

STRAITS OF LADYSMITH.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE NINE.)

In this passage there is a picture of the stern old Gen. Koch: 'When noon arrived I went to F. C. Pienaar and reminded him of his promise of permits. He shrugged his shoulders, told me he had no further authority, and referred me to Gen. Koch, who had arrived about 10 p. m. the previous evening. Choosing a favorable moment, therefore, I got the general alone. His bearing was very resolute, and, for a man of his advanced age and venerable appearance, wonderfully firm; but a single glance at his cold expressionless eyes enabled me to anticipate his answer. He apparently did not speak English with ease and called up one who I was afterward informed was his son, Judge Koch, and very deliberately told him to inform me as follows: 'You will stay here at least another two days, until the arrival of another commando, when a council will be held, and a decision taken as to what to do with you. If you remain here you will be protected; but if any of you are found on the veldt you will be shot indiscriminately. We mean absolute business this time.' Evidently we are fixed for a time.

A couple of hours after this I was sent for by Gen. Koch. Could I, he asked, find a sail (local for tarpaulin) as a wagon of ammunition had broken down in a spruit some two miles distant, and the night promised to be wet. I promised, seeing in the commission an opportunity to see what was afoot, and knowing moreover, that his own men could have got a sail any how if I had declined to find one. An escort was found me, and I went first to the station, where I knew a spare tarpaulin had lain. It was gone; but in looking for it, I found a case of dynamite, which had evidently been brought from the colliery magazine, distant about half a mile. A tremendous hammering was going on in the office, and on entering I found an officer using a hammer, and apparently opening up or nailing down the floor. I at once connected the case of explosives with the hammering, and suspected that the building was being mined. Before there was time to see what was being done I was peremptorily ordered outside, and when I replied that Gen. Koch had sent me for a sail I was told 'Go back and tell Gen Koch I don't know him.'

But the officers maintained discipline of a sort, as witnesses the following story of a duck. The afternoon dragged wearily on, and several of our party had a turn at cooking, none of the attempts seeming particularly satisfactory. Knives and forks crockery, etc., were rapidly disappearing, and our usual eating habits were following suit. Those who did not care to snatch a piece of half cooked mutton from the top of the kitchener and eat it Kaffir fashion stood at good chance of going hungry. By chance however, I had a dinner of roast duck that night. Passing a couple of officers at the table, one of them asked me to join them and passed me what he called a 'duck with a history' to help myself before he and his brother officer began. The duck, according to his tale, had belonged to the proprietor of the hotel, and one of the rough fighters, seeing it, had cut off its head with his jack knife, and was making off with his prize when he stumbled into the arms of a field cornet, who demanded particulars of the way in which the duck came into his possession. No satisfactory explanation being forthcoming, he was deprived of his duck and sentenced there and then to fifteen lashes in lieu thereof. The duck was taken inside and cooked for the officers, and together with a plentiful supply of potatoes, proved an appetizing dish.

We then left the station premises, and went to one of the colliery sidings, where a train of military stores was being loaded. My mission, and my escort together enabled me to go down the entire train, and watch the proceedings without interference. In one wagon dozens of new military saddles were found and this enabled the Boers to make use of the numerous horses they had captured on their way down. Another truck contained whiskey, which was destroyed as soon as found, the leader thinking it inadvisable to allow whiskey to get among their followers by the case. Further along the train we found meal, flour, bread, clothing, officers' baggage, bandmen's uniforms and instruments, what was useful was, of course, immediately annexed, and other goods were thrown out of the trucks and picked up by the scores of Indians and natives who were enjoying the spectacle. Some queer results were seen as the Boers found the officers' baggage and the bandmen's uniforms. One of the roughest managed to squeeze his feet into a pair of patent leather topboots and exchanged his coarse jacket for a scarlet bandmaster's tunic. So attired he walked off with cartine in one hand and a boot tree in the other, no

doubt bent on ascertaining what the latter was used for. Another sat for some time making vigorous attempts to blow a note on a big trombone which was minus a mouthpiece; and, when he found it unworkable he threw it down and trampled the shape out of it. Among other finds the Boers got a number of polo sticks, tennis rackets, chess boards, folding chairs (each bearing some officers' name), and many similar things and these were the cause of much unfavorable comment on the part of the Boer officers, who failed to see the need of them. However, the folding chairs, at least, were useful, although it did not seem to be quite in the fitness of things to see Gen. Koch or Field Cornet Potgieter sit at ease in a chair which bore in large letters on its back, 'Capt — R. I. F., or 'Lieut — R. I. F.'

