

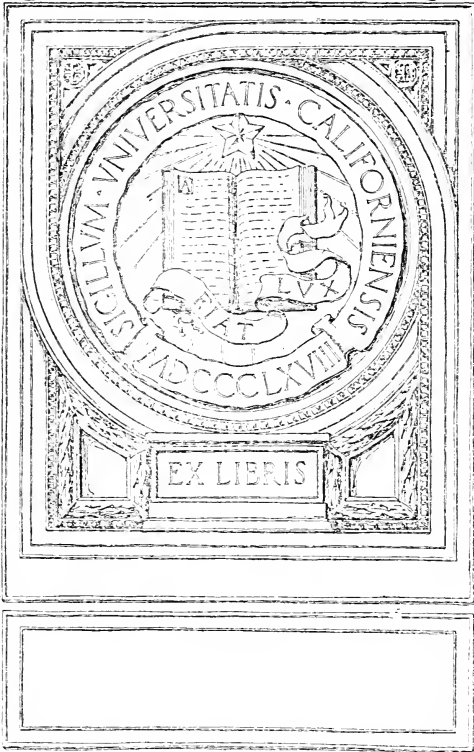
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BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

LYNN LYSTER



BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

VELD RHYMES FOR CHILDREN

With 26 Airs by EDITH L. M. KING.

63 Poems on subjects familiar to South African
children, some of which are set to music.

Crown 4to, 2s. 6d.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

BY

LYNN LYSTER

AUTHOR OF "FLAG LYRICS," "LYRICAL LINKS," "DICK KING'S RIDE"
"VOORTREKKERS LIEDEREN," "VOICES OF THE VELD," "LYRICS
OF CHILD-LAND," "THE TRIPLE-CROSS," ETC.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA
1913

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1. The first part of the text discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for financial transparency and accountability.

2. The second part of the text focuses on the role of internal controls in preventing fraud and errors. It highlights the need for a strong internal control system that includes segregation of duties, authorization procedures, and regular audits.

3. The third part of the text addresses the importance of communication and collaboration between different departments and stakeholders. It stresses that effective communication is key to ensuring that everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals.

4. The fourth part of the text discusses the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest industry trends and regulations. It emphasizes that organizations must be proactive in monitoring changes and adapting their processes accordingly.

5. The fifth part of the text concludes by reiterating the importance of these practices and encourages organizations to implement them consistently to achieve long-term success and sustainability.

THESE BALLADS ARE, BY KIND PERMISSION OF
FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS,
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF HIS SON,
THE LATE LIEUTENANT ROBERTS, K.R.R.,
WHO FELL IN HIS
GALLANT ATTEMPT TO RECOVER THE LOST GUNS
AT COLENZO

491305

To

The Lone Veld-Graves

*The Veld-wind's soft caressing,
Impressed in gentle blessing,
 Has kissed the mounds away!
Rough carven, rude and humble,
Prone, now, their Crosses crumble
 Where desert wild-things stray!*

* * * *

*Tho' we may deem them sleeping,
Our deathless Dead are keeping
 A warden-vigil still!
Tho' herds their graves may trample,
Nath'less their life's ensample
 Points ever to the Hill
Of Selfless Abnegation
Where lies our own salvation,
 And where the Day-star gleams;
For, from the Veld's lone places
The heroes of Two Races
 Bequeath to us their dreams!*

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BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

IN THE DAYS TO COME

WHEN our children's children gather
On the stoep at dusky eve,
While the fire-flies flash and flutter
As their dazzling dance they weave.
Then, as now, the tired house-mother
Resting from love's ceaseless task,
Shall delight her eager listeners
With the tales for which they ask.

She will tell them how a nation
By their sires has been upbuilt ;
Tales of peril and of daring,
And the blood of heroes spilt ;
Tell them why their own Mimosa
On the Empire's flag is wrought
Since the day when Boer and Briton
Set their differences at naught.

BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

And of how the Union's *fontein*¹
Feeds the land with streams of life,
Since the sands of time, slow-drifting,
Filled the grave of racial strife ;
While one people, undivided,
In the cities—on the veld—
Knit by ties of closest kindred
In unbroken concord dwelt.

She will call the Roll of Honour
Of the Champions of the Land ;
Tell of Woltemade, the dauntless,
And a surf-lashed, wreck-strewn strand ;
She will speak in low, hushed accents
Of the fearless boy, Dirk Uys,
Who, astride his dying father,
Proved the courage of his race.

She will name the Voortrek leaders,
Gert Maritz and Piet Retief ;
Tell of crafty, cruel Dingaan,
And that bitter time of grief,
Which befell at Ginginhlovu
When Retief was done to death,
And the royal kraal was reeking
With red slaughter's steaming breath.

¹ *Fontein* = fountain.

She will tell of prayer and promise
And the vow the burghers made
In the laager by Blood River
Ere their battle was arrayed,
And they sallied forth to conquer
On the morn of Dingaan's Day,
When the Sword of Retribution
Broke the Zulu power for aye.

Rensburg's Kop and brave Martinus
Ever set their hearts a-thrill,
As they hear again the story
Of the laager on the hill ;
And of how a single horseman
Through a Zulu impi rode
With a store of ball and powder
On the steed that he bestrode.

Then some curly-headed *kerel*,¹
Eager listening at her side,
Will, perchance, say, " Tell us, mother,
Of Dick King's long, daring ride ;"
And they listen, hushed and breathless,
While the twinkling stars look down,
As she tells the deathless saga
Of the ride to Grahamstown.

¹ *Kerel* = fellow.

BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

From the Four Winds come her stories,
East and West and South and North!
Melville's Saving of the Colours
Of the shattered "24th";—
Isandhlwana's dire disaster;—
Rorke's Drift! grand, heroic stand;—
Alan Wilson's tragic passing
On Shangani River's strand.

One by one she turns the pages
Of the Annals of the Years,
Thickly strewn with deeds of daring,
Storm and sunshine, joy and tears:—
All that goes to build a nation
Lies beneath her storied lore,
Told to make her children worthy
Of the men who went before.

When they ask her of our heroes
Will their lineage she trace,
Naming this one Boer or Briton?
Will she speak of blood and race?
Nay! for she will whisper softly
In those quiet evening hours,
Looking down the years' dim vista,
" 'Tis enough to call them *Ours*."

DE HELD WOLTEMADE

(THE HERO WOLTEMADE)

NOTE.—To the heart of Young South Africa, from the Cape to the Zambesi, the name of Wolraad Woltemade, dairyman and hero, should be as dear, and the story as familiar, as are the names and stories of Grace Darling or Robin Hood to Young England. Of humble birth, and past the prime of life, yet daring and lion-hearted as Cœur de Lion himself, “De Held Woltemade” will always stand as a synonym for all that is manly and chivalrous in the annals of our land.

If Natal is justly proud of Dick King and his white steed, the Cape may be equally so of Wolraad Woltemade and his black stallion.

The two form companion pictures in South Africa's portrait gallery of her national heroes, and the saga of each is equally romantic and thrilling, as handed down to us by history.

In June 1773, the *Jonge Thomas*, Dutch East Indiaman, was blown ashore, during a terrific north-western gale, near the mouth of Salt River, and became a total wreck amongst the breakers, with the loss of some 138 lives out of 205 souls on board

at the time. Riding out from Cape Town on his forever-famous black stallion, with provisions for his son—one of the guard who were in charge of the valuable cargo which was being washed ashore—the dairyman Woltemade made desperate and heroic efforts to save as many of the perishing crew of the *Jonge Thomas* as he possibly could.

His horse, a powerful animal bred on the Cape littoral, was a magnificent swimmer, and, urged by his intrepid master, performed the perilous journey through the breakers from shore to ship, and back again, no less than seven times, on each occasion succeeding in rescuing two of the drowning seamen. On his eighth attempt, however, the survivors crowded upon him, till, overweighted, he sank with his heroic rider.

As a memorial to Woltemade's gallantry, the Dutch East India Company christened one of their new ships *De Held Woltemade*, and a son of the hero was taken into the service of the Company.

THE BALLAD OF WOLRAAD WOLTEMADE

THIS is the Saga of Woltemade,
 A hero of low degree,
 Who, for the saving of other lives,
 Resigned to the hungry sea
 His own, as the price,
 And a sacrifice,
 That some might at least go free.

Know ye The Cape and its iron coast—
That cruel, relentless shore?
Sea-wolves, her children the rav'ning waves,
Full-gorged ever howl for more!
A pack, devil-bred,
Whom Fury hath fed!
Who batten, and snarl, and roar.

Know ye the sign of the "Mouldering Wreck"—
A skeleton, gaping, grid?
Haunt of that Horror, the Octopus—
That Ogre, the ghoulish Squid—
Whose tentacles draw
To its noisome maw
The prey that the waves have hid.

There the *Jonge Thomas*, Dutch Indiaman,
Full-freighted, had come to grief;
Breaking her back with a sickening crash,
A wreck on the gap-toothed reef.
And her canvas, torn
By the gale, was borne
Away—like a storm-blown leaf.

Fishers and farm-folk on wave-swept beach,
A huddled and helpless crew,
Listened, in dread, to the wailing cries
That fainter and fainter grew,
As the shrieking gale
With its icy hail
The perishing victims slew.

On his black stallion, Woltemade,
With clatter of hoof-beats came;
Woltemade! Hero and Dairyman!
Destined to leave his name
In letters of light
As a fearless knight,
And heir to immortal fame.

Moved by that vision of hapless woe,
To pity his manhood woke;
Plans for a rescue he sought and weighed,
And patting his charger, spoke:
“We swim for the deck
Of yon rolling wreck!”
Then doffed he his horseman’s cloak.

Drawing the buckle, he girt his belt,
Then shaking good Springbok’s rein,
Into the chaos of waters plunged
That gallant and fearless twain,
Who reckoned as naught
That the task was fraught
With risks they might dare in vain.

Swam like an otter, his coal-black steed!
And, bred on the salt coast-belt,
Breasting the breakers was naught to him,
A colt of the sea-board Veld.
In his fiery eye
And his courage high
A strain of the Arab dwelt.

Fiercely they battled 'midst seething surf—
A cauldron of yeasting doom—
Bravely confronting the raging gale,
Enshrouded in fearsome gloom ;
While loud on the shore
With a sullen roar
Clanged ever the breakers' boom !

Tossed like a cork in the boiling surf
Where, combing, the billows creamed !
Over his pathway the swooping gulls
Discordantly shrieked and screamed :—
Tho' fleet as a deer
Or a yearling steer,
Too heavy a task it seemed !

Straining eyes followed the daring twain
Adrift on their storm-tossed course ;
Frantic hands beckoned from swaying shrouds,
Encouraging man and horse,
Who struggled and fought
Like a pair distraught,
Submerged by the surges' force.

Swept to the summit of towering waves !
Engulfed in a black abyss !
Panting and gasping, emerged again,
Half-stunned by their deafening hiss !
Yet fighting alway
'Gainst the Storm-King's sway—
A battle of Titans, this !

* * * * *

Under her quarter the back-wash swirled,
A-lee of the straining hull!
Screened from the tempest the shallows showed,
Whene'er came a moment's lull,
The treacherous teeth
Of the reef beneath,
Like fangs in a mouldering skull.

There, 'midst the turmoil swam Woltemade
A-weary with desperate toil;
Nath'less determined at least that some
Assigned as the Storm-Fiend's spoil
Should challenge their fate—
Though the odds were great—
And—rescued—his risks assoil.

Shouting a warning that none should come
Save only the twain he bade,
Presently beckoned that two should spring,
As shorewards the wreckage swayed,
Who, clearing the gap,
Hung fast to the strap
He hove as the leap was made.

Springbok responded to touch of heel
And signal of tightened rein!
Turning his head to the distant shore,
He swam for the beach again;
But, caught in the flow
Of the under-tow,
He struggled, for long, in vain.

Mettlesome courage at last prevailed !
The shallows at length were gained !
Leaving the rescued, brave Woltemade
Swam back—for there still remained
Those others who prayed
For a brave man's aid,
Where Death 'midst the surges reigned.

Seven such journeys he, dauntless, made—
Saving two lives by each !
Wresting the prey of the eager waves
Away from their hungering reach,
Till, gasping and drenched,
But with life unquenched,
They stood on the storm-whipt beach.

Daring the hazard of Fate once more,
On succour and rescue bent,
Into the breakers he, fearless, plunged,
Confirmed in his bold intent
Still others to save
From a watery grave,
Tho' panting, and worn, and spent.

* * * * *

Alas for the rider ! alas, good steed !
Alas, for the death they died !
'Whelmed by the clutches of drowning men,
They sank in the surging tide !
The grave was the price
Of their sacrifice—
But their fame is a fame world-wide !

THE VOORTREKKERS' VOW

A BALLAD OF THE GREAT TREK

NOTE.—On 7th December 1838, at the farm Dancekraal, near where Ladysmith now stands, the Boer commando under Andries Pretorius, before engaging the overwhelming forces of Dingaan, at the battle of Blood River, made a solemn vow to the Lord that if He would vouchsafe unto them the victory in the coming struggle, they and their posterity would, for all time, observe the day and the date as a day of thanksgiving, and keep it as holy as a Sabbath day. This vow was confirmed daily by the commando in their evening prayers, until the battle of Blood River was fought and won, a few days afterwards, on 16th December.

Sarel Celliers, one of the leaders under Andries Pretorius, was appointed as the spokesman, who should in the name of all make the solemn vow. In his "Journal" (*vide Bird's Annals of Natal*) Celliers himself gives the following facts concerning the "Making of the promise": "It was the general feeling that I should give it (the pledge) in the name of all. I made the promise in as simple a manner as

the Lord enabled me to do. I took my place on a gun-carriage. . . . And I raised my hands towards the heavens in the name of us all."

THE MAKING OF THE PROMISE

"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord, thou shalt not slack to pay it."—DEUT. xxi. 23.

WITHIN the wagon-laagered space—
 Outspanned upon the veld—
 With reverent and upturned face
 The Boer Commando knelt!
 Whilst in each heaving bosom
 Iron resolution dwelt!

With *roer*¹ and ammunition-horn
 Beside the bended knee
 The Burghers on that fateful morn
 Prayed God that they might be
 From Dingaan's power delivered;
 And his savage *impis*² flee.

Then, standing on a carronade,
 One foot upon its wheel,
 Sarel Celliers³ to heaven made
 His passionate appeal!
 "Jehovah! God of Battles!
 Hear the folk as now they kneel!

¹ *Roer*, old-fashioned musket.

² *Impis*, regiments.

³ *Celliers*, pronounced Silye.

“ As Israel in the Wilderness
 Called loudly on Thy name,
 And did with prayer their sins confess,
 So now do we the same,
 Rememb’ring, God Almighty,
 That to them Thine answer came

“ O’er countless leagues of trackless veld,
 Lord, Thou hast been our Guide ;
 But now our hearts within us melt,
 If Thou Thy face dost hide—
 We have none other Helper
 Than the Lord our God beside !

“ Our farms and ‘ lands ’ lie desolate !
 Our kraals are cattle-bare !
 Lord, must we bow before our fate
 And still for worse prepare ?
 Nay ! lead our van of battle
 And the spoils shall be our share !

“ As Rachel for her children wept,
 Our tears so Grief compels,
 For o’er our heads its wave hath swept,
 Till, Lord, our faith rebels !
 The Willows of our Sorrow
 Droop by Marah’s bitter wells !

“ Lord, wilt Thou not our pangs assuage
And send us peace again ?
Why round us do the heathen rage
And count their victims slain ?
Why should the folk distrust Thee
And imagine a thing vain ?

“ ‘ Sword of the Lord and Gideon !’
Hear it, O God of hosts !—
That battle-cry which vict’ry won
And shamed proud Midian’s boasts
To-day we make the Watchword
Of our Borders and our Coasts !

“ God ! who accepted Jephtha’s vow,
Our own to-day record !
Vouchsafe to us the vict’ry now,
And steel th’ avenging sword !
Then shall this day, for ever,
Be kept holy for the Lord.

“ As Jacob did of olden days,
His Bethel-stone uprear,
So, shall this troubled people raise—
Vowed on their Bow and Spear—
To Thee, a Tabernacle,
If their way Thou makest clear !

“ To Thee, in name of all the folk,
I stretch uplifted hands !
Ne'er shall our sons this vow revoke
But follow our commands !
We kneel, Lord, making promise—
Vowed to-day, it ever stands.”

