew.

The parley lasted many minutes. Sometimes the cannibals raised their assagais and bared their filed teeth; again they grunted and rubbed their noses as if in doubt. Tommy and I waited, picturing ourselves boiling in fat or nicely spitted over a fire.

It took the cannibals an age-long hour to decide our fates. Eventually they stalked haughtily into the jungle. Immediately our bearers began to regain their courage and soon were boasting of their strategy.

"We say you were Arab traders," exclaimed the big black boy from camp, who could speak a little English. "We tell them they sell slaves to you, so not kill you."

One of the other guides made weird signs, and the spokesman grinned. "Yes. They say white man's meat is no good. It is too much salt."

Thus we were saved, I am convinced, largely because of the cannibals' epicurean tastes. Certainly there could have been no successful resistance on our part, for we were outnumbered forty to five.

On down the river we wallowed. We found no kraals and no sign that we were approaching the mouth of the Shiré. Gradually we settled ourselves to the conviction that we would have to walk all

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the way to the coast. Indeed, it seemed that we had been walking all our lives.

Again it was Tommy who sighted good fortune. "A boat!" he called excitedly. "Look, a boat!"

Moving slowly down the river behind us came a weird Arab dhow, its deck loaded heavily with naked black slaves and huge piles of ivory stacked like cordwood. Only fifty feet long, it was sharp-prowed, high in the stern, propelled by oars and a small triangular sail.

Never was there a more welcome sight. Behind us now for ever was the green, gulping jungle; ahead lay life and sanity—no more of horror, suffering, and death. But our anticipations were doomed to an early crash.

Knee-deep in the Zambezi we bellowed to the dhow. For a moment it came straight toward us, then suddenly turned again toward the middle of the river. The captain had looked us over and decided we were strange, hair-matted beasts with whom he could have no dealings. We shouted for him to stop.

The crew rested on their oars for a moment and the master rose in the stern. He was a little weazened Arab with a huge black beard which straggled down his tattered, dirty robe. Clinging to the tiller, he barked a staccatic fusillade of questions at us. Naturally we didn't understand him. He made a sweep of his hand and turned again to the crew. The oars churned the water and the boat moved away.

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That was too much for Tommy and me. Disdaining crocodiles, the treacherous currents, and quicksands, we splashed frantically out toward the boat. We reached it, and for a moment were in imminent danger of having our heads split by members of the crew. We pulled ourselves aboard, and the Arab captain stood over us.

"How much to take us to the ocean?" We patted our leather belts, implying that they were full of gold. "How much to take us to the ocean?"

The old Arab shook his head. He was fingering a scimitar at his belt. It looked like a very efficient knife, and the old boy was obviously a ready murderer. He scowled at us, motioned us back into the water. The members of the crew had gathered at his shoulder, a motley gang of half-naked Arabs and blacks, real cut-throats looking for employment for their talents.

Tommy had the happy thought of calling to our guides on the shore and asking them to relay our message through some of the black members of the crew. After considerable shouting from boat to shore the Arab captain understood at last. His eyes lighted at the prospect of making an unexpected profit. He set his price—a huge one—and we accepted readily, gloriously happy in the prospect of reaching civilization without further effort on our part.

We called our native guides to the boat. Clutching the gunnels with their black hands, they waited until we had inscribed for each of them a short note

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to Captain Heany. The Arab captain invited them aboard. They shook their heads and waited warily, half expecting each moment to be dragged on deck and chained to the other slaves. Our notes, written on scraps of paper, were completed at last. They requested Captain Heany to give each of the blacks a liberal reward for faithful performance of duty. Our guides thrust the messages into their mouths and dropped back into the water.

“Give the writing to the big high boss!”

They understood. They grinned, pushed away from the boat, and splashed back to shore. We shouted a farewell to them, wondering if they would ever reach Fort Salisbury again. As a matter of fact, as far as we could ever learn, they disappeared completely somewhere on that long trek inland through the jungle, and Captain Heany was never asked to pay the bonus.

Aboard the dhow, Tommy and I had only one ambition—to throw ourselves on the deck and sleep. Sprawled there, hats over our swollen faces, it seemed that we could rest for ever. The cruel life aboard the dhow, the fact that the Arab captain might be planning to murder us and secure the rest of our gold, the moans and cries of the chained slaves, the shouts of the crew, these meant nothing to us. We slept almost instantly.

It was hours later when we awoke. We found ourselves at the spot we had set out to reach overland, the junction of the Shiré and the Zambezi rivers. The dhow had already been warped to

the shore, and we were in a typical Arab slave-camp.

The Shiré, rising in Lake Nyasa, was one of the busiest of all highways in the slave-traffic, and that camp at the mouth of it was a large and profitable settlement. Arab captains were there from all parts of the world. Naturally enough, they could speak every language, including ours, and we were temporarily the centre of interest.