The Boers, too, seem to be able to sing songs other than hymns and psalms, for on the second night they had a smoking concert. 'As our stay seemed likely to prove a long one, and the hours dragged wearily on, a smoking concert was mooted, whether by our men or by the Boers, I cannot say, but whoever gets the credit of the initiative, it was duly arranged, and Field Cornet Pienaar was ready and willing to take the chair. Duty at 8 p. m., he appeared, and at once had some choice whiskey and cigars placed on the table, and he filled up and handed round to Briton and Boer impartially. The whiskey was consigned to some of our British officers at Dundee, and Pienaar jocularly admired their choice of whiskey, and, indeed, as the night advanced, he quite warmed up to the officers, who, as he put it, were not so bad as he thought, as evidenced by their good taste. Poor Pienaar had a right royal time and probably never had a jollier night in his life. It was his last on earth, for ere another sun had set he was stretched dead on the battlefield within a mile of the scene I have just mentioned, after, from all accounts, fighting like a Trojan.

The smoking concert proceeded merrily, despite the extraordinary circumstances under which it was held. It was opened by a comic song, rendered by a refugee from Newcastle, whose musical abilities proved of great service. He and I then rendered the old duet, 'All's Well,' and on being encored responded with the 'Army and Navy' duet. A Transvaal burgher sang an Irish song, as only an Irishman can. He told us afterward that this way his eighth campaign, but he did not know then that it was his last. Next day he was dead. A German sergeant then sat down to the piano. Sir Joseph Barnby's glee, 'Sweet and Low,' was sung to his accompaniment, and when I say that it was a success vocally and instrumentally and add that we all had to trust to memory it goes to show how wide is the popularity the little composition enjoys. The Boer sergeant then played a series of national anthems, including 'God Save the Queen' and the Transvaal Volkslied. They were all played with great taste, and I certainly never expect to hear our national anthem played or sung again under such apparently impossible conditions. While we English prisoners sang our national anthem, the Dutch present joined in, but as they sang in the taal I could not

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make out what they were singing, but they were well acquainted with the air and sang it freely. 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' was also played by the Germans, both English and Dutch singing in their respective tongues. Whether the Dutch version had any relation to ours I cannot say, but the tune was evidently familiar.

Word from "Our Boys".

The following letter has been received from J. Benson Pascoe, one of the St John members of the Canadian contingent, and shows that the citizen soldiers were carrying a light heart and ready for the hard work before them in Africa. The letter reads as follows:—

Well to begin with I am enjoying the best of health and spirits, and have all the way. One poor fellow from Ottawa died the fourth day out and was solemnly committed to the deep. A great number were sea sick, but not I. We have had a splendid trip, I have seen the sea as calm as a mill pond at mid ocean. We will arrive at Cape Town on Tuesday or Wednesday. Have not passed many ships, about ten. Have seen a few whales and sharks and lots of flying fish. We passed the Cape de Verde Islands on Sunday, two weeks ago today, and oh! you could not imagine, neither could I begin to explain the beautiful scenery. They are huge hills or mountains, green from top to bottom, except on the perpendicular face of the rock. If I ever see you again I will try and tell you about them. The cook had a big plate of canned corn yesterday, and while he was eating it, Will Swatridge swiped it out of his hand and ran, the cook fell head over heels down stairs chasing him, but failed to catch him. Just as I was dozing off to sleep last night the string of my hammock broke and down I went on a lot of dishes on a table under me. But there has been others, and I have had the pleasure of laughing at them, I did not hurt myself, so I will allow you to laugh at me. We had shooting a few days ago and I made first class. I have been a mess orderly most of the time, my duties are to wait on a table, wash the