* * * * *

God heard the people's bitter cry,
Appealing and devout—
Lo ! Dingaans vanquished Impis fly !
Loud rings the victors' shout,
For scattered are the savage foe
Who compassed them about.

The vow the old Voortrekkers vowed
Their children straitly keep !
Then was our heritage endowed—
Now we the harvest reap,
And surely, there they know it
In the veld-graves where they sleep !

DIRK UYS

A BALLAD OF "THE VOORTREK"

NOTE.—The seeds of a nation's virility and power germinate in the ashes of its heroes. The noble example of a life self-sacrificed on the altar of Duty not only stirs the national pride, but rouses that spirit of emulation the realisation of which shall, perchance, in the hour of need be the means of averting defeat and disaster. When Dirk Uys, a stripling of fourteen years, laid down his life in the ravine beside Umgungundhlovu in 1838, and chose to die beside his wounded father rather than secure his own safety by flight, he wrought a deed the memory of which has to this day tempered the steel of the manhood of the Afrikander race. In the South African Valhalla Dirk Uys, the champion of filial devotion, waits to welcome the future Paladins of a new nation. In the fulness of time may they arise when their country needs them; men mighty of heart, arm, and brain, worthy to fill the seats awaiting them in our Hall of Heroes.

COME, pledge me a toast, and pledge me deep!

'Tis the king of all toasts, I trow;

It makes the life in our pulses leap,

And sets e'en the coldest a-glow.

The toast of all toasts—with a three times three—

Is the toast when we honour Chivalry!

THE BALLAD OF DIRK UYS

FROM strenuous strife are moulded men as stern,
Whose virile youth aspires to Manhood's place,
Nor finds in sport alone its chief concern ;—
'Twas of such sturdy strain came brave Dirk
Uys.

A stripling—yet a very Paladin—
He gave his life, and counted not the price,
Nor sought the laurel-wreath of Fame to win
Whilst making thus his filial sacrifice.

It happened in those days of Long Ago,
When settlers rode with musket at the thigh,
Since every mealie-patch might screen a foe,
'Neath every bush a Kafir warrior lie.

By night the streamers of the wind-stirred corn
Rustled and waved above the ostrich plume
Of savage foeman, waiting but the morn,
To shout his battle-cry of death and doom.

In those stern times the hardy pioneer
Went armed to herd his cattle and his sheep,
And seldom took his rest without the fear
That bloody Death might strike him in his
sleep.

Those were the days when kopje, krantz, and kloof
Rang with the angry clash of savage steel,
And battle-cries, and clang of thund'ring hoof,
And crashing shots, and tramp of arméd heel.

Then Zulu impis made their murderous raids ;
 Their spears drank blood, and ever seemed
 a-thirst !

While smoking kraals and lust-ensanguined blades
 Proclaimed a Kafir war, a land accurst.

* * * * *

Unsettled by the vacillating laws
 Enacted since the war of 'Thirty-Five
 The Boers held Council—making common cause—
 Some plan of future action to contrive.

And when agreed, they make a northward trek,
 Armed to the teeth, and guided by their scouts
 Along the Drakensberg ; without a check
 Until Umsiligaas their vanguard routs.

This fugitive from mighty T'Chaka's spear
 Had travelled north in search of neutral ground,
 And on his path had swept the country clear—
 His aim, a rival dynasty to found.

Checked in the north, they turn and cross the
 Range,
 And send to Dingaan envoys seeking peace,
 Laden with gifts, a treaty to arrange
 In terms of which their wanderings might cease.

Unworthy scion of a Royal Race,
 This fratricide now bore the King's white shield,
 And ruling in the murdered T'Chaka's place
 He flung his raiding impis far a-field.

Fierce Dingaan listens with a traitor's ear
 And Judas smile—because his heart is black—
 Then bids the Strangers settle without fear ;
 Yet, privily, gives orders for attack.

All unsuspecting that they are betrayed,
 As guests, unarmed, they go to join the feast
 Which in their honour Dingaan's women made—
 Foredoomed to Death the while they fear him
 least.

When Dingaan lifts his hand his warriors leap,
 As leopards spring, and drag their victims down !
 The hoarse "*Usutu!*"¹ thunders loud and deep,
 And savage shouts the sudden death-cries drown.

Umgungundhlovu, Dingaan's royal kraal,
 Sleeps in the jealous care of guardian hills,
 Where the White Umfolosi's waters fall
 From their far source in swift-converging rills.

" Hill of Mimosas," so the place was named,
 Where Piet Retief and seventy men were slain,
 When Dingaan was to everlasting shamed,
 And his red shield received its foulest stain.

Here Potgieter and Uys on justice bent
 Follow with aching hearts their comrades' spoor,
 Leading a well-armed force, with stern intent,
 To write in blood the vengeance of the Boer.

¹ "*Usutu!*"—the Zulu battle-cry.

THE BATTLE

THE impi is scattered—its crescent¹ is broken,
Its fierce *Indunas*² are stricken with dread,
The smoke-clouds hang dun, for the *roers* have
spoken,
And Dingaan is counting the tale of his dead.

See! still the Avengers, now maddened with
slaughter,
Ride, furiously firing, in reckless pursuit,
A-flame with the thoughts of the red Bushman-
Water
Whose blood-sodden banks mark the ravishers'
route.

They rage as they think of the homesteads in-
vaded,
The laagers destroyed and by outrage defiled;
For, always, the foe when the wagons were raided,
Speared wantonly, greybeard, and woman and
child.

Incensed by the vision of rapine and ravage,
The death of their kinsfolk they swear to
requite
With vengeance tenfold on the merciless savage,
False Dingaan, whose impi is headlong in flight.

¹ The Zulu battle-front is always formed in the shape of a crescent.

² *Indunas*, captains.

Hot-spur on their track the Commando rides
scattered,

Some few of the foremost too far in advance ;
The Zulus, tho' fleeing disheartened and shattered,
Turn back—and the Boers are in perilous chance.

The hunter is hunted ! the victor defeated !
Aloft soar the scavenger-scouts of the sky,
As Commandant Uys from his saddle unseated
Goes down with an assegai sunk in his thigh.

He plucks out the weapon, his torture unheeding,
Then drives the point upward thro' muscle and
bone ;
The foe bending o'er him falls gasping and bleeding,
And renders his life with a shivering moan.

His back to an anthill, he fights like a Viking !
The butt of his *roer* uprises and falls,
And whilst his fierce Berserker blows he is striking,
He shouts to his comrades encouraging calls.

“ Ride ! ride for your lives ! it were useless to linger !
Dirk, ride for the wagons, my well-beloved son ! ”
He points to the rear with admonishing finger,
Then home rams the powder and ball in his gun !

Dirk turns in his saddle, looks back for a second,
Then swings his horse round with a wild, ringing
shout,
And charging alone against odds never reckoned
He forces a path through the carnage and rout.

His courage is high, but his senses are reeling ;
 A stripling, but dauntless, he rides to his death !
 At sight of his sire in extremity kneeling,
 He drives the spurs deep, with a sob in his breath.

Three times as he gallops he fires his *roer*,
 And thrice does his bullet strike deadly and true ;
 Yet hope of a rescue sinks lower and lower—
 His father, out-foughten, waves Dirk his adieu !

At last ! See ! he flings back his steed on its
 haunches,
 Then leaps from the saddle—a second too late ;
 The Commandant smiles, but his death-wound he
 staunches,
 And Dirk, battling over him, passes Death's gate.

So father and son in their death still united,
 Emblazoned on Chivalry's scutcheon their name ;
 Thus filial love fond affection requited
 And won for Dirk Uys Valour's chaplet of fame.

* * * * *

'Tis seventy years ago, and yet we thrill,
 Recalling his immortal, noble deed.
 Thank God ! its spirit lives amongst us still,
 To serve Our Country in her hour of need.

To-day she boasts as grand and gallant sons—
 'Twas writ again beside Shangani's flood !
 And while the river's current ceaseless runs,
 It sings of Heroes worthy of their blood !

THE BALLAD OF RENSBURG'S KOP

HOW MARTINUS OOSTHUYSE CARRIED POWDER AND BALL THROUGH A ZULU IMPI

NOTE.—Following upon his treacherous murder of Piet Retief and his comrades at the ill-fated “Hill of Mimosas,” Dingaan resolved to raid the scattered and unprotected Boer stations on the banks of the Tugela and Bushman Rivers. The settlers were living in wagons, had made no preparations for defence, and, being unsuspecting of impending disaster, they fell an easy prey to Dingaan's savage warriors. A very few succeeded in escaping the general massacre, and these gave warning to their neighbours. Martinus Oosthuyse, riding upon such a mission, reached Rensburg's Kop, a steep hill which was at that very moment being desperately defended by fourteen Boers against an attacking Zulu Impi. Observing his approach, the leader of the little party signalled to him, holding his rifle aloft *with the muzzle pointing downwards* to signify that the ammunition was running short. Reading the signal aright, Oosthuyse rode back to one of the deserted wagons, and loading himself with as much powder and ball as he could carry, actually succeeded in fighting his way with it, singlehanded,

through an entire Zulu regiment. This daring act saved the lives of his friends, for his arrival with the much-needed ammunition enabled them eventually to drive off the attacking force.

STATUE-STILL, his figure bent,
 Leaning forward in his seat ;
 Staring out with look intent
 T'wards where veld and heavens meet ;
 Rigid, with uplifted arm,
 Long he gazes 'neath his palm.

Foam-flecked flanks and heaving sides
 Tell a tale of headlong speed !
 'Tis a gallant horse he rides,
 Staunch of heart and good at need ;
 By the fierce marauders chased,
 Through the night the twain have raced.

News they bear of savage raid—
 Dingaan's spears are out for blood !
 Every reeking, reddened blade
 Adding to the rising flood
 Which the Bushman River's tide
 With foul murder's crimson dyed.

As he strains his anxious sight
 Drifting vapours upward creep—
 Towering in the hazy light,
 Rensburg's Kop looms sheer and steep ;
 And he marks the rumbling crash
 Following close on rifle-flash.

Fourteen men on Rensburg's Kop
Hold a savage horde at bay!
Every rush their rifles stop!
Every charge their bullets stay!
From each ravening attack
Fire-swept ranks go reeling back!

Sudden, 'midst the drifting smoke,
High above the surging press,
Urgent succour to invoke
Looms a signal of distress!
Rensburg, from the kopje's crown,
Shows his gun—*the muzzle down!*

Quick as thought the watcher knows
By the way he holds his gun,
What his signal would disclose—
“Ammunition almost done!”
Round he wheels with flashing eyes,
Racing off for fresh supplies.

In the wagon by the drift
There, he knows, is ample store.
So he gallops hard and swift
Though his limbs are stiff and sore—
Calling on his horse again,
Urging him with voice and rein.

Never since the colt was foaled
 Had he ridden such a race!
 Never was there ride more bold!
 Never such a madman's pace!
 Every moment as it passed,
 Well might be his comrades' last!

Quick his saddlebags he fills
 Bursting with their precious freight;
 On the veld the powder spills,
 Yet he durst not pause or wait!
 So, he's off with scarce a stop,
 Racing back to Rensburg's Kop!

Now indeed the fight grows warm,
 Every stride with danger fraught!
 Round his track the Zulus swarm!
 Every yard is hardly bought!
 Assegais and 'kerries sing
 As he charges through the ring.

Well for him his charger knows
 How to answer touch of heel!
 Both his hands must fend the blows
 Of the hurtling wood and steel:
 In the raging tide immersed
 Round he whirls his gun reversed.

To his rein a warrior clings !
 Down he swings his rifle-stock
 And the Zulu's death-cry rings
 As he staggers 'neath the shock !
 Raging like a tempest-blast
 Horse and man go crashing past.

Umtagati !¹ loud the cry,
 As he storms his way along !
 Dingaan's warriors turn to fly !
 Witchcraft this—and all too strong !
 Surely, mortal man and horse
 Never rode so dread a course !

Hiding by an ant-heap near,
 Covered by his ox-hide shield,
 Gripping fast a stabbing spear,
 Crouching, lurks a foe concealed :
 Poised to make his deadly spring,
 Every muscle quivering.

Danger lies on every side,
 Right or left he durst not swerve ;
 He must clear it in his stride,
 Riding with an iron nerve ;
 Brain, and eye, and hand alert,
 Deadly peril to avert.

¹ *Umtagati* = witchcraft.

As he rises to the leap
 Assegai and stirrup clash,
 But his rifle's upward sweep
 Turns aside the vicious slash—
 One tense moment in the air,
 Then he lands—a yard to spare !

Now the marksmen on the hill
 Cheer him as he races on.
 How his pulses throb and thrill !
 For his goal is nearly won,
 With his saddlebags intact,
 Though the hide is slashed and hacked.

Rensburg grips his bridle fast
 As he staggers up the slope ;
 Here was succour come at last !—
 Succour, and revenge, and hope !
 For 'gainst rifles charged again
 Every fresh assault is vain.

* * * * *

Should the note of danger sound
 In the years as yet unrolled,
 Shall as true a man be found
 To essay a feat as bold ?
 Aye ! for till Old Time shall stop
 Manhood rides for Rensburg's Kop !

THE SONG OF 'NDONGENI

THE BALLAD OF DICK KING'S RIDE

NOTE.—Dick King, during his famous ride from Durban to Grahamstown in May 1842, was accompanied over the most critical part of his journey by his faithful native servant, 'Ndongeni, a Zulu of royal descent. 'Ndongeni, who was still alive in 1905, gives his personal narrative of the great adventure, a translation of which was printed and published in connection with the "Dick King Memorial."

The Englishman referred to as having been shot by the Boers while swimming from the beach to the *Mazeppa* schooner, which was anchored in Durban Bay at the time, was Charles Adams, whose descendants are still living in Natal. King rode the distance, 600 miles, in ten days, using the same horse for the whole journey; truly a marvellous performance for rider and steed. Well may Durban be proud of Dick King and his famous white stallion—the saviour of Natal!

*E-wé! Yebo! Umlungu,*¹ 'Ndongeni, I who speak
To-day am old and feeble, and wrinkled is my cheek;
Yet still when I look backward my pulses throb and
sing,

As I burn with pride
When I think of the ride
Through the "lines" of the Boers, with King!

¹ Yes, indeed, O white man.

Dingana slew my father ! I speak the word of truth—
But what could I for vengeance—a weakling and a
youth ?

*Umfaan*¹—my arm was powerless *Inyembi's*² weight
to wield ;

So I sought in fear

Of the lust of his spear

The defence of the White-man's shield.

I found *Mla-mu-lan-kun-zi*³—King's native Name of
Praise—

He gave me food and shelter, I learned the White-
man's ways ;

Though fierce and quick to anger, his rule, if stern,
was just ;

So I served him long

Till my arm grew strong,

And I gave him my heart's whole trust.

Those were the Days of Danger ! The land was rent
with strife :

The White-man in his anger took daily toll of life !

Loud boomed the rumbling " roer " ⁴ with deep, full-
throated growl,

Till the *krantzes rang*

With its thundering clang,

And the *Carrion-feeder's*⁵ howl.

¹ *Umfaan*—a young boy.

² *Inyembi*—the heavy Zulu stabbing spear used at close quarters.

³ *Mla-mu-lan-kun-zi*—the peace-maker between fighting bulls.

⁴ *Roer*—the old-fashioned muzzle-loading elephant gun of heavy calibre.

⁵ *Carrion-feeder*—the hyena.

At Durban, English soldiers still held a sod-built
fort :

Hard pressed ; by Boers surrounded ; their rations
running short ;

The nearest hope of succour far-distant Grahams-
town !

Could a man be found

Who would cover the ground—

And in time—ere the Flag came down ?

Then King, the stalwart settler, the while he stroked
his beard,

Spoke up and told his comrades no lurking foe he
feared ;

And called for men and horses to speed him on his
way.

When they brought him both

Then he swore them an oath,

'Twas a trust he would ne'er betray.

That night when all was quiet and silent as the
dead,

He called to me, " 'Ndongeni, go fetch your arms,"
he said.

" *A wu ku dinga luto,*"¹ he promised when I came :

And his eye flashed bright

As a spear in the light,

For he rode for the Flag's good name !

¹ *A wu ku dinga luto*—"You shall never want for anything."