"The less concern we show the better off we'll be," Tommy whispered to me. "Be careful of giving any information."

He was right. We were called into the tent of a patriarchal Arab, who cross-examined us thoroughly. We informed him that we had deserted from a party formed by Cecil Rhodes to settle Matabeleland. Mashonaland? No, we were not interested in that at all. That was Arab slaving territory, and even Cecil Rhodes had no interest in it—that was the story we told.

For a full hour we were questioned, but at last convinced the Arab that we were neither spies nor competitors. Moving from the tent, we saw a pair of scales used for weighing ivory and rubber. I had not been heavy at Salisbury, weighing only one hundred and sixty-three pounds in spite of my six-foot two of height. Now I weighed one hundred and twenty-two pounds. Tommy was even more of a skeleton; he had lost almost fifty pounds.

We slept that night in a little tent which we appropriated near the river-bank. During the black

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hours we heard commotion on the river-front as two more slave-boats pulled in. We were up at dawn to investigate the newcomers. In the hours which followed we saw the most frightful barbarity.

A generation or more ago the civilized world was in fever-heat over the Congo slave atrocities. National and international courts investigated, King Leopold of Belgium was castigated, evidence was gathered from all parts of Africa, and the revolting details of that trafficking in human life became public property. To the evidence which was accumulated Tommy and I can add details; we can vouch for the truth of many of the worst things mentioned in the reports.

That first morning we investigated two huge stockades in which had been assembled the slaves brought down the rivers. Approximately two hundred men, women, and children had been herded into the foulest corral. Not a single one of them, as far as we could see, had escaped terrible maiming. Men had their hands or feet cut off or eyes blinded; little children had been twisted and racked, either accidentally or on purpose; women had their faces slashed, their lips and breasts amputated, and arms broken.

Each man bore a five-foot yoke made from a forked tree and fastened to his neck with rivets. Constant rubbing of these heavy yokes had lacerated their shoulders, producing great ulcers upon which flies swarmed. The women bore no yokes, but were chained together with iron rings fastened around

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their necks. There they huddled in the sun, a welter of humanity, dumbly anticipating the death which would end their suffering.

While we watched orders came to load one of the boats which had arrived during the night. Instantly there was great commotion. Arabs cracked long whips around black bodies, forcing the slaves to totter to their feet. A dozen men and half as many women were whipped out of the herd. The yokes of the men were fastened together until a pole, almost rigid from end to end, was formed. Under this pole they staggered away, and when a slave passed out, his legs dangling limply, the others bore his weight. Beyond the stockade they were stopped at a pile of ivory, and each slave was forced to take up a huge load. Again they were whipped forward, a double profit now to the slavers.

The sights in that camp and in the others we visited in the days which followed were not pleasant, but with our own lives at stake Tommy and I made no protest either vocal or by facial expression, and the Arabs were actually proud of their handiwork. They boasted to us of the many villages which had been exterminated; they hastened to add that often they left young men and women to repopulate some of the kraals. Periodically they wiped out whole tribes, carrying with them those whose strength would bring a prize at market, killing the old, the deformed, and the very young.

At dusk that day a huge black giant of the Mashona tribe managed to tear free from his yoke. He made

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his bid for freedom—a futile one, for he was caught scaling the stockade. Coldly, methodically, he was chained to a log and whipped to death. His skin was literally flayed from his body; the tattered corpse was impaled on a stockade pole and left there—food for flies and maggots—an example to the other slaves.

The Arab slavers were thoroughly hardened to their trade. They even considered themselves merciful. The agents of King Leopold, they explained, were a thousand times more cruel, and the practices of which they told are too revolting to print. Eye-witnesses swore to us that the stories were true, but as I did not actually witness the atrocities I have no right to relate them as facts. There is this to be said: if King Leopold and his agents treated the twenty-five million blacks upon whom they levied with more barbarous cruelty than the Arabs, then the imagination can picture nothing worse.

## *Chapter XX*

### WHO DRINKS OF AN AFRICAN SPRING

It began to seem that Tommy and I were due to spend the remainder of our lives in that disgusting slave-camp, constantly witnessing scenes of suffering and torture. The captain with whom we had bargained to take us to the coast was in no hurry to move. He explained that both the slave and ivory markets were glutted and prices low. He would keep his particular stock until prices soared. This might be a few weeks or a few months.

We attempted to make other arrangements to leave the camp, and five days later secured passage in a second dhow. The captain agreed to take us to the mouth of the Zambezi for two pounds each, which was almost our entire capital. Half-heartedly we attempted to secure a refund from our first captain, but he shrugged his shoulders. We could wait for him or not, just as we pleased.

