

LOST ON THE... VELD

A STORY OF THE BOER CAMPAIGN IN NATAL

By H. B. Mackenzie

CHAPTER I.

It was evening—a glorious evening, such as only tropical countries know. The hot wind that had blown all day had now died down, and there was a great stillness; but a pleasant coolness in the air made it delightful after the sweltering heat.

There had been no rain for a long time, and the ground was parched and dry. Outside the pretty homestead the red sand of the veldt lay thick and fine in the dry grass which covered the wagon track. But inside the grass looked green enough. Perhaps it had received an artificial shower. All round the grassy lawn were flower beds, mostly of tropical flowers, among which the succulent blue lily raised its long, trumpet-shaped flowers; but there were a few English flowers, too—stately hollyhocks, sweet-scented roses, queenly dahlias.

Beyond the lawn an avenue of blue-gum and black nettle led to the veldt without. Behind the house, which was built of stone, and looked quaint and pretty with a veranda running round it, rose some of the highest peaks of the Drakensberg. A little to the left ran the river Klip.

On this evening the sun, too near its setting to be hot now, was shining right into the sleepy brown eyes of a girl who lay full length in the shade of a gum-tree, a book on the grass beside her. Her head was supported by a plump little brown hand, and she was smiling a very happy, contented smile, as if some happy thought passed through her mind.

It was a pretty face, too, with its warmth and healthiness of coloring, its softly-rounded, girlish contour, its smiling, half-open, red lips, its clear, open, childishly smooth forehead, over which little curls of the brown hair shot with ruddy gold came straying. The half-shut, smiling eyes were very soft and happy just now; but who could say whether they might not some day be filled with burning passion, with blinding tears, or with the cold, set expression of despair?

"Bluebell, Bluebell! where are you, child?"

The voice came across the little lawn, clear and distinct on the evening air; and the girl, rising up from her comfortable position, shook herself, very much as a wet spaniel might do after coming out of the water, and started at a quick run for the house.

A tall, angular, splinter lady stood upon the doorstep.

"What a head, child!" was the salutation. "Have you forgotten we are to have company tonight?"

"Well, I do believe I had," retorted the girl. "Don't be angry with me, will you, auntie? Really I couldn't help it. I'll never, never do it again. Now dad's going to bring some one from Maritzburg, is he? Who is it, auntie? Not anyone very great, I hope—Mr. Rhodes, for instance?"

"Don't talk nonsense, child!" returned Miss Elizabeth Leslie. "No, no! it's no one so great as that, only some very rich man, I believe, who has made his money at Kimberley or somewhere. But run away and dress yourself, child. I have a good supper ready, so I hope your father won't keep us waiting. He wished us to have dinner; but why should I? We don't call it dinner when we are alone, and why should we change our customs for strangers?"

"Quite right, auntie dear." Bluebell patted her aunt's bony shoulder with a gentle hand. "Besides, likely enough he's some coarse, horrid man! They are always the kind that become millionaires. Oh, auntie, I hope father won't make a great friend of him if he is!"

"We shall soon see him, dearie, so there's no use thinking beforehand what his ways are," said Miss Elizabeth—she was always called Miss Elizabeth—soothingly.

Bluebell ran upstairs to her own room. It was a pretty little room, not containing much furniture, but as dainty as feminine fingers could make it. Bluebell did not spend all her time lying dreamily under the gum-tree.

She had just donned her pretty white muslin frock, drawn in at the waist by a blue band—it was rather strange that Bluebell should smile and blush a little to herself as she fastened the blue band—when the sound of horses' hoofs galloping up the avenue drew her attention. She ran to the window, hiding behind the window curtains.

Presently two riders emerged from the avenue, and rode up the gravelled path to the house. Bluebell could see them distinctly.

The first was her father. Bluebell knew him well enough not to require to take a second look at him; yet she did take a second look.

Adam Leslie, Esq., of Tinslaverstock, Scotland, who had emigrated to South Africa 10 years ago, was a man of middle age, heavily built, stout, and red-faced, with a heavy chin, a stubborn mouth, and a pair of rather cold gray eyes. But just now his face was redder than usual and there was a slight want of certainty in his gait as he sprang from his horse that Bluebell solered to see.