Two horses from the *laager*¹—both chafing at the bit—

Stood waiting in the moonlight, with *riem*² and travelling kit.

And where the Bush threw shadow upon the shining sand,

I spied me a boat

On the water, afloat,

With her head to the Bluff's dark strand.

We sat us down in silence and pulled with muffled oars ;

No sound must break the stillness to warn the watchful Boers ;

The horses, swimming, followed, secured with straining *riem* ;

For the tide ran strong

As it swept us along

Where it flowed in the deep mid-stream.

The English ship *Mazeppa* was anchored in the Bay :

There, on the moon-lit water, her shadow, ghost-like, lay ;

But as we drifted past her the sleeping echoes woke ;

O'er the heaving swell

Came the clang of her bell,

And the splash of a strong man's stroke.

¹ *Laager*—fort.

² *Riem*—rawhide tethering-rope.

A message from the *laager* he carried to the ship :
 We watched him cleave the water, his shoulder rise
 and dip ;
 But Boer sharpshooters, sniping, had marked his
 wake of foam :
 As he swam, he died,
 In the swirl of the tide,
 For a shot in the dark went home !

Though sad our hearts and heavy, we dared not pause
 nor wait,
 For on King's desperate venture depended Durban's
 fate !
 So, passing Salisbury Island, we gained the farther
 beach.
 With a spring to horse
 We were off on our course
 To the goal he had sworn to reach !

Our steeds—two English chargers, and bred of Arab
 strain—
 Pulled, reaching at the bridle, impatient of the
 rein.
 King rode a noble stallion—its colour milky
 white—
 And he showed the way
 To my galloping " Bay "
 Through the hours of that livelong night.

Then drawing rein a moment at Mni-ni's friendly
kraal,
We hailed the old Induna, who wakened at our
call.
"Send back," Dick King commanded, "to cover up
our spoor ;
 Not a mark of hoof
 Must be found in the kloof ;
Let the work of your hands be sure."

Umlazi's silver ribbon lay gleaming to the South :—
We gave them rein, and galloped to gain the river's
mouth ;
'Twas known a Boer outpost was camping at the
drift,
 So it needs must be
 We should cross by the sea,
Though the tide was in flood and swift.

Here King himself dismounted and stripped him to
his shirt,
But bade me keep the saddle lest I should come by
hurt.
I could not swim, Umlungu, and feared the crocodile,
 For the musk¹ hung rank
 In the air of the bank,
As I quaked on the brink awhile.

¹ *Musk*.—The proximity of a crocodile is always known by the overpowering smell of musk in the proximity of his haunt.

But he, alert and dauntless, plunged headlong in the
wave!

No man knew I more fearless! no warrior more
brave!

The snorting horses followed the ripple of his wake;

Then—Click-atty-clack!

They were off on the track,

With the price of our lives at stake.

We galloped for the sedges that veiled Illovo's
breast;

For now that dawn was breaking we needs must hide
and rest;

And, in the bright'ning distance we saw the figures
loom

Of a Boer patrol

In the path to our goal,

As they rode in the misty gloom.

Like *'vondwe*¹ in the rushes lay King that day con-
cealed

Till fell the friendly shadows—but I went far afield.

Unclothed, save for the *mu-tsha*,² and leaving all
my arms;

So, he sent me out

As a spy and a scout

To the kraals³ on the distant farms.

¹ *Ivondwe*—the cane-rat.

² *Mu-tsha*—a scanty leather apron, variously ornamented.

³ *Kraals*—groups of native huts.

And there I heard the tidings of danger on our
route;

Our spoor¹ had been discovered! The Boers were
in pursuit!

Then, as the stealthy jackal goes slinking on his
way

When he seeks his hole,

So I crept, as I stole

To the reeds where my master lay.

At fall of dusk we galloped for Um-ko-ma-zi's
banks,

Our willing horses straining with mud-bespattered
flanks;

We crossed the sullen river near Um-tan-ya-na's
kraal,

And I drove my steed

To the top of his speed

At the hum of a whistling ball.

Um-zin-to and Ifafa! then Um-twa-lu-me's gleam!
Sea-cow at Um-zim-ku-lu were sporting in the
stream.

Straight reared the "Bay" affrighted, in terror
swerving round,

But I kept my seat

As he dropped on his feet

With a snort and a sidelong bound.

¹ *Spoor*—hoof-prints.

38 BALLADS OF THE VELD-LAND

On, on! with staring eyeballs and heaving quarters
wet!

With rein and saddle sodden and wet with lathered
sweat,

The horses toiled and struggled through krantz and
swollen flood;

As the miles swung past

They ran game to the last—

Though the rings of the bits dripped blood!

At last! at last! Um-ga-zi! the hard-won English
post,

Beyond where Um-zim-vu-bu rolls sweeping to the
coast.

Once there, King's danger ended—the miles his only
fear.

With a staggering dash

And a whirl of the lash

It was done—and his front lay clear!

There, saddle-worn, I rested; but he, the man of
steel,

Rode on alone, untiring, with ever-spurring heel!

His friends in stress and danger, his path he might
not stay;

For they held his troth

In the words of his oath—

“ 'Tis a trust I will ne'er betray!”

Two hundred miles behind him, yet twice as much
remained

For man and horse to cover ere Grahamstown be
gained :

A long and toilsome struggle with ne'er a spell of
rest—

Who to hope might hold,

For was steed ever foaled

That could live through so stern a test ?

* * * * *

They told me, long days after, how, fainting, worn,
and spent ;

With dry, cracked lips, and voiceless, his form with
travail bent,

He rode it to a finish :—I marvelled as I heard,

But I cried—“ *Yebo !*

It is verily so !”

He had sworn—and he kept his word !

So succour came to Durban, and so was honour
saved

By deed of splendid daring, and deadly peril
braved !

To-day the rider slumbers ! the white steed's shoes
are rust !

Yet I hear the beat

Of those galloping feet,

Though the bones of the twain are dust.

As long as Durban Harbour smiles back on Durban
town,

So long shall King's achievement have honour and
renown!

Six hundred miles for succour! A mighty deed to
dare!

So I burn with pride

In his desperate ride,

When I think of 'Ndongeni's share!

By bravery, Umlungu, you rule the subject Race!

'Tis by the right of valour the White-man holds his
place!

Yebo! I tell you, truly, such deeds are stone-built
walls!

While the strong white Hand

Is the Power in the land

There is peace in the native kraals!

THE WRECK OF THE TROOPSHIP “BIRKENHEAD”

NOTE.—The iron paddle-wheel transport *Birkenhead* was wrecked on Danger Point Rock, lying off Simon's Bay, on the 26th February 1852. The ill-fated troopship had on board nearly 500 British soldiers, drafts for various regiments, viz., 12th Lancers, 74th Highlanders, 2nd, 6th, 12th, 43rd, 45th, 73rd, and 91st Foot, and 60th Rifles. The troops on board were commanded by Lieut.-Col. Seton, 74th Highlanders, and amongst the officers with him were Captains Wright and Giradot, Ensign Lucas, and Cornet Bond. According to the circumstantial details of the catastrophe given by survivors, “not a drum was heard,” no call of bugle, or blare of trumpet, as the men formed ranks on the deck of the foundering vessel, to die where they stood, almost to a man, rather than endanger the lives of the women and children by overcrowding the ship's boats. So great an impression did this magnificent example of self-sacrificing heroism and splendid discipline make on Frederick of Prussia, that he is reported to have commanded that the story of the wreck of the *Birkenhead* should be read to every regiment in his army.

THE CAFFRE COAST

STRAND of despairing hope
Strewn with unanswer'd prayers,
Insatiate, thy greed
No hapless victim spares!
Coast of a thousand wrecks!
Shore of the nameless graves!
Raging, the fangs of Death
Raven amidst thy waves!

Gluttons, thy fierce sea-wolves,
Current and reef and shoal,
Batten with dripping jaws,
Gorged with the Storm-Fiend's dole!
Salt with the widow's tear
Glitters thy spindrift-spray;
Plaintive, the orphan's moan
Sobs in thy surf always!

Snare of unwary barques!
Home of the mouldering hulls!
Well may thy breezes wail,
Golgotha! Strand of Skulls!

THE WRECK

SOFT fell the velvet of an Afric night
Set with a myriad points of twinkling flame,
And pulsing through the phosphorescent light
The rhythmic throb of threshing paddles came.

The crowded troopship forged her gleaming way,
 Threaded sea-jewels trailing in her wake ;
 Her glowing smoke-stack drenched with hissing spray
 Lit dripping spar and salt-encrusted strake.

From far below, her engines' measured beat—
 With clank of bolt and clash of grinding steel,
 Rang like the muffled tramp of marching feet—
 The laboured breathing of her hurrying keel.

Astern, the Cape's swart guardian¹ towering loomed,
 His flowing turban tinselled with the stars ;
 His foot-stool set where breakers crashed and boomed ;
 His armour seamed with Time's corroded scars.

"Four Bells" had gone ! beneath a starry sky
 Her churning paddles creamed a glassy swell ;
 With melancholy note the helmsman's cry
 Rang droning o'er the drowsy watch, "All's well !"

Off Simon's Bay that sea-wolf, ravening,
 Dread Danger Point, lay crouching in his lair
 Waiting such prey the waves, his jackals, bring
 For his fierce fangs to mutilate and tear.

Drawn by the lode-star of relentless fate
 Swift to her doom the barque unwitting sped
 With ne'er a warning, till 'twas all too late,
 Full on the terror crashed the *Birkenhead* !

* * * * *

¹ *Cape's swart guardian*—Table Mountain.

Like bounding bush-buck stricken in his stride
 The speeding vessel staggered from the shock
 With broken back and gaping, riven side—
 A helpless victim for the waves to mock.

As from Veld ant-hill swarming termites pour
 When by some lumb'ring wheel its walls are
 crushed,
 So, from below, 'midst steam's escaping roar
 And women's shrieks, the wakened sleepers rushed !

Spawn of Despair, the Octopus of Dread—
 That devil-fish which lurks in every breast—
 Insensate Panic, reared its hydra-head,
 And put the staunchest heart to Terror's test !

Grouped on the poop—dark forms in strong relief
 Against the Blue-flare's weird and spectral light—
 Seton, the "Seventy-Fourth's" heroic chief,
 Lucas and Bond, with Giradot and Wright,

Calm and courageous, hurried council held
 How best the hapless women might be saved,
 Order restored and rising panic quelled,
 Manhood aroused and certain death be braved.

"Fall in, The Drafts!"—The word was passed along
 The swarming decks, and as the units heard,
 Order was born in that mad, surging throng,
 Panic was stay'd and Chivalry was stirred.

The deck, aslant, but slipp'ry foothold gave ;
 The soaring rockets shed a baleful glare,
 The while Five Hundred Bravest of the Brave
 Formed up their ranks a watery death to dare.

Trim Lancer-jacket brushed the Highland plaid
 As Scotia's tartan fluttered in the wind,
 And Rifle-tunic pressed 'gainst Sapper's braid—
 Recruit and Veteran—all to death assigned.

No blast of trumpet stirred the soldiers' blood !
 No heart-beat throbbed to War's inspiring drum !
 Silent they stood amidst the swirling flood,
 Courage was mute and Agony was dumb !

A weeping mother hushed her infant's wail
 The while through streaming eyes her heart de-
 voured
 Her man's still figure by the broken rail
 Lit by the sparks the glowing funnel showered ;

A chiselled statue in a chiselled group !
 Drawn brows ! clenched teeth ! yet twitching muscles
 told
 That if, to Panic, Duty scorned to stoop,
 Yet Nature strove through Discipline controlled.

He caught her look, and, for a moment's span
 Courage turned craven ; Frenzy fought with Fear ;
 Duty went down, and Man was only—Man,
 Till—"Steady, there, lads, Steady!" reached his ear.

A strangled oath—a choking word of thanks—

One lingering look—there with averted gaze
Manhood, ashamed, rejoined Devotion's ranks

And watched the end through Sorrow's misty haze.

* * * * *

“Swim for the boats!”—“Who gave that order? *No!*”

“Stand fast, the ranks!” ’Twas Seton's clarion
spoke—

And Wright with lifted hand, and Giradot,

Steadied a wav'ring line which, almost, broke!

“Stand fast, the ranks!”—Though Death himself
advance,

The women and the weak come ever first!

What *Man* would buy his life at their mischance,

Then face his God, a craven—and accurst?

“Stand fast, the ranks!” The boats are over-full!

Women and children their unhappy freight!

The labouring oars the rowers scarce can pull;

What *Man* dare add an ounce of dangerous weight?

A sudden crash! her keelson rent in twain!

Her fo'c'sle sank with all its patient load!

The Depths had called, nor had they called in vain,

For far and near the human wrack was strowed.

Then horrors followed thick in Horror's train!—

With questing fin uprose the grisly shark,

That bloody pirate of the Southern Main

Who scents his hapless victim in the dark.

A swirling rush ! an agonising shriek !

A flash of white ! the clash of cruel teeth !

Then on the waves a blood-empurpled streak

Marked where the fierce Sea-tigers raged beneath.

* * * * *

'Twas finished !—As the sob of Calvary's sigh

Redeemed by blood vicarious our Race,

So may the death those heroes chose to die

Win for their passing souls Absolving Grace !

THE QUEEN'S COLOUR OF THE "24TH"

A BALLAD OF ISANDHLWANA

NOTE.—At Isandhlwana, when it was apparent that the day was irretrievably lost, Colonel Pulleine entrusted the Queen's Colour of the 24th Regiment to the care of Lieutenant Melville, with instructions to convey it safely from that fatal field, and guard it with his own life. Right nobly did the gallant young officer carry out his orders, giving in the end his life as the price of the safety of his flag.

On his charger; already staggering from exhaustion, he covered the distance to the Buffalo River, hotly pursued by the victorious Zulus, and plunging into the torrent, he strove to gain the farther bank. The current swept him from the saddle, and but for the assistance of Lieutenant Coghill, of the same regiment, he could not have succeeded. Coghill had already gained the safety of the Natal side of the Buffalo, but, on seeing his comrade struggling in mid-stream, plunged in again to his rescue. They both succeeded in landing, but were pursued and overtaken by the Zulus. Some days afterwards a search party from Rorke's Drift found their bodies, sur-

rounded by a ring of corpses—proof of the gallant stand they had made. The Queen's Colour, to save which they had fought so well, was discovered stranded in a bend of the stream, about three hundred yards from the spot where its guardians had met their deaths.

When the rescued Colour was afterwards shown to Queen Victoria, she, with her own hands, crowned the torn and water-stained flag with a wreath of immortelles.

THE SAVING OF THE COLOUR

PULLEINE, heart-sick, in black-browed wrath
Gazed on his shattered "Twenty-Fourth,"

And marked their broken ranks!

The hoarse Usutu's strident notes
From twice ten thousand Zulu throats

Rang out, as front and flanks

Were 'whelmed by that resistless tide

Which, ruthless, spread destruction wide.

Molt-hot, the noon had come and passed—
This scorching hour must be their last,

For hard by Chelmsford's tent

What once had been the General's flag
Lay now a tattered trampled rag,

Its fabric torn and rent,

While to and fro the savage fray

Surged as the white men stood at bay.

Melville still rode at Pulleine's knee—
 A lion-hearted soldier he
 Though swaying in his seat.
 Spent with the conflict's stress and strain,
 And grimed with many a battle-stain,
 He yet defied defeat ;
 For in his charge that fatal day
 The "Twenty-Fourth's" Queen's Colour lay.

Time and again in that wild strife
 He fenced The Colour with his life,
 And many a trenchant blow :
 Yet now he grimly realised
 The Emblem all so greatly prized
 Risked capture by the foe ;
 And prompted by so dread a fear
 He forged a pathway to the rear.

Sadly he viewed the rout and wreck
 That drifted towards the distant *Nek*¹—
 The ruins of a host—
 The remnants of a shattered force
 Which strove to reach the river's course,
 And Helpmakaar's far post ;
 Then, swung him stiffly to the earth
 To tighten strap and saddle-girth.

¹ *Nek*—narrow pass.

Pulleine had turned to meet his fate,
 But bade him ride ere 'twas too late,
 Nor draw his bridle-rein
 A moment in that headlong race
 To save The Colour from disgrace,
 And Britain's shield from stain.
 A sacred trust in parlous plight
 To be redeemed as best he might.