dishes and keep clean around the table. There are two orderlies and ten men at each table. We have full sway of the ship and get clear of all other duties, such as fatigue, watch and guard, which are much more disagreeable. They have to swab the decks and other dirty work. With the exception of about 100 they are all a nice lot of fellows. Some splendid singers, and we have lots of it. Our camp gave a concert Friday night on the quarter deck, and the colonel was very much pleased with it. We have boxing exhibitions occasionally and I take an active part. I will write again when I get time; and I will have something of interest to tell you. The next week or two will be a case of hustle, time is very precious. A number of fellows are to be sent home because they are not strong enough and some for different offences.

Sincerely yours,
J. BENSON PASCOE

Man Drunk, Block Signals Seber.

The introduction of block signals on railroads running fast express trains has lessened the danger and also created a feeling of safety in the minds of those who are compelled to travel to any extent.

The pilot on the engine of the postal express, when it reached New London, bore the signs of an accident in which some track walker had lost his life. The engineer knew nothing of it, nor could he tell when the supposed accident happened.

None of the operators could shed any light on the mystery, but, strange to say, the operator in the tower just east of the Westerly station failed to respond. Repeatedly he was called up, but to no purpose.

An investigation showed that he was lying on the floor, dead drunk. From the appearance of things, it looked to those present at the station as if the man had set out deliberately to celebrate. All the signals were set at safety, and there was no reason why the towerman should have been disturbed.

Cruel Kindness.

John Ruskin, at seventy five, had as keen a sense of taste as most men have at twenty, and greatly enjoyed new flavors.

'My palate,' he once said, 'serves me now so well, because when I was a child I was given only the plainest food. When I was a boy, too, I had but one or two toys and no amusements. Hence the keen delight which I take now in every little pleasure.'

Monsieur Renan explained to a friend his habitual cheerfulness in the same way. 'When I was young,' he said, 'my life was simple and bare. I had few amusements. I kept all my illusions; hence little things, which an indulged child in a luxurious home would scarcely notice, now give me an old man—real happiness.' Here is the hint of a truth worth the attention of American parents. If they have wealth, or even a moderate income, their fond effort usually is to give to their boys or girls all the pleasures in miniature which belong to middle age. Children are early made familiar with the idea of fashionable clothes and jewelry. They have their

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formal luncheons and dinner parties, and even balls, in which there are the state and ceremony, and sometimes the dishes, which are to be found in the entertainments of adults. They are overloaded with costly toys, for which they care little. The disappointed father and mother wonder why the child is bored by new pleasures. They do not see that they are robbing him in youth of the relish and keen sense of enjoyment which was meant to give happiness and zest to his whole life. Still more cruel kindness is that of parents of moderate means, who accustom their children to a life of luxury, living to the full limit of their incomes, and when they die leave them unprepared to struggle with the world.

Heroes of Peace.

When the storm howls on a winter night and from the shelter of a comfortable home one hears the snow or sleet driven against the window pane, it is natural, at least for those who live near the sea, to think of the perils to which sailors are exposed. With this thought may well be blended some recognition of the brave men who are waiting to give succor to vessels in need. From nearly two hundred stations on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and from seventy more on the Great Lakes and the Pacific, the crews of the life saving service patrol the coast on such nights, keeping a sharp lookout for vessels in distress. It rarely happens when a ship goes ashore anywhere along the extended American seaboard that the life-savers are not at hand to give aid. Few know their names, and their daring deeds are seldom mentioned in the newspapers; but they are as ready to risk their lives as if their names were to be gazetted for bravery. In 1898, the serious work of the crews began early with the great blizzard which swept the Atlantic coast late in November. Nearly two thirds of all the recorded loss of life on the coast for the year occurred in that single storm. Altogether, the crews saved nearly four thousand persons who were on board of vessels which had met with some disaster; and they saved also more than six million dollars' worth of property. There is little danger that the heroes of war will be denied the glory which their courage merits, but these heroes of peace, who risk and sometimes lose their lives to save others, deserve recognition also.



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