Early one morning the dhow, slightly larger than the one we had first boarded, was loaded with slaves and ivory. Sixty blacks, half men and half women, were herded into the foul hold after stacking the ivory on the forward deck.

As the boat moved out into the Zambezi Tommy and I appropriated a little cave in that wealth of ivory, and for two days we lived in it, existing on the bilong which we had brought with us and begging

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water from the Arab captain. Now that the profiteer had our money he apparently cared little what happened to us, and even water was given with ill grace.

We expected to see the ocean open out before us, and were greatly surprised when the boat suddenly put in to shore. We were told that navigation farther along the Zambezi was impossible. Ahead of us lay myriads of shifting sand-bars, making the river from there to the sea, a distance of fifty or sixty miles, a mass of mangrove islands and swamps.

A portage was in order. The Kwa Kwa river was only five miles distant overland, and on its bank another boat awaited our cargo. The slaves were dragged from the hold to the deck, yoked together, and loaded once more with their burdens of ivory. Over the swampy ground they were whipped, and we followed at their heels. Within two hours we were on the banks of the Kwa Kwa.

Aboard the waiting boat, we expected to move directly to the ocean, but the slaves, after depositing their load of ivory on the deck, were sent back over the trail for more. It took three days to complete the transport of all merchandise to the second boat. The third evening we set out for Quelimane, a post on the Indian Ocean at the mouth of the Kwa Kwa.

This particular Arab dhow was the filthiest we had seen. There was no pretence to sanitation and the stench was terrible. The deck was littered with ivory, filth, and a few sprawled blacks. Below us in the hold had been thrown the great bulk of the

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slaves. Constantly we heard their moans, broken by occasional howls of pain and the clanking of chains. Just so many black cattle they were, worth about four pounds a head at the source and forty pounds when delivered at their market, which was either Madagascar or Arabia.

The tenfold increase in the value of the slaves between the point of capture and the slave-market seemed unreasonable to me, and I asked an Arab boy who was some relation of the captain concerning it. The lad had a smattering of English which he had picked up at some port of call, and was proud to exhibit it. He told me that the differential in slave value was due to the watch kept by British gunboats. He went on to add, illustrating his explanation with two bits of wood, that many of the big slave-boats had a plank fence centred from stem to stern of the deck. To it pulleys and a rope were attached. When an English gunboat appeared the slaves were hastily brought from the hold and lined up beside the plank fence. Heavy rocks were attached to each end of the human line, and the fence was jerked to the side of the ship. Overboard went the helpless blacks. In this manner all evidence was destroyed—a score of black people, more or less, lying on the bottom of the ocean.

I was still questioning the boy concerning this practice when an older Arab appeared. He caught the lad by the back of the neck and marched him away, growling threats and imprecations. From that moment existence aboard that slaver was not

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worth living for Tommy and me. Disaster hung over us. We knew too much, had seen too much; obviously we should be destroyed.

Wherever we turned on that filthy deck beady eyes followed us. Arabs, their hands on their curved knives, bumped rudely into us, inviting a quarrel. One evening at dusk a huge pile of ivory toppled on to us. We should have been buried under it had not Tommy, with some strange premonition, leaped away, pulling me with him. That ivory did not crash to deck unintentionally.

During the long nights we could hear the Arabs padding around us, their bare feet almost noiseless on the deck. One or two would come close to us, listening in the darkness, and then move away again. We dared not sleep. It was perfectly obvious to us that the owners and the crew of the slaver wished us to disappear. It needed only a single order from some one in authority or one overt act on our part to bring the *dénouement*.

Our only defence against the danger which threatened us was to mask our feelings, increase our geniality. We asked no more questions. We laughed at the plight of the slaves, appeared to relish the whippings given to those who struggled or protested; we distributed most of the money we had left to members of the crew in return for small favours.

The ocean at last, spreading out before us, smooth as glass under the midday sun. The ocean, the goal at which we had aimed so many weeks before in Fort Salisbury, the destination we had set when we

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started that long trek across the morasses and jungles which no white man had ever seen before. The ocean—we gazed at it and blinked. Both of us were thinking of Frank Shaw and Jack Dunn, who had hoped to be there with us, and instead were deep in the black earth of the jungle.

With sunset—a glorious golden sunset over the coast of Africa—we were well out at sea. Something of the peace, the expanse, the majesty of ocean and land settled over us. No longer were we concerned with the suspicions of our Arab hosts; for the moment our personal jeopardy meant nothing. Our thoughts flashed back over the months and years. Sitting on the deck of that little Arab dhow, we reviewed our lives with the Mounted Police. For the first time we really computed the cost in the sickness, suffering, and death of brave men, mentioning friend after friend who had died in that long trek, until it seemed we had no friends left.