Mounting again he cast one glance
 To where he saw the sunlight dance
 On twinkling points of steel—
 The flash of axe and assegai
 As thousands swung the weapons high
 The final blow to deal.
 Once in farewell he waved his sword,
 Then dashed away to gain the ford.

Stride for each stride in that stern race
 The Zulu runners held his pace,
 And hung upon his rear ;
 Whilst ever as he onward sped,
 With vicious drone the hurtling lead
 Sang hissing past his ear :
 Yet still, it seemed his life was charmed,
 For through that storm he rode unharmed.

He gained the Nek! but Fate, alas!
Frowned as at length he reached the pass—
The narrow trail was blocked!
For struggling groups of friend and foe
Choked the steep path, as to and fro
The surging conflict rocked:
Here in the Zulu toils enwrapped
The flying fugitives were trapped.

Spurring his steed, and bending low,
Down to the very saddle-bow,
He drove the rowels in;
And charging with a warning shout,
Hurled horse and rider 'midst the rout,
A desp'rate path to win.
Then—breathless from that surging fray
Emerged, and onward fought his way.

Two warriors sprang to grip his rein—
His blade flashed once—yet once again—
And then he thundered on:
Whilst swathed about his bridle-arm
He bore the flag still free from harm,
Its safety almost won:
For far ahead he saw the gleam
That marked the Buffalo's wide stream.

Swirling, its torrent strong and swift
 Raced past the *Pont*¹ beside Rorke's Drift—
 The point for which he strove—
 So making one last stumbling spurt
 He gained its banks though sorely hurt,
 And then its waters clove ;
 Yet none too soon, for from the bank
 A bullet seared his horse's flank.

Breast-high, the current round him broke !
 Death-cold, the water numbed his stroke,
 And swept him from his seat !
 The Standard, wrested from his clasp,
 Tossed wildly in the eddies' grasp—
 Flotsam of cruel Fate ;
 And strangled by the swirling stream
 His charger sank with equine scream.

Coghill, upon the farther side,
 Beheld him battling with the tide
 Which he himself had crossed,
 And, plunging in the wave once more,
 Drew him half-conscious to the shore,
 With all but honour lost.
 What further blow could Fate inflict ?
 Their Flag now drifted derelict !

* * * * *

¹ *Pont*—floating bridge.

Battered and spent, the hapless twain
 Some point of vantage sought to gain—
 Their lives to dearly sell—
 For well they knew there but remained
 A soldier's death ere daylight waned,
 So said their last farewell :
 Content with God to leave the rest,
 And die at Duty's stern behest.

Adjacent rose a towering rock,
 'Gainst which to stand and meet the shock
 Of that last 'whelming rush ;
 So, limping towards its shelt'ring base,
 They turned at bay their foes to face,
 Amidst the Desert's hush,
 With none to hear their battle-cry
 Save the *aasvogel*¹ circling high.

Ere all was done they took their toll—
 A long and bloody muster-roll
 Of stalwart foemen prone ;
 In many a distant Zulu kraal
 In vain the waiting ones would call,
 With Sorrow's plaintive moan,
 For those who in their lusty pride
 Fell, ere the Berserk white men died.

* * * * * *

¹ *Aasvogel*—vulture.

Cooper and Black, on pious quest,
 Days after, from a kopje's crest
 Espied the fatal spot
 And what the desert had concealed
 Before their glasses lay revealed—
 A scene they ne'er forgot—
 The relics of that desp'rate fray,
 Where, ringed by dead, their comrades lay.

Coming with grave and rev'rent tread,
 Meet sepulchre they gave their dead
 Upon the lonely Veld ;
 And when the last sad rites were done,
 Uncovered, 'neath the Afric sun,
 For one brief moment knelt ;
 Then searched with eager eyes around,—
 The Colour, too, might yet be found.

Stranded beside the river's brink
 Where the wild creatures came to drink,
 They found it 'midst the reeds.
 The swollen torrent when it fell
 Had left the shattered staff to tell
 What lay 'neath sand and weeds ;
 So, draggled, water-stained and torn,
 To camp the blood-bought Silk was borne.

* * * * *

Trooping the Colours, Glynn essayed
Before his Column on parade
 In camp at Helpmakaar,
The brave and stirring tale to tell—
How Melville rode and Coghill fell—
 Duty their guiding star ;
But louder than his broken speech
The drooping Standard spoke to each !

THE CROWNING OF THE COLOUR

THEY brought Her the silken Standard
All ravelled and slashed and rent—
The stain of an Afric river
With the hues of the fabric blent.
There was blood on the jagged splinter
That once was the Colour-staff,
Where a Zulu axe had riven
And shortened its length by half.

They told Her of Isandhlwana,
And how, when the day was lost,
Her Colour was saved by Melville,
Though saved at his own life's cost ;
How he galloped many a furlong
By a raging horde hard-pressed,
And how, with her Silk wound round him,
He fought like a man possessed.

They told how he reached the river
And plunged in its rushing flood ;
How, swept away by the current,
And faint from the loss of blood,
He strove with the swirling eddies
While the Zulus lined the bank,
And fired on steed and rider
Till the struggling charger sank.

They spoke of his comrade Coghill,
Who, safe on the farther side
Of the raging rushing torrent,
Plunged back in the seething tide
When he saw the desp'rate struggle
Of Melville in deep mid-stream,
And heard the death-cry ringing
In his drowning charger's scream.

And they told, in low, hushed voices—
With a sob in the words they said—
Of two stark, silent figures
In a ring of Zulu dead ;
Of ghastly spear-thrusts, gaping,
But wounds that were all in front—
They had faced grim Death undaunted,
As Her soldier-sons are wont.

The flag they found in the shallows
Near-by, on the reedy strand,
In a bend of the moaning river,
Half-hid by the drifted sand.
It was torn, and stained, and sodden,
But, lo ! it was Britain's still !
And the searchers stood uncovered,
With their pulses all a-thrill !

'Twas safe, that cherished Standard,
 The gift of a gracious Queen—
 And the passing of its Saviours
 Keeps their memory always green!
 To-day in the Brecon Barracks
 They tell to the young recruit
 The tale of the old "Queen's Colour,"
 While the veterans salute.

* * * * *

The Queen when she heard the story,
 Bent low, with a woman's prayer,
 "Jehovah! God of Battles!
 Keep Thou in Thy gracious care
 My knightly sons who perished
 That Honour might prevail,
 And who held my Silken Emblem
 As the soldier's 'Holy Grail.'"

Then she sighed:—"Their hearts' devotion
 Tribute from my heart compels"—
 As she crowned the blood-bought relic
 With a wreath of immortelles.

RORKE'S DRIFT

(22nd January, 1879)

*Rorke's Drift! our ready fingers rise
Uplifted in Salute!
Rorke's Drift! Pride flashes in our eyes
Though feeling holds us mute!
Rorke's Drift! Immortal honour lies
On vet'ran and recruit!*

NOTE.—The superb defence of Rorke's Drift after the ghastly tragedy of Isandhlwana in all probability saved Natal, if not from destruction, at least from the unspeakable horrors of a native invasion. At this scantily garrisoned military post on the banks of the Buffalo River, 139 British soldiers (of which number 35 were in hospital at the time) for thirteen hours successfully held their hastily improvised defences—constructed for the most part of sacks of mealies and boxes containing army biscuit and bully beef—against the furious assaults of 3000 Zulus, the flower of Cetewayo's famous regiments, flushed with their victory at Isandhlwana. The splendid gallantry of the defenders is attested by the extraordinary number of Victoria Crosses conferred in connection with this incident, no fewer than eleven of the coveted decorations having been awarded. Under the command of their two gallant young officers, Lieutenants

Chard, R.E., and Bromhead, 24th Regiment, the defending force not only successfully held the Drift, but inflicted so severe a reverse upon the Zulu army as to negative to a great extent the results of their victory at Isandhlwana. The main point of attack seems to have been the Depôt Hospital, and the magnificent manner in which it was defended and the sick and wounded carried to safety, has made Rorke's Drift a synonym for chivalrous and self-sacrificing valour.

I.—HOW THEY BROUGHT THE NEWS OF
ISANDHLWANA

THEY held the Pont—a Sergeant's guard—
Six of "The Twenty-Four"—
As, through his levelled glasses, Chard
Watched two far horsemen spurring hard
With tidings from the North.

He saw they rode a desperate ride,
With frequent backward glance:
The horses falt'ring in their stride
Staggered and swayed from side to side,
A pair in parlous chance.

To warn the Drift's defending force
They raced—a Carbineer
And Ardenhorff, of Lonsdale's Horse,
Plying hot spurs in headlong course,
For Death rode in their rear!

Behind them Isandhlwana's plain
Its ghastly horrors spread,
Where, rank on rank, the British slain,
Piled thick as sheaves of autumn grain,
Told of disaster dread.

Eight hundred men lay stark and still,
Disfigured, slashed and ripped ;
Whilst widening pool and creeping rill
Marked where the spears had drunk their fill
As Slaughter's wine-press dripped.

For, as the python's strangling coils
Enfold its hapless prey,
And crush him, writhing, in the toils,
So, the fierce Impi won its spoils
On that disastrous day !

Its crescent horns had overlapped
And formed a steel-meshed net
Whose folds the fated Camp enwrapped,
Holding its scant defenders trapped
And hopelessly beset.

Dauntless, they made a desp'rate stand—
Their last, too well they knew,
As fighting grimly hand to hand,
A brave but death-devoted band,
Their numbers fewer grew.

The Impi, twice ten thousand strong,
And Cetewayo's pride—
Chanting its thund'ring battle-song,
Swept with converging ranks along,
A fierce, resistless tide.

Few, few escaped to tell the tale
When that wild charge was o'er!
For even Valour's best must fail
'Gainst weight of numbers to prevail
In the red scales of War!

And now to cross the Buffalo
But two came speeding back;
Rorke's Drift's outlying post must know
That, drunk with blood, the savage foe
Were must'ring for attack.

'Twas well the chargers they bestrode
Were mettled, fleet of pace!
Since 'twas for human lives they rode
Dread spurred the horsemen with his goad
In that wild, desp'rate race.

Chard watched them reach the farther shore,
And heard their urgent shout;
Then, reeling, spent and battle-sore,
The fugitives were ferried o'er—
And, lo! the news was out

Of Isandhlwana's fatal fray
And devastated Camp,
Where slaughtered, and in hundreds, lay
The wreck of Britain's proud array,
Crushed 'neath Destruction's stamp.

Breathless, the Pont-guard heard them tell
Of massacre and blood !
'Neath Horror's paralysing spell
On all Foreboding's shadow fell
And chilled Life's throbbing flood !

But Courage shook Fear's fetters free,
And faced with gallant front
The peril that it would not flee ;
So, armed to battle val'rously
As Chivalry is wont.

For in the Hospital the Sick
Confided to their care,
Lay in rough wards of sun-dried brick
Loopholed in haste with crow and pick,
And must the danger share.

RORKE'S DRIFT

II.—HOW THEY HELD THE HOSPITAL

(1) Pte. Cole (killed). (2) Pte. Horrigan (killed). (3) Pte. Jos. Williams (killed). (4) Pte. John Williams (V.C.). (5) Pte. W. Jones (V.C.). (6) Pte. R. Jones (V.C.). (7) Pte. F. Hook (V.C.).

From the Glory Roll of the 24th Regiment.

PICTURE Rorke's Drift! That erstwhile peaceful spot,
The Swedish Mission, now a British post:—
The pastor's roof-tree screens the soldier's cot;
For the maimed units of an armed host
Seek rest and convalescence in its walls,
Which, silent once, resound to bugle calls.

Its sides of brick and gable-ends of stone,
The hanging eaves thick-thatched with river-reeds
By velvet moss and creeping vines o'ergrown,
Its garden filled with tangled shrubs and weeds,
Bespeak the Padre's uneventful sphere
Where placid days complete the placid year.

The Mission Schoolroom close adjacent lies,
Now filled from floor to thatch with warlike gear;
And where the voice of Prayer was wont to rise
Are piled munitions, tier on close-packed tier,
While sacks of grain and Commissariat stores
Bestrew the ground and block the rough-hewn doors.

Down by the Pont, the waters, crooning, flow,
 Bringing the sick their brimming draught of
 health;

For as its gift the kindly Buffalo
 Endowed the Hospital with sparkling wealth.
 Such was Rorke's Drift on that December day
 When Valour's Handful barred an Impi's way.

* * * * *

A quivering breath of palpitating heat
 Hung o'er the throbbing Veld in shimmering
 haze—

The parched Earth's panting, as the Sun-god's feet
 In molt-hot sandals set her robes ablaze
 With the hot splendour of an Afric noon—
 And Nature, faint, was fain for Vesper's boon.

Half-somnolent, the Camp lay drowsed with sleep,
 Till from the Pont came Ardenhorff and Chard
 With news that made Sloth's torpid pulses leap,
 And paled the bronze on faces stern and hard,
 For I-sand-hlwa-na's fatal field was fought,
 And Carnage still for further victims sought.

Then muttered curse and many a rumbling oath
 Growled Wrath's deep bass to Preparation's hum;
 The wounded, even, in the wards were loath
 To lie supine when such dire news had come,
 And dragged maimed limbs from Fever's cot, to ask
 Permission given to join their comrades' task.

Their youthful leaders, young for such a strain,
 Yet proved themselves all worthy of their trust—
 Bromhead and Chard displayed the General's brain,
 As grimed with sweat, their tunics thick with dust,
 They toiled beside the willing rank and file
 And cheered that darksome hour with lightsome
 smile.

As grizzled war-dog growls beside the whelp
 Hearing afar the desert-lion's roars,
 So vet'ran Dalton gave his ready help;
 ('Twas he controlled the Commissariat stores).
 From hard experience gained in bygone days,
 He knew by heart the Kafirs and their ways.

'Twixt Store and Hospital, twin barricades
 Of transport-wagons flanked with grain-filled sacks,
 Showed front and rear their roughly built façades
 And fenced a space 'gainst Murder's fierce attacks.
 Strong when complete the rude entrenchments
 stood,
 And Bromhead viewed his work and knew 'twas
 good.

* * * * *

Round Oscarsberg a living torrent swept
 Crested with feath'ry spray of plumes a-toss :
 A swirling tide which hissed and roared—and leapt
 Foaming, the intervening space across,
 Till dashing 'gainst the laager walls it broke,
 Shattered and spent, 'midst rifle-flash and smoke.

Such was the Zulu charge! And yet again
 It surged and thundered round the fire-girt fort;
 Yet beat against those flaming walls in vain,
 For steel and lead its fury set at naught.
 While round the laager piled on every side
 The dead were heaped like sea-weed by the tide.

In one small ward a wounded native lay—
 One who had eaten the Umlungu's salt—
 There Hook and Cole to guard him stood at bay
 And brought the charging foe to sudden halt,
 With bay'nets fixed and rifles smoking hot
 The white men stood before the native's cot.

Charging, Cole drove them through the shattered
 door,
 Gave the "Haymaker's lift"—a mighty heave—
 And slew the last; then with Berserker roar
 Lurched staggering o'er the threshold to receive
 In his own breast the gleaming assegais;
 His death-groan drowned in wild exultant cries.

Hook took his place, his bay'net dripping red,
 Firing from hip point-blank into the crowd,
 While the poor wounded patient from his bed
 Writhed to the ground and helpless groaned
 aloud;
 Striving, in vain, with bandaged limbs to crawl
 Across the floor and through the loop-holed wall.

The foe had fired the thatch with fiendish guile,
And the dry crackle of devouring flame
Spurtd a lurid fusilade, the while
Billows of smoke in swirling eddies came
Through the rent roof, till Hook, perforce, retired
Fighting each inch—a Paladin inspired.

With flashing eyes and form all blood-besprent
He plied red bay'net, taking toll of life ;
While desperation to his sinews lent
A giant's vigour in that Titan fight,
Yet foot by foot the Zulus drove him back
Before the fury of their fierce attack.

His helpless charge was butchered at his feet—
He heard the grating sound of steel on bone
E'en as he fought to cover his retreat—
Then backwards sprang to make secure his own,
And gained the inner ward, alas ! to find
Nine helpless patients, hopeless but resigned.

There, fighting furiously, he held the breach
Where once the door on make-shift hinges hung ;
Across his steel no murd'rous arm might reach
As back and forth that deadly bay'net swung
Like the *green mamba's*¹ swiftly darting tongue
When o'er her hole she battles for her young.