His companion, the "millionaire," was not at all what Bluebell had pictured him. He was an old man; he looked straight-backed and alert, and sat on his horse with an air of negligence that showed him a true horse-

man. For the rest, Bluebell could see that he was somewhat dark in complexion, wearing a short little peaked beard; but she could not see his face distinctly.

She went downstairs presently. Her sitting room was a pleasant apartment, with skins of springbok and other wild animals covering the floor. A lamp burned on the table, on which a sumptuous supper was spread. The two men stood by the fireplace talking.

As Bluebell entered her father turned.

"Well, my girl, I'm back again, you see. Come and kiss me, Bluebell."

The girl approached, and the other man on the hearthrug stared at the dainty white figure as Adam Leslie gave her a sounding kiss on the cheek.

"You see I've brought a friend with me, Bluebell. Mr. Moore—my daughter, Bluebell."

Mr. Moore bowed low, Bluebell did the same. She did not offer her hand, as her frank custom would naturally have led her to do; she hardly knew why.

"You will remember your native country every time you address Miss Leslie," said the millionaire, turning to his host.

Adam Leslie laughed uproariously. Bluebell felt now quite sure that he had been drinking. He was usually a reserved, even taciturn man, stern enough towards his household; but alcohol unloosed his tongue and gave him a certain coarse frankness.

"Quite right, quite right, Mr. Moore! It was her mother gave her the name—a romantic freak; but it serves its purpose here, and makes us remember the poor old 'mither' country."

Miss Elizabeth came in presently, and they all sat down to the abundant supper. During the meal the two men talked, Mr. Moore quietly and gravely, in a somewhat rich, sonorous voice; Mr. Leslie with loud hilarity. Miss Elizabeth and Bluebell said very little, and the latter had a strange, uncomfortable consciousness during the meal that the dark, slow-moving eyes of the millionaire turned again and again to her face. She knew not why the look made her shiver suddenly every time she met it through her warm, joyous heart and body.

The two men talked politics, discussing the likelihood of Kruger's yielding to Britain's demands.

"Give in? Not he!" cried Leslie loudly. "Well, the British know what to do next, that's one good thing. We'll sweep the whole race of them from the earth before we've done with them, or I'm mistaken, and it's what they deserve!"

"If it comes to war, of course there can be no doubt as to which side will win," said Mr. Moore, more quietly. "I suppose you have no friends among the Boers or Afrikaners, Mr. Leslie?"

"Friends among such people?" cried Mr. Leslie. "Not very likely! I would not admit one of them into my house!"

Bluebell spoke almost for the first time. Her voice was just a little unsteady, as if emotion of some kind was stirring it.

"You don't always speak like that, father. I am sure we have never received anything but kindness from any of the Dutch with whom we came in contact. And, besides, there's a good deal to be said for their desire to rule their own republic in their own way. How would we like over in the old country if foreigners came and settled down among us—Frenchmen or Germans—and compelled us to conform to their customs? They are only like their brave forefathers in the time of William the Silent."

Her father interrupted her with a loud laugh.

"Doctor Rothes has provided you with quite a number of arguments, Bluebell. But politics are quite outside a woman's sphere, my girl, so I advise you not to take them up. Eh, Mr. Moore, isn't that so?"

"I think Miss Leslie would even make a convert of me," said the millionaire, bowing gallantly. Again Bluebell caught his eye, and the look gave her another shiver. "May I ask he went on quietly, discussing Miss Elizabeth's pie. "who Doctor Rothes is?"

"A young Englishman over at Ladysmith," replied Mr. Leslie carelessly. "We have him here sometimes. A very clever young fellow—quite exceptionally clever; but just a little quixotic, you know, as young fellows are apt to be."

"Just so; I understand," said Mr. Moore quietly. He glanced at Bluebell without appearing to do so, and saw that the healthy rose in her cheeks had deepened almost imperceptibly in tint, and that her long lashes drooped over and demurely hid her eyes.