At last we were silent, staring at the stars in the tropical skies, listening to the lap of the waves against the prow of the boat, and thinking perhaps of that wild elephant stampede through camp, or, more likely, the smile which remained on Jack Dunn's face when we buried him.

Our journey down the coast to Chinde, on to Beira and Inhambane, was uneventful. Always we were watchful of our Arab hosts, but they were too busy making trades and discussing prices to pay much attention to us. At Lourenço Marquez, off the southern coast of Madagascar, we found a

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coastwise passenger boat which took us to Durban, Natal.

We were at the starting-point of all our African adventures. Civilization again! How we relished it—the comparatively easy life of the people around us, the bar-rooms, the dances, the commonplace commercial trading! Gravely we watched such everyday affairs as the building of a house or the toddling of a child. Our bodies and minds were more jaded than we had realized; a lethargy of peace claimed us.

Gradually restlessness returned. We had drunk of an African spring, and he who drinks of an African spring must always return to it. Almost without discussion we started north again to Johannesburg. Beyond the goldfields the raw, wild life was calling us. How to get back to that more northerly land of lions and elephants, of jungle and forests? We had not a pound between us.

Fortune favoured us. Four titled Englishmen had heard of our experiences. They engaged us immediately to serve as their guides on a hunting trip. We accepted on strict terms, which included the elimination of a collection of variegated dogs, a dozen black valets, four canvas bath-tubs, and the great arsenal of guns which they carried.

Of that hunting trip little need be said. There have been hundreds of similar hunts, probably thousands of them, since that day. We shot small game on the way to Mafeking. There we stopped. Word had been sent down that the black volcano to

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the north had finally erupted. Lobengula and his Matabele were on the war-path; the first Matabele war had begun. Scores of white lives had already been sacrificed, and hundreds of blacks.

With all our hearts Tommy and I wished we were back with our friends in the Mounted Police. We planned to leave our little hunting party and trek north to join our remaining comrades. The titled Englishmen held us to our contract. They had come for hunting, they said, and a black uprising could not be allowed to disturb their plans. We would wait until the trouble was over. Tommy and I fumed—and waited.

Up north, up there in what we called “our country,” explosion succeeded explosion. The Matabele warriors attacked the Mashonas around Victoria, even entering the forbidden district. Our comrades in the Mounted Police, only two hundred of them now, set out on a punitive expedition. They drove the Matabele back to Bulawayo, where old Lobengula sat with his wives.

A brief moment for breath and parley and then the actual warfare began. Battle succeeded battle; the Matabele were killed by the hundreds, and the whites suffered grave losses on the Shangani and Bembesi rivers. The kraal of Bulawayo, the great hill-town of Lobengula, his treasury and his storehouse, were fired at his orders. The old chieftain fled to die in the Zambezi swamps, and Alan Wilson, as brave a soldier as there was in all Africa, was sent in pursuit with a small party. Somewhere in the



WHERE RHODES LIES ON "THE ROOF OF THE WORLD"

The native is standing by the grave.



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jungle the little white band was surrounded and annihilated.

All these things were happening and Tommy and I were not in it. Our comrades were fighting, suffering, dying. We belonged with them. Frantically we tried to get a pass to go north and join the fray. We were refused, perhaps through the connivance of the earl and duke who were members of the hunting party which had hired us. We were ordered to remain where we were until the trouble blew over.

Perforce we remained. Later we took the Englishmen out to their hunt. We watched them slaughter game, helped them with our advice and our presence, even saving them when their lives were in danger. But our hearts were not in our work. No longer was the thrill of the hunt for us. The charge of a lion, the trumpeting of an elephant, had ceased to be distinct adventures. We were hired guides, hired men, we who had hunted hundreds of miles of jungle together, who had cut a semicircle across the untracked wilds of South Africa.

"I can't stand this any longer," Tommy told me one night. "I simply can't stomach it. Let's leave these pot-shooting Englishmen and get out of here."

We did. Once more we tried to go north to join our comrades. We were threatened with arrest. No person could break the cordon. Frustrated, disappointed beyond words, we turned south. Africa didn't want us any more. Africa couldn't use us. We turned our backs on Africa.

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The African springs still call us. Some time, God willing, we will retrace that long trek from Mafeking to Salisbury and from Salisbury to the ocean. We will pause at the Zimbabwe ruins, and watch them only in the moonlight lest we see what civilization has done to them. We will journey to the new Bulawayo. There in the Matopo Hills we will stop at the grave of Dr Jameson, the man whose little body was all courage. We will linger longer at the tomb of Cecil John Rhodes, he of heroic visions of an empire—an empire which our little band of Mounted Police helped to create.