¹ *Green mamba*—a deadly poisonous snake.

To him came Williams through the stifling reek—
 A blood-stained figure in the lurid gloom,
 With scorched, cracked lips which hoarsely strove to
 speak

Above the raging din that filled the room :
 From the adjoining ward, with crow and pick,
 He and two more had broken through the brick.

Ill news they brought, for Horrigan was killed ;
 The walls were breached ; the foe had entrance
 gained ;

The raided ward a rabid rabble filled,
 And certain death it seemed alone remained.
 Yet, 'midst mad chaos, Valour made its plan
 To save the sick and stricken, man by man.

By breaking through the walls 'twixt ward and ward,
 Perchance they might at last to safety win ;
 Bromhead's entrenchment still defied the horde,
 For cheers were heard above the madd'ning din.
 With frantic haste they seized on spades and crows
 And smote the crumbling bricks with frenzied blows.

Again 'twas Hook the narrow doorway kept ;
 Again his steel each savage onslaught foiled
 As right and left his swinging weapon swept,
 While at their task his comrades, sweating, toiled ;
 Till, gaping wide, the ragged fissure showed
 The sick and wounded Safety's open road.

Time and again, with grim, tenacious grip
The baffled Zulus seized Hook's glancing blade !
Time and again, still firing from the hip,
He foiled each rush the savage foe essayed !
While from his rear came Williams' cheery shout,
" Five minutes more will see the wounded out ! "

When all save one were made secure from harm
(Conley lay bandage - swathed — poor luckless
wight !)
Hook paused to breathe and rest his weary arm,
Spent with the strain of that Homeric fight ;
Then, as the foe prepared again to storm,
Dashed to the cot and raised his prostrate form.

Stumbling beneath his weight, he reached the gap
Where ready hands drew Conley quickly through,
Then, wondrous to relate, without mishap
He gained the inner room in safety too ;
Dragging his smoking rifle as he went
Though lock was jammed and steel-hacked barrel
bent.

* * * * *

And now the grisly struggle recommenced,
For yet another wall remained to pierce !
So once again Hook held the gap—and fenced
The Zulu spears with rapid carte and tierce ;
While once again the clanking axes rang,
Riving the wall, with sharp metallic clang.

Again at length a gaping chasm yawned—

The hard-won entrance to the inner fort—

And then, indeed, Hope's roseate daybreak dawned

For those who through Dread's dreary night had
wrought,

Since, once within the laager's sheltered space,

The war-scarred toilers might take heart of grace.

Quickly they drew the wounded, one by one,

From the grim horrors of that seething hell,

Nor paused nor flinched till all their task was
done—

Then rested, grateful for a breathing-spell,

For Bromhead's barricades still stood intact,

Though round them surged a living cataract.

The flaming thatch flared lurid 'gainst the sky

And lit the landscape with its ruddy glow,

Revealing to the keen and watchful eye

The every movement of the baffled foe ;

And so each savage rush the rifles foiled,

And headlong charge in headlong rout recoiled.

Through a long night the sounds of conflict raged—

The fierce " Usutu ! " and the answering cheer—

For no repulse their thirst for blood assuaged ;

The rav'ning wolf-pack hung on flank and rear

Till Dawn, in silver armour, in the East

Lifted Light's lance—and, lo ! the combat ceased !

For with the morn came Chelmsford and relief ;
The Zulus fled—Rorke's Drift had won renown !
Yet pride was mixed with bitterness and grief,
And Cypress twined with Bay in Victory's crown,
Since Isandhlwana and disaster dread
Must with Rorke's Drift be grav'd and bracketted !

PATROL BALLADS

PATROL BALLADS

THE SHANGANI PATROL

I.—THE MUTE APPEAL

MAJOR ALAN WILSON

NOTE.—After the massacre at Shangani River, where Major Alan Wilson's patrol was wiped out to the last man, natives who had taken part in the fight reported the following pathetic incident. When it appeared certain that no hope remained, some few of the troopers began to make preparations for a bold dash through the Matabele Impi, but upon Major Wilson raising his hand and silently pointing to their wounded comrades, every man instantly returned to his place in the firing-line, where, standing over their fallen comrades, with clubbed carbines and revolvers in hand, they fell one by one.

THE fight was fiercely raging
Beneath a blazing sun,
And 'gainst the ambushed troopers
The odds were ten to one ;
Behind them rolled Shangani
In swirling, foaming spate,
Its sullen, moaning murmur
Prophetic of their fate :

PATROL BALLADS

For Alan Wilson's riders,
 Behind a parapet
Of dead and dying horses,
 Were hopelessly beset,
As Lobengula's Impi,
 With ox-hide shields flung high,
Charged to the wild "Usutu,"
 Their thund'ring battle-cry.

They faced the surging onslaught
 With calm, undaunted mien!
Around, the smoke-cloud hovered
 A zephyr-rifted screen,
Which gave but fleeting glimpses
 When drifted by the wind
Of rank on rank advancing,
 With rank on rank behind.

Self-preservation prompted
 Some few when hope was dead,
To wait for death no longer
 But ride for life instead,
And some had grasped the bridle,
 And some the saddle gained;
Yet, 'twas but for a moment—
 Then every man remained.

For Wilson saw them mounting,
Then cast his glance around,
And marked the helpless wounded
Thick on the reddened ground ;
His kindly heart was aching,
And filled with throbbing pain,
Full well he knew the fallen
Would never ride again.

He spoke no word, but pointed
To where those wounded lay,
So, seemed to question mutely,
“ Boys, will you ride away
And leave your hapless comrades—
Though 'tis to save your lives—
To fall the helpless victims
Of Matabele knives ?

“ Hark to the fierce ‘ Usutu !’
Death comes with that dread shout ;
We know our hours are numbered—
The sands of life run out !
Yet, will you leave your comrades ?
To us their wounds appeal !
Since cartridge-belts are empty,
Fall on with butt and steel !”

Ah ! louder than a bugle
That mute entreaty rang !
The carbine-butts swung upwards
As every trooper sprang
With ready acquiescence,
And hoarse defiant cheer,
To meet the death of heroes—
Without reproach or fear.

Grimly they fought unconquered,
Their faces to the foe !
The last farewell was faltered—
The vultures circled low ;
God rest them ! How their passing
Sets Manhood's blood aflame,
And twines the word Shangani
With laurel-leaves of Fame !

Oh ! lion-hearted soldier,
Staunch comrade to the core !
As chivalrous and knightly
As Paladin of yore !
Proud are we of the heroes
Who at Shangani fought,
But prouder that compassion
Was Valour's dying thought !

THE SHANGANI PATROL

II.—SHANGANI RIVER

NOTE.—The desperate engagement fought by Major Alan Wilson and his handful of troopers on the banks of the Shangani River, although resulting in the complete extinction of the gallant little band of scouts, thoroughly disheartened the Matabele, and caused them to realise the futility of further resistance. Indeed, this incident practically put an end to the rebellion, for so demoralised did the natives become after the enormous losses then received that they immediately thereafter began to sue for peace. As there was not a single survivor of the Patrol left to tell the story of that last stand, the only details on record were obtained from natives who fought in the ranks of the attacking Impi, and, later, graphically described the closing incidents. From their reports it would appear that when the troopers realised the inevitable end, some of the wounded made a last despairing effort to send their farewell messages. Lying behind a parapet of dead horses they strove to write their Adieux with stubs of pencil on the backs of old letters and cartridge wrappers. It was, surely, as dramatic and pathetic an incident as has ever happened in the red history of savage frontier warfare!

A SORROWFUL strain with minor chords
 The tide of Shangani sings,
 Of empty rifles and savage hordes
 And swoop of aasvogel wings :—
 To the current's swirl
 And the eddy's whirl
 An echo of anguish clings.

A pitiful song at dead of night
 The voice of the water croons ;
 And at blazing noon the ripples write
 The story in mystic runes ;
 As the Veld-wind sighs
 'Neath the darkling skies,
 The wraith of a requiem swoons.

The sunshine's flickering shuttle weaves
 O'er pools where the shadows fall
 From a fretted reredos of leaves,
 The folds of a sombre pall :—
 From the rain-bird's throat
 Peals a clanging note,
 As he rings his mournful call.

'Tis Nature's Mass for the sleeping dead,
 This dirge of the moaning stream ;
 And Nature's tears o'er the troopers' bed
 Its glittering spray-drops seem :—
 As the stars shine down
 From the Midnight's crown,
 Their altar-candles gleam.

* * * * *

The troopers ride on a parlous quest,
On a trail which is plain and clear;
They trace the spoor with a hunter's zest,
For the quarry they seek is near.

'Tis the fleeing Matabele King
Whom they track to his desert holt,
Nor reck that a wounded lion's spring
Is akin to the levin-bolt;

For he turns at last to stand at bay,
With a gleam of his vengeful teeth,
And his taloned paw upraised to slay
The rash foe who shall come beneath.

So grim his snarl, and so keen his claws,
And so fierce is his dying leap,
Exacting toll to the Desert laws
Ere he sinks in his last long sleep,

That e'en the reckless seek his lair
With a wary and cautious tread,
For death is rife in the Desert air
Round the King of the Desert's bed.

* * * * *

See! on they come! and the welkin rings
To the clink of clattering steel!
The rhythmic beat of their gallop swings
To the clang of iron-shod heel.

But a spectre-horseman, stride for stride,
Keeps abreast of the leading rank—
The wraith of Death in a phantom ride
Is a-spur on their racing flank!

Too late they find that a dying snake
In its throes has the power to sting
With venomed fang, and its vengeance slake
In a last, but a deadly, spring.

In full retreat, and at headlong speed,
They return on their outward track,
And seek some spot in their desp'rate need
To defend 'gainst that fierce attack.

Round a giant ant-hill's spreading base
They dismount for the last stern stand;
And well they know 'tis the resting-place
Of their bones in the Great North-land.

For six long hours, 'neath the Afric sun,
They out-fight the remorseless foe,
Though the men are falling one by one,
As the assegais lay them low.

The cruel fray to its end draws near—
There are few who remain to fight!
For on each flank—in the front—the rear—
Lie the slain 'neath the waning light.

But one is left ! See ! he writes with haste,
As he wipes Death's gathering dew.
The pencil scrawl that his hand has traced
Is besmeared with a crimson hue !

'Twas news from Home, which a loved hand
wrote—

He is using the fly-leaf now—
The choking blood in his gasping throat,
And the sweat on his pain-racked brow.

He sees the words through a blood-red mist—
“With our love—from your anxious wife.”
Those words which his lips had often kissed
Are the last he shall read in life.

* * * * *

The foe creep near ! See ! how close they come !
Still the point of his pencil crawls—
His arm is weak and his fingers numb—
How he strives ere the death-blow falls !

Six shots remain in his pistol still—
They shall gain him a short reprieve.
He holds Death back with an iron will,
And a wave of his blood-drenched sleeve.

His hand is raised with a shaking aim ;
Then, a flash !—that is cartridge one !
The paper smokes from the pistol's flame
Whilst another brief line is done.

Again! again! comes the Webley's flash;
 But the scrawl with his life is red!
 The last shot rings—then a sullen splash—
 And the writer, alas! lies dead.

* * * * *

The river bears on its heaving breast
 The adieux which they strove to send!
 The breezes waft to the kopje's crest
 Those letters with never an end.

The stars that 'broider the Midnight's cloak
 Look down with their sorrowing eyes!
 The sighing winds of the Veld invoke
 God's grace from the pitying skies!

* * * * *

In the far-flung North, where they fought and
 fell,
 They are named in Valhalla's scroll;
 And the Impi's Chieftains wondering tell
 How in scores they had paid them toll.

Our Frontiers, girt with a chain of graves,
 That our heritage may be sure,
 With the mould'ring bones of our Country's
 Braves
 Are buttressed—and so they endure.

THE MAZÖE PATROL

I.—HOW SUCCOUR CAME TO MAZÖE

NOTE.—When the Matabele Rebellion swept over Rhodesia in June 1896, like a devastating hurricane, many magnificent acts of heroism were performed before the tide of bloodshed and outrage was rolled back by the comparatively small body of European settlers then in the country. Perhaps the most pathetic and heroic incident in the chronicles of Rhodesia is the story of what is known as “The Mazöe Patrol.” The mining staff of the Alice Mine, situate at a distance of more than a mile from the Mazöe Telegraph Station, were, almost without warning, besieged by an overwhelming horde of Matabele, drunken with blood and slaughter. The narrative of the Mazöe Patrol naturally resolves itself into three chapters, the first being the splendid self-sacrifice of Blakiston and Routledge, the telegraphists in charge of the Mazöe wire, who left the shelter of the hurriedly constructed laager determined to reach the telegraph station and despatch a message to Salisbury for aid. This they succeeded in doing, but at the cost of their lives.

Then followed the plucky dash on horseback to Fort Salisbury by Piet, the Hottentot, for reinforce-

ments, and the subsequent desperate running fight made by the Patrol while escorting the women and wounded from Mazöe to the Fort, a distance of over thirty miles.

THE Ruby of self-sacrifice—
 God's priceless precious stone—
 Glows, when as ransom for a life
 Devotion gives its own,
 And in undaunted fearlessness
 Goes forth to die alone.

A chivalrous and knightly deed
 Rhodesian annals tell
 Of Blakiston and Routledge, who
 In Honour's tourney fell
 To save Mazöe's women from
 The gaping jaws of Hell.

As thunders from a summer sky
 The crashing levin-bolt,
 So burst the Matabele storm
 Of carnage and revolt,
 And poured a stream of ruthless war
 From every savage holt!

Mazöe Post lay isolate,
 Defenceless, far afield,
 While every donga, krantz, and kloof
 Marauding foes concealed;
 And every wind that stirred the reeds
 A warrior's plume revealed.

Fort Salisbury, the nearest help,
Lay thirty miles away,
And knew not of Mazöe's plight,
Nor where the danger lay ;
So men could only wait for death,
And women only pray.

Time and again the rifles rang !
Time and again the foe
Reeled beaten from the laager's walls,
Row upon writhing row ;
Yet natheless still the sea of plumes
Tossed restless, to and fro !

'Twas in this hour of direct need
That Chivalry awoke,
And Blakiston and Routledge, grimed
With blood and sweat and smoke,
Through the Matabele Impi,
On their deathless errand, broke !

True hearts were they, and kindly, though
The life they led was rough ;
They recked not of the danger ;
They were made of sterner stuff—
There were women in the laager,
And for them it was enough !

They knew, alas! that shame and death
 Would fall to woman's lot;
And as they thought of what might be
 Their blood burned fiercely hot.
So, if to save them men must die,
 Well, death it mattered not!

Together, racing side by side
 (This was the plan they made),
So one, perchance, might reach the wires
 And telegraph for aid,
Then succour, if it came at all,
 Would not be long delayed.

Speechless, their comrades gripped their hands—
 A silent, sad good-bye;
Whilst through the flashing battle-light
 Dew shone in every eye;
Full well they knew those gallant hearts
 Rode out for them—to die!

The women watched them ride away,
 With many a fervent prayer
That Heaven would raise a shelt'ring arm
 And hold them in its care;
Yet, as they vanished from their sight
 They sobbed in blank despair.

Followed—An agony of dread !
Hope, crucified by Doubt,
Supped vinegar and hyssop
As the moments lengthen'd out !
Then, hark ! Returning hoof-beats,
And a faint, far-distant shout !

Back ! back they raced ! But, ah ! alas !
Poor Blakiston was sped !
Down to the very saddle-bow
Swayed low his drooping head !
God ! Struck again !—and man and horse
Lay motionless and dead !

No safety by that dreadful path
Might Routledge hope to gain !
No passage to the laager's walls
Through that death-dealing rain !
One chance alone for him remained—
To reach the open plain !

He left the track, and in the Bush
Was hidden from their sight.
God rest him ! For he made his stand
And fought his lonely fight
For Womanhood ; so gave his life,
A brave and gallant knight !



So succour to Mazöe came,
 Won by self-sacrifice !
And well we know their noble hearts
 Grudged not the bloody price.
They knew, when Fortune " throws a main "
 She plays with loaded dice.

God send us more such Errantry,
 Grand, chivalrous, and bold,
As in Rhodesia's Chronicles
 Is writ in words of gold,
Where " Blakiston " and " Routledge "
 Are on Valour's page enrolled !