The millionaire was to stay at New Kelo—thus Mr. Leslie had named his farm in memory of the Scottish town near which he had lived—all night. Bluebell did not feel nearly as hospitable as usual.

Now Kelo was a lonely enough place, being about twelve miles from Ladysmith, the nearest village, and the womenfolk sometimes saw no outsider for the space of many months; they were, therefore, all the more disposed to make the most of any stray one who did appear.

But Bluebell did not feel that Gerald Moore was going to be any acquisition

She had a vague, groundless dread of him, as if his presence denoted danger.

"I don't like him," she said to herself. "And yet why should I not? He has done nothing to make me dislike or distrust him."

Downstairs the two men were sitting together at the table, a decanter of Scotch whisky and two glasses between them.

They had been speaking in low tones; but now, as the whisky began to take effect, Leslie raised his.

"You are a generous man, Moore!" he cried. "And you are in earnest when you tell me that this is the sole return you ask for your extraordinary generosity?"

"The sole return," Moore replied. He raised his hands to his lips, and kept it there for a moment; then, dropping it to his glass, which had stood full beside him all the time, though Leslie had replenished his several times, he added slowly: "But I must have that return, Mr. Leslie—that and no other. I have set my mind upon it."

CHAPTER II.

It was a week later. Bluebell had gone to Ladysmith, riding across the dry, open veldt by the wagon-path on her sure-footed little horse Rover. She was a capital horse-woman, and nothing daunted her when in the saddle.

It was a very hot day, and there were signs of coming rain, which made Bluebell hurry. Her path lay across the dry veldt. Coarse, parched grass and withered shrubs made it look like a desert. The road was a bad and narrow one. It swelled and undulated like an ocean, now dipping down into a hollow, now rising to the height of a little green-covered kopje. Sometimes she rode close to the river, which seemed almost dry now, so long had been the drought; and always she kept in sight of the great frowning peaks of Drakensberg, above which eagles and vultures circled in their sky-pling flight.

Bluebell had messages at Ladysmith, but it was not of her messages she was thinking as she neared her destination. She was close to it at last. She saw the little town nestling, as it seemed in the distance, almost at the bottom of Bulwaan, though in truth separated from it by wide stretches of meadow lands, with the Klip winding its course through them.

Now she passed numerous kopjes of red earth, interspersed with shrubs, between which grew abundance of flowers, white jasmine and climbing convolvulus, and the rich glory of red and yellow bloom clustered thickly on the low, dwarf shrubs which covered the kopjes.

Bluebell had acquaintances in Ladysmith. The Leslies were pretty well known in the country.

She was just turning into the town, when some one emerging from behind a sudden curve came towards her. Bluebell started a little and stooped over Rover, a richer color than exercise had brought there coming into her cheeks.

In a few seconds the new comer was close to her, and lifting his big gray hat from his head, paused by her horse. He was a young man, perhaps nearing thirty, attired in gray khaki, and with a sunburnt face which showed that he was exposed to all weather. For the rest, he had been originally a fair-complexioned man, with good features and an open, frank expression. His dark gray eyes were clear and steady, but could look wonderingly soft and tender. They did so now, though his expression was one of much anxiety as he held out his hand, into which Bluebell put hers without a word.

(To be continued.)

Burma's Amber Mines.

In Burma amber is found in a region difficult of access and jealously guarded by those who have every interest in keeping their secret. It is situated in the Hukong valley, surrounded on three sides by almost impassable ranges of mountains, so that it is accessible only from the south across low hills forming the watershed between the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy. In one of these low hill ranges are the famous and mysterious mines of golden resin. It is obtained in a very primitive way. After the harvest the diggers go to the hills, and selecting a place where there are no pits dug by previous prospectors, shape with their swords a small pointed hoe, a wooden shovel, and a basket of split bamboo. With these they make a hole in the blue clay, removing the refuse by means of the basket, and gradually deepening the shaft. Three men work in company—one below (the shaft not being large enough for more than one at a time), while the others hand up the basket. The amber is found in "pockets," which are generally indicated by strings of coaly matter appearing in the clay.—Stray Stories.

First Class in Optics.