The desert's restful silence
 Shrouds them softly, for a pall !
The whispered Vespers of the Veld
 Around them gently fall !
In Woman's heart their names are shrined—
 Best resting-place of all !

THE MAZÖE PATROL

II.—HOW PIET THE HOTTENTOT RODE FOR MAZÖE

NOTE.—Following on the heroic deaths of Blakiston and Routledge, the second incident in the Story of the Mazöe Patrol is the plucky dash on horseback by Piet the Hottentot, through the besieging lines of the Matabele Impi, in response to Captain Judson's call for a volunteer to ride for reinforcements to Fort Salisbury. Captain Judson reached the laager at the head of a small patrol, starting immediately the pathetic message despatched by Blakiston and Routledge, and paid for with their lives, was received. He found, however, that without further help it would be impossible, with the women and wounded, to force a way through the Matabele. Piet the Hottentot, son of a despised race, proved himself nevertheless a true scion of Chivalry—the Brown Knight of Mazöe. Mounted on the swiftest horse in the camp, and starting on his perilous ride at midnight, he successfully fought his way through miles of hostile country till beyond the reach of pursuit. He succeeded in his desperate venture, and but for his plucky ride it is probable that the lives of all in the laager at Mazöe would have been sacrificed. It is

pleasing to know that he was suitably rewarded for his gallant action by the Chartered Company.

CLICKITTY-CLACK ! clickitty-clack !
 Who is it gallops so hard on the track ?
 Clickitty-clink ! clickitty-clink !
 Up through the donga and over the brink !
 Hope of Mazöe in desperate plight,
 Piet, the brave Hottentot, speeds through the
 night !

Back in the laager the women at prayer
 Face the grim spectre of cruel despair !
 Back in the laager the men are on guard,
 Sleepless and bleeding, and assegai-scarred ;
 Strength'ning defences of hurdle and thorn,
 Straining fierce eyes for the glimmer of morn.

Back at the laager a ravening horde
 Shouts the " Usutu ! " Red murder's abroad !
 Murder relentless and cruel as hell,
 Sounding poor shuddering Womanhood's knell !
 Speed, Pieter, speed ! Spur, Pieter, spur !
 He who would falter is branded a cur !

* * * * *

Someone to Salisbury township must ride,
 Braving the jaws of the death-trap outside ;
 Threading the dongas and spruits in the dark,
 Riding each mile as an assegai-mark,
 Who will for Woman bear jeopardy's brunt ?
 Piet, the brave Hottentot, steps to the front.

“ Baas ! I can ride—I can shoot—as you know ;
 Give me a horse—but a horse that can go.
 Lend me a ‘ Webley ’—then open the gate—
 See if a Hottentot cannot ride straight.
 Brown though my colour, my courage is White ;
 Baas, I will ride for Mazöe to-night.”

Give him the best of the horses, they said :
 Judson’s bay charger is three-quarter bred ;
 Long in the barrel and low in the hock ;
 Comes of a staying, hard-galloping stock.
 Delicate muzzle and spirited eye,
 Rocket can race when another would die.

Draw back the hurdles with “ thorn ” interlaced !
 Quickly the *chevaux-de-frise* is displaced—
 Out like an arrow shoots Rocket with Piet
 Crouched on his withers—the Hottentot “ seat ”—
 Caution no longer will serve ! Give him rein !
 Home go the spurs—he is snorting with pain !

* * * * *

Clickitty-clack ! clickitty-click !
 Scatter of pebble and snapping of stick !
 Clickitty-clack ! clickitty-clack !
 Riding for Honour, he never looks back !
 Meercat and jackal scud off in affright
 As he goes thundering past in the night !

There, by the watchfire's flickering glow
 Lurk the grim forms of the pitiless foe !
 Springing alert as the galloping hoof
 Wakens the echo in donga and kloof.
 Spur, Pieter, spur ! There are lives on your
 speed !

Drive home the rowels ! Alas ! he must bleed !

* * * * *

Crouching, their scouts are preparing to spring !
 Rocket strides on with a thoroughbred's swing—
 Takes off—covers thirty good feet in his leap—
 Scatters the foe as a leopard will sheep—
 Pecks—and recovers—a bound, and a snort !
 Clear ! and they're racing for Salisbury Fort !

Flash !—'tis a shot from his flank—but a miss !
 Whizz !—'tis an assegai's sibilant hiss !
 Whir-r !—'tis a knobkerrie, wide of its mark !
 Zip ! there's a scar in the Kaffir-Boom's bark
 Where in the shadow it looms far ahead
 Spotting Night's cloak with its splashes of red.

Murder behind him and perils around !
 Death follows hard on his track as a hound
 Hangs to the quarry he marks as his prey,
 Biding the time when he turns him at bay.

Shrill in his ear sings the whistling wind !
 Faint come the shouts of the Impi behind ;
 Loud ring the clattering shoes in the Krantz,
 Muffled where water-reeds screen his advance.

* * * * *

Rocket is flagging and spent with fatigue,
 Yet he is conquering league after league :
 Twenty long miles has he flung in his rear,
 Salisbury township draws ever more near.

Distance and danger his courage defies,
 See, he is gallantly breasting a rise,
 Nostrils a-quiver and quarters a-sweat !
 Call on him, Piet, he will answer you yet.

Rocket responds to the touch of his rein,
 See him stretch out like a greyhound again !
 Pedigree tells in such desperate straits ;
 " Blood " never reckons the Handicap Weights—
 Lithe as a leopard, his sinews are steel ;
 Gamely he answers the Hottentot's heel.

* * * * *

Up to the Courthouse the messenger raced !
 Then there was arming and mounting in haste !
 Men threatened vengeance and women turned
 pale

Hearing the words of the Hottentot's tale :—
 Bold, plucky rider, his mission was done !
 Help for Mazöe his courage had won !

* * * * *

Only a Helot ! a serf of the soil,
 Hewer of wood, and the Bondman of Toil !
 Natheless as gallant and brave as the best,
 Risking his life at Compassion's behest.
 Swart though his skin, yet his courage was White,
 Greeting, O Piet ! to Mazöe's Brown Knight !

* * * * *

THE MAZÖE PATROL

III.—HOW THE WOMEN CAME OUT FROM MAZÖE

NOTE.—The closing incident of the Mazöe episode was the desperate running fight made by Captain Judson's Patrol while escorting the women and wounded from the Mazöe laager to Fort Salisbury. It is a thrilling record of dogged valour and determination. For thirteen long miles it was one unceasing struggle through the valley of death, every furlong towards safety being bought by the blood and lives of the plucky little band of rescuers.

During this perilous journey a member of the Salvation Army, named Pascoe, lay on the roof of the wagonette containing the women and wounded, and with his rifle helped to beat off their assailants, preventing the vehicle from being rushed. Several times the Patrol were brought to a stand, and fought desperately against overwhelming odds. At the start Captain Judson had been compelled to dismount half a dozen of his men, their horses being required to draw the wagonette containing the women and wounded, all the mules of the team at the Alice Mine having been shot during the attack upon the Mazöe

laager. This retarded considerably the pace at which the escort travelled, and added greatly to the perils and difficulties of the retreat. Near the Lime Works, on the road to the Gwebi, the party were fought to a standstill and nearly overpowered, though they finally succeeded in rushing the wagonette through the ranks of the attacking force, but with severe loss. The episode is a magnificent epic in Rhodesian annals, where the names of Judson, Nesbit, McGreer, Van Staaden, Jacobs, Burton, Ogilvie, Brown, and Edmonds will ever hold an honoured place. The circumstantial details given in the ballad were obtained from one of the members of the Patrol.

ERE Routledge and Blakiston fell they had flashed
o'er the wire
That call from Mazöe which told of extremity dire ;
And though we could raise in response but a skeleton
force,
Yet Judson had ridden, hotspur, with a handful of
Horse.

And now there was mounting in haste, for at Salis-
bury Fort
We heard with dismay the ill-news Piet, the Hot-
tentot, brought ;
That Judson's Patrol were in straits, and with women
to guard,
Had found that all hope of escape from Mazöe was
barred.

We reckoned to fight our way through—though a
hazardous task—

Yet what we might find in the end men were fearful
to ask ;

Red Murder was out, with rapine and outrage and
shame !

We raced against time with the fire of our vengeance
afame.

* * * * *

The laager ! the laager at last ! and their rifles still
spoke,

As flash after flash rent the screen of the eddying
smoke :

A wave of relief swept away the last vestige of
fear,

As borne on the wind to our ears came the sound of
a cheer.

We dashed from the edge of the Bush with en-
couraging shout,

The shock of our charge putting foes to confusion
and rout ;

And when from the saddle we swung in a smother
of sweat,

Hope shone in the women's tired eyes, though their
lashes were wet.

* * * * *

We halted and rested a space, for the horses were
blown,
And safety depended, we knew, on our chargers
alone.
Perforce, we must spare not the spur, as we fought
our way back,
And how would we fare if so much as a buckle were
slack?

Mazöe to Salisbury Fort was a thirty-mile ride,
With Death pricking fast, every foot of the way, at
our side;
So knowing the price we must pay for a single
mishap,
We tested and proved every girth and surcingle and
strap.

We armoured the Mine wagonette with a boiler-plate
screen
To shelter the women. We knew that the fire would
be keen.
Dismounted six men of the troop and their horses
inspanned
With makeshift of riempje and rope we had found
to our hand.

'Twas nearing high noon, and the sun with its
vertical rays
Draped kopje and donga and Veld in a quivering
haze:—

“ Let go ”—and away dashed the team, as they sprang
to the trace.

Then—Fate held the stakes in her hand of a life-
and-death race !

Zip ! Zip !—and the spattering lead rang like hail on
the shield !

Vesuvius Mine came in view as the furlongs were
reeled.

The screen, though it clattered and clanged, 'gainst
the bullets was proof,

And Pascoe, Salvationist, fired from the wagonette's
roof.

Our comrades unhorsed in the fight, though they
stumbled and tripped,

Ran clinging to stirrup and strap, or a saddle-flap
gripped ;

And so through the smother of dust and the swelter-
ing heat

Toiled panting and tortured with thirst in that awful
retreat.

The labouring team were in straits—we must give
them a rest,

So halted and fought for a spell with the Lime
Works abreast ;

Close quarters ! for barrel and butt countered assegai-
blade,

And stubbornly beat back each rush as 'twas des-
p'rately made.

Then, sjambok and rowels and lash! and the wagon-
ette rocked!

We levered a boulder aside and the wheel was un-
blocked.

A lurch—a wild scramble of hoofs as we crashed
through their ranks!

Once more we were forcing a path, though they
crowded our flanks.

McGreer reeled back in his seat—'twas his death
wound, he knew—

Then slipped from his mount with a groan as he
waved us "Adieu!"

But Hendricks at top of his speed doubled back on
our course,

Dashed out through the smoke, and returned—with
a riderless horse.

When Nesbit and Edmonds went down we were
fought to a stand,

And fired till the barrel burned hot to the grip of
the hand;

While Judson and Brown, spurring hard, galloped
back for McGreer,

But found him stretched dead on the Veld fifty yards
in our rear.

And when Sataroga was passed and the Drift was in
sight,

The pick of our team came to grief, sorely wounded;
poor wight;

We knew, by the wild way he plunged, he was
grievously hit,
And marked the red gash on his neck, as he fought
with his bit.

The "off-wheeler" dropped in his tracks and dis-
ordered the team;
We cut him away from his trace—put a knot in the
riem—
But scarce had we finished the task, when his mate
with a leap
Fell over the pole, at our feet in a quivering heap.

We thought that, indeed, 'twas the end—they must
rush us at last!
Each moment the odds were increased, men and
horse falling fast!
Van Staaden and Jacobs were dead, and Ogilvie
struck;
While Burton was choking in blood like an assegaied
buck.

The women, courageous and calm, 'midst the carnage
and rout,
Stretched tremulous hands from the screen, passing
cartridges out;
And others to bandage our wounds tore their linen
in strips,
The while they prayed Heaven for aid—though with
quivering lips.

The river, thank God!—At last we were nearing its
brink,
Yet not for a moment dare stay that the horses
might drink ;
So filling our hats as we raced by the wagonette's
side,
We drained the first draught we had quaffed in that
desperate ride.

So furlong by furlong was won, till the Gwebi, afar,
Made glad our strained eyes where it shone—Hope's
inspiriting star !
Once crossed, then we knew we were safe, and in
reach of our goal :
Its gleam gave fresh courage and strength to the
flagging Patrol.

* * * * *

The wounded "off-leader" gave out, and went down
with a crash :—
His pitiful eye seemed to plead, "You may spare
me the lash"—
The jackals would polish his bones!—pity 'twas that
such fate
Should fall to a comrade-in-arms and a staunch-
hearted mate.

The Gwebi was forded and passed—our deliverance
won !
No ambush could menace our front—there was cover
for none ;

At length we might slacken our speed and our efforts
relax,
For the road to the Fort lay as bare as the blade of
an axe.

* * * * *

'Twas thus were the women brought out through
that Valley of Dread—
The miles marked with horror and blood and the
graves of our dead!
'Tis thus that to succour the Weak ever Chivalry
fights,
And blazons the page of To-day with the names of
our Knights!

A BALLAD OF MAGERSFONTEIN

(11th December 1899)

NOTE.—No blacker day ever dawned for Kilt and Claymore than that which saw Magersfontein's barbed-wire entanglements and trenches strewn thick with the red wreck of the Highland Brigade. In the "wee sma' hours" just before daybreak a direful five minutes of deadly rifle-fire at point-blank range stretched over seven hundred dead and wounded within two hundred yards of the Boer entrenchments. The withering storm of lead practically annihilated whole Companies, and yet from dawn to dark "A," "B," and "C" Companies of the "Black Watch," lying prone on the ground, clung grimly to the position they had gained, because they had no orders to retire—in fact so dreadful had been the slaughter that not a single one of their officers was left to take command of those skeleton ranks. In the whole glorious annals of the famous "42nd" there is no more dramatic incident recorded. The total British loss on that fatal day was one thousand dead and wounded, and of this number seven hundred belonged to the Highland Brigade.

SAE WEARILY! SAE WEARILY!

In many a bosky strath and glen
The pipes are wailing eeriely,
Sae eeriely!
In many a cottar's "but and-ben"
The guidwife sobs sae wearily,
Sae wearily!
The guidman turns his streaming eyes
To where the Book of Comfort lies,
And strives to soothe her while he sighs
Sae drearily, sae wearily!

In many a Highland chieftain's hall
The laird is grieving wearily,
Sae wearily!
He feels the grip of sorrow's thrall
Benumb his heart sae drearily,
Sae drearily!
He hears the slogan o' the clan!
He sees "The Master" lead the van!
And now he kneels, a childless man—
God help him! Kneels sae wearily!

The Highland maid of proud descent
Is mourning, O! sae wearily,
Sae wearily!
The cottar lassie's head is bent
In bitter grief, sae drearily,
Sae drearily!

For Lady Bell in silk arrayed
 And bonnie Jean the byre-maid
 Are weeping 'neath the self-same plaid
 Sae wearily, sae wearily !

To them it seems but yester-e'en
 He said Good-bye sae cheerily,
 Sae cheerily !
 And yet the weeks that lie between
 Hae creepit on sae drearily,
 Sae drearily !

To-night with Death their laddie sleeps,
 The while his stricken mother weeps,
 As down her cheek the sorrow creeps
 Sae wearily, sae wearily !

In many a bosky strath and glen
 The pipes are wailing eeriely,
 Sae eeriely !
 A dirge for Scotia's fighting-men
 Who marched away sae cheerily,
 Sae cheerily !

For all, the sorrow is the same—
 The withered crone, the high-born dame,
 The lass who cries her lover's name
 Sae wearily, sae wearily !

THE BALLAD OF THE LOST GUNS

NOTE.—Lieutenant Roberts, K.R.R., fell at Colenso, mortally wounded, in his heroic attempt to save the British Guns, in December 1899. In the following February, his father, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, left England to take command of the forces in South Africa.

HE greatly dared—and greatly daring, died :
True son of that true Son of Britain who denied
Himself Sorrow's sad solace, Solitude, and dried
A father's tears, untimeous, lest that salt dew
Should blind a soldier's eyes. Full well he knew
His Country called for his unselfish aid,
So stayed his grief to wield an Empire's blade.
The Arbiter of Death—himself bereft
By the Red Reaper, War,—had Honour left,
Britannia's and his own; both newly gilt
By a son's blood on Duty's altar spilt.

* * * * *

Colenso! ill-starred day! ill-omened name!
Brings to the cheek the mantling flush of shame,
For the swift torrent of Tugela's flood
Was dyed with wanton waste of British blood,

Poured out, Alas! in vain. Yet, nathless, still
 Our pride may burn, our heartstrings throb and
 thrill;

For blazoned bright athwart that bloody page
 Of fell Disaster—Indiscretion's wage—
 Is writ in gold as glorious a deed
 As e'er was wrought for Britain in her need.

* * * * *

“Guns to the front!” Lo! through the eager ranks
 A quiver runs. The teams with heaving flanks
 Dash through the lines—each chain and straining
 trace

Tense as a bow's drawn string! Gods! how they
 race!

Whirlwinds of War annihilating space!
 Jangle of steel, and pistol-crack of lash!
 Rumble of wheels, and splintering timber's crash!
 With wild swift rush, as mountain leopard leaps,
 Battery by battery into action sweeps!

* * * * *

Round swing the teams! The guns unlimbered wait
 Ready to belch the scorching breath of Fate,
 But ere the breech receives the deadly shell
 Tugela's banks become a flaming hell,
 And rattling rifles ring the batteries' knell!
 Man upon man! horse upon struggling horse,
 Goes crashing down, a mangled, bleeding corse!
 Caissons explode and hurtling havoc make!
 The rent earth trembles and the heavens quake!

* * * * *

Then, Silence—and the breathless army saw
 Red on their sight the tragedy of War;
 The ambushed guns, the teams and gunners prone
 On the drenched soil where rifle-fire had mown
 Swathe upon swathe the harvesting of lead,
 Rank upon rank, the rows of British dead,
 Where sanguine glint of sunshine redly broke
 O'er pools of crimson through the drifting smoke.

* * * * * *

A moment's pause—and then a gasping sigh
 Runs shivering through the ranks! A warning cry!
 Roberts with plunging team goes thundering by,
 Into hell's pit to save the guns—or die!
 Foredoomed to fall, a willing sacrifice,
 He vowed his life to Honour as the price
 Duty would pay, disaster to retrieve,
 And prayed the gods his offering to receive.
 Congreve and Schofield, doughty comrades both,
 Spurred at his side and swore the self-same oath,
 Whilst Fate decreed that of that dauntless three
 One should pay toll of life for Chivalry.

* * * * * *

Forlorn the hope! Can flesh and blood prevail
 Against that withering storm of deadly hail?
 Team after team goes racing down the path
 Strewn thick and deep with Slaughter's aftermath!
 Leaders and wheelers, snorting, plunge and rear,
 A hurtling mass of man, and horse, and gear,
 Whilst the red shambles by Tugela's stream,
 Re-echo human groan and equine scream!

* * * * * *

In vain that bloody holocaust is piled
 With God's own image, shattered and defiled !
 Roberts, with mortal wound, sways in his seat,
 And falling—hears the Signal for Retreat !

* * * * *

The Boers at even when they dragged away
 The captured cannon, left him where he lay
 On Honour's bed—saluting as they passed
 That prostrate form, heroic to the last ;
 For, sturdy foemen, worthy of our steel,
 Their hearts were stirred by Chivalry's appeal.

* * * * *

Congreve and Baptie found him as they sought
 The quick amongst the dead—and sorrowing brought
 Him back—of that dread heap, the first—
 Moaning the anguish'd cry, " I thirst ! I thirst ! "

* * * * *

The " Cross " he won a Marshal proudly wears,
 Twin to the Bronze a father's tunic bears.
 And though Britannia mourns her captured guns,
 She counts it naught, beside such Hero Sons !

A BALLAD OF COLENZO FIGHT

GUNNERS FOUR

(An Episode in the Drama of the Lost Guns)

NOTE.—In *The Natal Campaign* Bennett Burleigh narrates one of the most dramatic episodes ever chronicled by a War Correspondent. He sketches the incident in a few vivid lines, thus:

“. . . An order was given to abandon the guns, which for over an hour had fought in the face of the fiercest fusilade a battery ever endured. Yet, even then, all was not over, for four men persisted in serving two guns and remaining beside their cannon. One of either pair carried shell; the others laid and fired their beloved 15-pounders. But two men were left. They continued the unequal battle. They exhausted the ordinary ammunition, and finally drew upon and fired the emergency rounds of case—their last shot. Then they stood to ‘Attention’ beside the gun, and an instant later fell pierced through and through by bullets. These, I say, by the light of all my experience in war, these gunners of ours are men who deserve monuments over their graves, and even Victoria Crosses in their coffins.”

He also relates how, when Colonel Long was told that he had better retire, leaving his guns, that

officer replied, "What! abandon my guns? Abandon my guns—be damned!"

THIS is a ballad of Gunners Four,
 Whose names have been lost to Fame,
 Who died for duty—could man do more?
 And doggedly "played the game,"
 They were men of the crack 14th and 66th R.A.;
 When I read of their death
 Comes a catch in my breath
 And a throb in my pulse always!

This is the story—the vivid lines
 Of a Master's graphic pen
 Have limned a picture that glows and shines
 Till, almost, we see the men
 And the Batteries' ambushed guns by the red
 Tugela's banks,
 Where the dying and dead
 'Neath a tempest of lead
 Lay a-heap in the fire-swept ranks.

* * * * *

They heard the bugles ring out "Retire!"
 Yet never a step they stirred,
 But still continued to load and fire,
 As though 'twere a "call" unheard;
 For they came of that Bull-dog strain which all
 Creation knows,
 Once 'tis locked in a grip
 Never whines at the whip,
 And will die ere its jaws unclose.

Long was their Colonel, and he, they knew,
 Was down with a ghastly wound ;
 Had heard him mutter—his last adieu—
 Ere he sank to the ground and swooned,
 “ Abandon my batteries, eh ? ” (a closing breech-
 block clanged) ;
 “ While a gunner can stir
 Dare you speak of it, sir ?
 Abandon my guns—be hanged ! ”

A Colonel's motto, the gunners swore,
 Was, surely, the Battery's own ;
 So, moiled and sweated and toiled the more
 As they heard their Colonel's moan.
 There were *two* to carry shell, and *two* to load
 and train,
 Two guns through the smoke
 To their challengers spoke
 With a challenging roar, again.

Gazing in wonder, the whole Brigade,
 Aghast at the awesome sight,
 Watched *three* men facing the enfilade ;
 And, gods ! what a Titan's fight !
 There was *one* to load and fire, and *two* to carry
 shell,
 For a gunner lay dead
 With a shot-shattered head
 In those vomiting jaws of hell.

He who was sighting the right flank gun,
 With lanyard in rigid clasp,
 Reeled to its limber—a man fordone—
 And fell with a gurgling gasp.
 There was *one* to carry shell, and *one* to load
 and lay ;
 But *one* gun of the ten
 Left to thunder “ Amen ! ”
 To the Battery’s last display.

“ Shrapnel ” expended ! There still remained
 “ Point-Blank ” to “ the fuse ” replace ;
 That which the axle-tree’s “ Box ” contained—
 “ Emergency rounds ” of “ Case.”
 So the “ 15-pr. ” spoke with still defiant roars
 Until, smoking and hot
 It had dropped its last shot
 In the ranks of the wondering Boers !

* * * * *

Passing of Arthur ! Out-foughten, spent,
 They staggered—yet swayed erect !
 Stood to “ Attention ” as well content
 To die as “ The Guns ” expect ;
 With the battery’s jagged wreck of littered broken
 gear ;
 Shattered felloe and “ trail,”—
 All the wrack of War’s gale—
 Piled a-heap for a soldier’s bier !

Stood to "Attention!" Their duty done,
 It only remained to die,
 Each by the side of that well-served gun.
 With steady, unflinching eye.
 Then—Fort Wylie spoke again—the piece was
 shrapnel swept!
 From the spot where they lay,
 Mangled, quivering clay,
 Two red-running rivulets crept!

As the smoke lifted, its misty screen
 Adrift on the air revealed
 What but a moment before had been,
 Alas! by its folds concealed.
 There were *none* to carry shell, and *none* to load
 and fire,
 For the batteries' Four
 Were on Duty no more.
 They had answered, at length, "Retire"!

* * * * *

Shall they be fameless? Indeed, I trow
 When called at the Last Parade
 Of Duty's heroes the Roll will show
 The names that a world mislaid.
 They were men of the crack 14th and 66th R.A.,
 When I think of their death
 Comes a catch in my breath
 And a throb in my pulse, alway!

THE UMGUSA PATROL

I.—BAXTER OF “GREY’S.”

NOTE.—The Umgusa Patrol gave to Rhodesia’s coronet two of its brightest jewels, for during the engagement with the Matabele rebels near Bulawayo on the 22nd April 1896, two brilliant deeds of heroism were performed, both of which add imperishable lustre to the annals of the great Northland. Mr. F. C. Selous, the doyen of Frontiersmen, gives a vivid account of the two incidents in his fascinating book, *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia*. The name of Baxter, of Grey’s Scouts, will ever stand as a synonym for Frontier Chivalry, and the heroism of Lieut. Crewe, N.M.R., has been faithfully portrayed in the picture presented by Mr. Rhodes to the Art Gallery in Durban.

ON you at Home in Britain with friends on Afric’s
veld
Should lie a debt of Honour; and obligation felt
To guard your distant kinsmen from slander’s coward
blows;
The cruel fabrications and vapourings of those

Who prate of what they know not; the burden of
 whose song
 Is—The Native wears a halo and the Settler's always
 wrong.
 When you hear them ranting libels will you bid them
 heed their ways,
 And listen to the story of Baxter, late of "Grey's."

* * * * *

From Bulawayo laager marched out a mixed Patrol
 Of horse and foot, and natives, Umgusa's banks their
 goal,
 Where lurking 'midst the ridges the Impi lay en-
 trenched,
 Two thousand strong in numbers—yet ne'er a trooper
 blenched;
 For Bulawayo's women had bidden them "God-speed,"
 And no man bearing rifle would fail them at their
 need!

A band of Frontier fighters with Bissett in com-
 mand;
 With him rode Grey and Meikle, Van Niekerk, too,
 and Brand,
 And Colenbrander's levies;—two quick-fire guns
 designed
 To search Umgusa's ridges came rattling on behind;
 There, too, rode he, the Nimrod known all the North-
 land through,
 That bold and mighty hunter, redoubtable Selous.

Van Niekerk's Africanders had searched the river-
bank,
While Colenbrander's levies charged bravely on their
flank ;
Grey's men had crossed Umgusa in the face of heavy
fire,
When Bissett gave the signal that bade the Scouts
retire.

The troopers had dismounted a clump of bush to
clear,
For here and there the sunlight shone twinkling on
a spear,
Where lurking foes lay hidden, prepared to fight or fly,
With rifle, axe, and kerrie, and stabbing assegai.

Selous rode with the order which called the Scouts to
horse,
And bade the scattered units fall back on Bissett's
force ;
Then there was hurried conclave, and shouts, and
warning cries,
Men doubling for their horses, and with them Trooper
Wise.

With hand on rein and pommel he swung his troop-
horse round,
Then, one foot in the stirrup and one upon the ground,
He sprang to reach the saddle, but ere he gained his
seat
He fell, hard hit and bleeding, beneath the horse's feet.

His startled charger stumbled, then reared and broke
away ;
While dazed and half-unconscious the hapless rider
lay !
Small chance there seemed of rescue, for from the
ridge behind
The Matabele war-cry rang fiercely on the wind.

With stirrup-irons jangling and trailing bridle-rein,
With nostrils wide distended, and wildly streaming
mane,
His frightened troop-horse thundered upon the home-
ward track,
And as he passed him, Baxter looked round—then
galloped back.

He reached his wounded comrade, and down he
lightly sprung—
Raised Wise with straining sinews, and to the saddle
swung
The stricken, fainting trooper ; spoke kindly words of
cheer,
And bade him ride for safety while he should guard
his rear ;
Home in the friendly stirrups he firmly fixed his
feet,
Then turned with lifted rifle to cover his retreat.

The Matabele marksmen their shelt'ring ridge forsook,
And charged across the open as gallant Grey and
Hook

Came racing to the rescue and ranged them at his
side,
While "Texas" long behind them his dripping rowels
plied.

The rebels swarmed around them, and every bush
spat flame,
The while they succoured Baxter and played the
white man's game ;
The men on horseback forming on either flank a
screen,
As clinging to a stirrup their comrade ran between.

Hook lurched against his pommel and fiercely grit
his teeth,
For blood was dripping slowly his saddle-flap beneath ;
Then, almost on the instant, Grey faltered as he rode,
And, vivid, on his forehead a thread of crimson
showed.

Long ranged alongside Baxter and shook a stirrup
free,
And bade him grip the leather and swing beside his
knee ;
While assegai and bullet hissed in so fierce a blast
It seemed that every moment must, surely, be their
last !

A flash from yonder bushes! A bullet's vicious zip!
The straining stirrup-leather was torn from Baxter's
grip!

Ere Long could check his charger the battle-axes fell,
And shouts of savage triumph rang out—a hero's
knell!

Wise lives to tell the story; and Grey and Hook and
Long

Are proud to render honour where honour doth
belong;

And when his name is mentioned a misty eye be-
trays

The Northland's crystal tribute to Baxter, late of
"Grey's."

THE UMGUSA PATROL

II.—HOW HOOK OF THE SCOUTS WAS SAVED

NOTE.—When the dashing attempt to rescue trooper Baxter, of Grey's Scouts, failed, and he had fallen beneath the stabbing assegais and battle-axes of the Matabele, on the banks of the Umgusa, his comrades who had so gallantly ridden back to succour him found themselves in desperate plight. Trooper Wise—for whom Baxter had sacrificed his own life—Captain Grey, and Lieut. Hook, all of them wounded, were surrounded by a number of Matabele exasperated by the defeat the Impi had sustained, and were compelled to fight their way back to the supporting force in the face of overwhelming odds. Then it was that for the second time on the same day, a gallant fellow dismounted and gave up his horse to a wounded comrade. Lieut. Hook's charger, struck simultaneously on flank and fetlock, fell and threw his already wounded rider. Lieut. Crewe immediately dismounted and assisted Hook into his own saddle, then turned to hold back their assailants, armed only with his revolver, and eventually succeeded in fighting his way back to safety on foot. His retreat, with that of the men wounded in the futile attempt to bring out Baxter, was magnificently

covered by their comrades Rademayer, Stuart, and Button, whose deadly fire held the Matabele in check until the danger was past.

WHEN from the Cape to Cairo the bright steel ribbons
gleam—

Inception's consummation begotten of a dream—

Our sons will know the perils with which the task
was fraught

And how each rolling *morgen*¹ by Sacrifice was
bought.

Then, in the old-time laagers and out-spans on the
Veld

The rusting wagon-axle and rotting cartridge-belt
Will tell the wordless story of many a lonely mound,
Where death on Friendship's altar made consecrate
the ground.

Twin-brother to Compassion, I trow, was Valour born,
Holding a Man in honour, A Nidering in scorn!
Unselfish its devotion, as, armed on either hand,
It bears the Shield of Succour behind the naked
brand.

As in its golden setting a priceless jewel glows
So, in our Roll of Heroes doth every page disclose
Some deed of Abnegation—Renunciation's pledge
Of safety to a comrade, redeemed with "point and
edge."

¹ *Morgen*—a Cape land measure, in extent rather more than two acres.

Mazöe's gallant rescue, when many a brave heart fell,
Doth not the Cross, "For Valour," on Pringle's tunic
tell?

While "Neumeyer," and "Begbie," and many another
name

Blaze in the Roll of Heroes who won the Northland
fame.

And in this Scroll of Honour Natalia claims a son,
For by Umgusa's waters a gallant deed was done
When Crewe with lifted pistol stood fearlessly at bay,
And helped a stricken comrade to mount and ride
away.

With wounded Hook behind him and death before
his eyes,

He faced with mien unblenching the gleaming
assegais;

His life in deadly peril, he covered his retreat,
And won his comrade's safety—a brave and knightly
feat!

* * * * *

Hook had been sorely wounded when he with Long
and Grey

Had ridden back for Baxter in that sharp, desperate
fray

Where Bulawayo's Manhood essayed to break the
pride

And strength of Lobengula—and stemmed Re-
bellion's tide!

Beyond the reach of succour lay Baxter, stark and still ;

For on his mangled body the spears had worked their will.

And now the rescue-party, bleeding and hard beset,
Were struggling back to safety with rowels red and wet.

Pierced through in flank and fetlock Hook's mount
with frantic bound,

Plunged as the bullets struck him—then crashing to
the ground,

Rolled o'er his hapless rider and crushed his bleeding
thigh,

Leaving him maimed and helpless, whilst savage
death drew nigh.

The fall had hurled his rifle away beyond his reach,
Unarmed and barely conscious he lay bereft of speech,
Till spurred by desperation he struggled to his feet,
And turned with mien undaunted a soldier's death
to meet.

Crewe saw his deadly danger, and halted at his side :
“Come,—up into my saddle, I'll fight on foot!” he
cried ;

Helped him to mount his pony, then wheeling in his
track,

He raised his smoking “Webley,” and held the
rebels back.

Then came the crack of rifles, and cheers from their
right,
Where Rademayer and Button had marked their
parlous plight ;
Both keen and deadly marksmen, with Stuart for a
third,
Each dropped his living target as sportsmen drop
a bird.

The Matabele wavered, then halted, turned, and fled,
And Crewe with Hook before him came back as from
the dead ;
As chivalrous and doughty was his brave deed, I
trow,
As e'er was wrought by belted Knight in face of
Paynim foe !

THE UMGUSA PATROL

III.—MARTINEAU'S V.C.

NOTE.—An empty coat sleeve!—*that*, for the garish daylight. A little bit of bronze, locked away, perchance, in some office-drawer amongst bills, schedules, and such like oddments!—*that*, for a quiet hour and reminiscent pipe. In the love-shuttered sanctuary of some woman's heart—a place!—*that* for always. Is not this the life-story of many a V.C.? The stirring hour of action has long passed away, and there remain only its memory and—too often, alas! the handicap of that empty sleeve in life's stern, daily battle. The least we can do is to tender our tribute of homage in such coinage as the gods have vouchsafed unto us—the strong hand-clasp of Manhood; the dewy smile of sympathetic Woman; or the stanzas of the ballad-writer. All honest, at least, though, alack! intrinsically valueless; yet the psychological influence of that simple inscription, "For Valour," is beyond appraisement. The Homeland and her Colonies are all proud of their joint interest in the Empire's muster-roll of Paladins, and the "Cross" bestowed on Sergeant Martineau of the Protectorate Regiment for gallantry in rescuing a wounded comrade at Mafeking added another gem to Rhodesia's richly jewelled coronet.

IN the Club at Bulawayo they had talked of Mafe-
king—
Of the days when round the township lay the Siege's
iron ring—
And as the chat went to and fro of skirmish and
sortie,
'Twas Colenbrander told the tale of Martineau's V.C.

In one of Baden-Powell's brilliant dashes through the
lines
(When the dreaded British bay'net countersigned all
countersigns),
They had skirmished out to Game Tree where the
rifle fire grew hot;
And, with scarce a scrap of cover, 'twas a death-
devoted spot.

Le Camp, of the " Protectorate," beside a Boer trench
Lay badly hit and bleeding—still his courage did not
blench ;
When he heard the whistles shrilling out the signal
to retire,
He " set his sights at zero," to return the galling fire.

In the deadly rough-and-tumble it was Sergeant
Martineau
Who saw the luckless Corporal, and marked his life's-
blood flow ;
And going at the double he was quickly at his side,
To carry him to shelter and to stanch the crimson tide.

At some distance from the trenches there was cover
—of a sort,
And 'twas better than the open, where each yard was
danger-fraught,
So he raised the wounded Corporal, and bending
'neath his weight,
He staggered towards the shelter lest his aid should
be too late.

It seemed to him the distance grew the greater as he
strained
To reach the friendly bushes ; would their cover ne'er
be gained !
For the lead was humming round him, and his brow
was damp with sweat ;
While he felt his weary shoulder with his comrade's
blood grow wet.

When he reached the clump of bushes with his half-
unconscious friend,
He strove with rough and ready skill his bleeding
wound to tend,
Regardless of the leaden hail that swept across the
Veld,
And raised its angry spirts of dust all round him, as
he knelt.

Whilst the tourniquet adjusting, once again the rifles
rang !
He staggered as a bullet struck, and felt its searing
pang ;

Though dazed and faint, he laboured on to make the
bandage fast,
Nor ceased his kindly tending till the flow was
stanch'd, at last.

Then again the whistles sounded, so he raised the
wounded man,
And, again, the desp'rate struggle under rifle-fire
began,
As he stumbled, panting, bleeding,—with his breath
one laboured gasp,
But still holding to his burden with a grim, tenacious
clasp.

In that fierce and toilsome struggle, twice, he felt the
cruel lead
Find with numbing shock its billet, and his zig-zag
trail was red,—
Every step his strength was failing; every breath he
drew was pain;
And the Veld seemed heaving round him like the
billows of the Main.

Ready hands stretched out to help him as he reached
the firing line;
Gentle fingers stanch'd the bleeding, when he fell
without a sign:—
He had bought his comrade's safety by his daring
Chivalry,
And gave the old "Protectorate" another grand V.C.

The heroes of the Soldier's Cross, alas ! too often bear
 Those tokens of self-sacrifice that fall to Valour's
 share ;

The dew-gemmed eyes of Womanhood, beholding,
 softly grieve ;

And Manhood doffs a ready casque before an empty
 sleeve !

* * * * *

So the Northland writes her hist'ry, and the Red upon
 each page

Mutely tells the stirring story of the sons who bore
 her gage ;

Sons who, striving for her honour, ever led the fore-
 most rank,

And who, dying, knew some comrade ready stood
 to fill the blank.

* * * * *

In the Club at Bulawayo they had talked of Mafe-
 king—

But a hush fell on the gossip—such a hush as
 mem'ries bring ;

And a silence full of eloquence throbbed softly in
 the air

As Memory limned the portraits of the friends who—
were not there.

THE FARRIER-SERGEANT

A BALLAD OF THE NATAL MOUNTED POLICE

NOTE.—The “Farrier-Sergeant” is merely an imaginary sketch of a type, and I have availed myself of the latitude of poetic licence in making him the central figure of that last hopeless stand by “details” of the “Natal Mounted Police” and the “Natal Carbineers,” afterwards described so graphically by the rebel Chief “Mehla-ka-Zulu,” son of “Sirayo,” who led “Cetewayo’s” Ngobamanzi regiment at Isandhlwana. He narrates that when all the rest of the unfortunate 800 had fallen, one stalwart figure at the foot of a small red kopje fought on desperately, slaying many of his assailants. The Zulu dearly loves a grim fighter, and we can easily imagine them, after he was at last overpowered, giving him the Zulu Royal Salute with uplifted shield and “inyembi” (stabbing-spear)—“Bayete! Bayete!”—there dies a Chief.—L. L.

A RAW-BONED charger, nigh seventeen hands,
The “grey” of the Farrier-Sergeant stands;
Camel-backed brute with a leathery mouth,
Pilot him north and he’d carry you south—

The Colonel he said,

With a shake of the head,

“Now where in Gehenna was ‘Cataract’ bred?”

His "points" were patent—his rolling eye
 Gave warning to warily pass him by!
 Quivering muzzle and threatening hoof,
 Signals of danger—meant standing aloof!

The antics he played
 At a full-dress parade

Were more than sufficient to wreck a brigade!

He bucked—he bolted—he reared—he plunged—
 The saddle-girths went as he lashed and lunged—
 Crumpled the ranks like the crash of shell—
 Sent the Right-front of the squadron to hell—

And everyone swore
 They had never before

Seen such a red deuce of a mess to deplore.

The Sergeant-Major grew black with rage—
 His language unfit for a printed page—
 Blanked his progenitors, dam, Sir, and sire,—
 Blanketty-blanked in a purple-red-fire!

The turbulent tide
 Of his ribaldry died,

But not till the fount of profanity dried.

An awkward devil, you bet, to groom—
 He wanted an acre for standing room!
 Just let the curry-comb tickle his hock—
 Sequel—a live seismological shock!

He'd fidget and fret
 In a lather of sweat,

Till everything round him was smashed or upset.

The Farrier-Sergeant was grandly built—
With muscles as hard as a sabre-hilt ;
'Neath the dark bronze of the tropical tan
Coursed the hot blood of a desperate man—
 And riding Life's race
 At the devil's own pace
Had left on his features indelible trace.

The Mess-room called him "The Gilded Don,"
He carried the air of the "haut-bon-ton"—
Barrack-room wags with their merciless chaff
Dreaded the sting of his cynical laugh.
 His courtly address
 Made it easy to guess
He once might have ruled a "crack" regiment's Mess.

Uncertain temper, and biting wit ;
A dangerous gleam in his eyes when lit—
Aristocrat with the devil's own knack
Of turning the rear of a verbal attack :
 Quoth Patsy O'Shea,
 " His charger and he
Were matched in Gehenna, and so they agree."

At I-sand-hlwa-na the " N.M.P.,"
Were fighting in front—where a man should be—
Stirrup and knee with the " Carbineers,"
Facing the onslaught of red-dripping spears—
 And meeting the shock,
 Like the face of a rock,
Reversing their carbines dealt death with the stock.

The fierce "Usutu!"—"Ugh! Slay!" "Ugh! Slay!"
 Rang hoarse round the kopjes that direful day:—
 Where the "Tambookie" waved wickedly red,
 "Mehla-ka-Zulu" his warriors led:—

When they had passed
 Like a withering blast

The Farrier-Sergeant lay restful—at last.

When all was over—that headlong charge!
 Riderless horses were roaming at large—
 Many a trooper all motionless lay,
 Naught but a mangled God's-image of clay!

* * * * *

A blunder?—One more
 Britain has to deplore,

And, cruelly laid at a wrongly-marked door.

In days long after that "Feast of Wrath"
 A burial-squad of the "Twenty-Fourth,"
 Finding the Zulu dead piled in a ring,
 Traced the grim track of his carbine-stock's swing!

Ay! full to the brim,
 Flowing red o'er its rim,

The Death-cup, as drained by his comrades and him!

* * * * *

The dread aasvogels had stripped the corse
 Of the Farrier-Sergeant's iron-grey horse:—
 Nevertheless when they buried the twain
 They let the two comrades together remain:—

They did him no wrong,
 Since the brave and the strong

In life and in death to each other belong.

* * * * *

In death-cramped fingers, with grip of steel,
There, 'neath a coronet's dainty seal,
Crumpled, and stiffened and red with his life,
Lay the fair fame of another man's wife.

A heartless coquette

He could never forget—

Who blasted his life since the day when they met.

O fair, false traitress! at "rout" and ball,
The whispering Veld-wind—dost hear it call?
Does the fond dotard who gives you his trust
Know of your share in that mouldering dust?

Lo! a broken troth!

And the wreck of an oath!

Ye gods in Valhalla! what wage for them both?

THE MATOPPAS INDABA ¹

(21st August 1896)

NOTE.—No more striking instance of daring bravery is recorded in the annals of later South African history than the unflinching courage and determination displayed by Cecil Rhodes during his intrepid negotiations with the rebellious Matabele within the mountain fastnesses of the Matoppas, in August 1896.

At the time, a man discredited on account of his complicity in the ill-starred Jameson Raid, yet his spirit was unbroken and his will as inflexible as ever. Without any credentials whatsoever, he assumed the full personal responsibility for what many considered at the time to be a foolhardy and hazardous undertaking—to fail in which meant his own utter and irretrievable ruin. But, trusting to his indomitable courage and intimate knowledge of the savage race with whom he had to deal, he rode unarmed—and all but unattended—into the very heart of the rebel stronghold, and there took the Indunas to task for their misdoings. Nor did his intuition play him false. His cool audacity won that respect and admiration which an armed column would have

¹ *Indaba*—equivalent to the Indian word “Durbar.”

failed to exact from the Matabele, and by the force of his mesmeric personality alone he secured a lasting Peace for his loved North Land. The whole incident throbs with dramatic force, for the scene of that historic Indaba was the spot where his own ashes were afterwards laid to rest, guarded by the very race whose chiefs on that August day held his life in the balance for four long, trying hours.

His sepulchre—the grand Matoppas loomed

Towering above his all unconscious head!

Crag called to Peak, as thunder crashed and boomed

Its throbbing requiem, clangorous and dread,

“ A Kinsman comes for whom ye mountains wait
That ye may hold his rest inviolate !”

* * * * *

With purpose steadfast as the granite hills—

To whom his giant mind indeed was kin—

He clomb the steps; since, there, Rhodesia's ills

Like carrion festered, those grim walls within.

'Twas there Red Murder had its foetid lair,

And sulked—a menace to the plains beneath—

A rabid wolf, the cub of Mad Despair,

With slavering jaws, and poisonous, rending teeth.

'Twas there the Matabele, desperate

And maddened with the rancour of defeat,

Waited the fiat of relentless Fate,

And held the passes to their last retreat.

To them unarmed he rode—The Great White Chief,
 Feared and yet trusted by the savage clan,
 Whose simple word won always their belief,
 For when he spoke, then spoke indeed A MAN.

He knew that dauntless Courage was a King
 To those fierce warriors—so gave them proof
 Of his blood-brotherhood, and faced the ring
 Of threat'ning assegais with mien aloof
 And all-contemptuous—as though he said,
 “What toys are these to which ye would appeal?
 Am I a child that I should be afraid
 Because I see the sunlight flash on steel?”

“Tell me your wrongs, that I may set them right;
 For this I come, a messenger of peace.
 Why should I blench or tremble in affright?
 These be my words:—Let all vain vapouring cease;
 Such only serves with children and with maids—
 No man is moved by brandishing of blades!”

* * * * *

Sekembo, Chief and orator, then told
 In burning words—a glowing lava-tide—
 Of slights and wrongs. Despair had made him bold,
 And long-pent passion would not be denied!

“List ye, my Father! ’Twas for this we fought:—
 They set Mashona dogs to track the spoor
 Of Matabele lions—and we sought
 For this dire insult, vengeance swift and sure!

“ List ye, my Father ! ’Twas for this they took
 Toll of our cattle in the Great Chief’s name.
 Small wonder that the mountain-lion shook
 With bristling fury at so black a shame ! ”

* * * * *

“ Content ye, Children ! Rest from now content.
 I pledge Rhodes’ word your wrongs shall find redress,
 Yet first ye shall, ere they have betterment,
 Make full submission, and your faults confess ! ”

“ How dared ye slay the women of my race ?
 Were there not men enough for men to meet,
 That ye should work yourselves such foul disgrace ?
 Are ye but dogs to spit upon and beat ? ”

* * * * *

From out the ring an old Induna strode,
 Then cast a broken weapon at his feet,
 As though he eased him of an irksome load,
 And cried, “ My Father ! thus I peace entreat ! ”

As fall the hailstones from a lowering sky,
 So, kerrie, battle-axe, and ox-hide shield,
 With throwing-spear and stabbing-assegai
 Clanged clattering, to the cry—“ We yield ! we
 yield ! ”
 And so with broken blades the pact was sealed !

STAND FOR THE KING!

BRITANNIC Ocean's mighty bosoms swell
And throb with life when kissed by wandering gale!
They breathe th' Imperial Greeting, "All is well!"
Kith calls to Kindred in the gladsome hail!

Stand for the King! the echoes ring
From shore to distant shore!
Stand for the King! and time shall bring
To Briton and to Boer
One aim in Peace, when strife shall cease;
And discord reign no more!

From Northland shores to sunny Southland climes;
O'er Eastern Seas to rolling Western Plain,
Stand for the King! the watchword of the times,
Rolls thund'ring out—again, and yet again!

Stand for the King! the echoes ring
From shore to distant shore!
Stand for the King! and time shall bring
To Britain and to Boer
One aim in Peace when strife shall cease;
And discord reign no more!

Go, tell the World the Empire's sons will stand
In close-linked brotherhood of race and name,
To strike with naked steel at her command,
For Britain's Throne, and Britain's splendid fame.

Stand for the King! the Veld-winds bring
A strange and new refrain!
Stand for the King! wing, Echo! wing
Across the trackless Main!
Our wishes bear! an Empire's prayer—
“God send a glorious reign!”

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