"In looking out of doors, do you notice how bright is the green of the grass and the leaves?" asked an elderly gentleman of a little girl, whose home he was visiting. "Yes, sir."

"Why does it appear so much brighter at this time?" he next asked, looking down upon the bright, sweet face with tender interest. "Because ma has cleaned the window, and you can see out better," she said.—Stray Stories.

Tommy's Only Wish.

"What would you like best tomorrow, Tommy, on your birthday?" "I'd like to see the school burnt down," replied the lad.

A BUNCH OF KEYS.

From the pitch black interior of the freight elevator Mollie Carton reviewed the situation.

It was worth reviewing, being, as situations go, unique.

In the first place, no young woman of sound mind sits in a freight elevator at midnight attired in a dinner gown as a mere pastime. Add to this the fact that the painfully new and unyielding ropes by which the lift was propelled were being pulled upon by the clerk from the neighboring drug store—awakened from a sound sleep for the purpose—and it will readily be seen that something unusual had happened in the Carton family.

At that moment when the drug clerk was pulling Mollie with infinite pains toward the fifth floor, rear of the apartment building in which the Cartons had the pleasure of residing, Mrs. Carton sat wringing her hands and calling upon heaven to save her child upon the front stairs. To be exact, it was upon the first step of the fourth flight of stairs she sat. Which should make it evident to everybody that she was conducting her lamentation just outside her own door. She sat outside not from choice, but because she couldn't help herself.

In short, she was locked out. And so was Mollie.

So was the drug clerk, for that matter, but the fifth apartment in the "Brunhilda," not being his abiding place, he did not take it to heart as Mrs. Carton did. Having known the Cartons for only twenty minutes, his interest in the matter was as yet quasi-professional.

But perhaps it would be better to begin at the beginning.

Be it known, then, that Mrs. Carton and her daughter had been giving a little dinner that evening. The guests had stopped on rather late, and the janitor, after the manner of his kind, having put the lights out early. Mollie stepped into the hall to light the gas, that her friends might find their way down the winding stairs in comfort. Mrs. Carton followed her, and together they sped the parting diners. While they were thus engrossed, the door—their own treacherous front door—impelled by a slight draft, or by what somebody has called the total depravity of inanimate things, clicked sharply shut. They both turned quickly, but it was too late. The latch had done its worst.

Their maid had departed immediately after serving, to a ball, intending to spend the night with her sister. Mr. Carton was out of town on a business trip. So there was no hope of success from within.

It was obviously impossible to go to a hotel attired in their evening frocks. Besides, they had no money. They knew no one in the building. Their friends all lived at a distance. Their guests were already beyond reach. Mrs. Carton entertained a mental vision of a night spent upon the street, or at best in a drafty hallway. She sank down upon the stairs, overcome. "He also wept."

But Mollie was young, and youth is ever resourceful. Also, she had a keen sense of humor. Although she didn't dare let her mother know it, she was amused. At all events, the situation savored of adventure, and an opportunity for adventure is not to be lightly disregarded, even if it does involve a little discomfort. She patted her mother's shoulder soothingly.

"There, there. Don't cry, dear. The janitor is sure to have a skeleton key. I'll run down and get it."

But the janitor hadn't any such thing. Moreover, he resented being disturbed. He was a hard-working man, he said, and a night's sleep was about all he got out of life aside from three meals daily. Why didn't the young lady go wake up the landlord. Landlords had an easy time. All they had to do was collect rents. They were just made to be waked up. They liked it.

Fortunately the landlord lived across the street. So, wrapping Mrs. Janitor's shawl about her, Mollie went forth to wake the landlord.

Notwithstanding his rent-collecting habit, the landlord seemed to share the janitor's views on the subject of sleep. He hadn't a duplicate key, he informed her, after at last he had been awakened and appeared at an upper window. He seemed to Mollie to gloat over the fact. He intimated that his business was renting apartments, not running other people's domestic affairs.

"But can't you suggest something?" Mollie cried, desperately. "We must get in, you know."

He suggested the drug clerk on the corner, who had a big bunch of keys, might be able to open the door, and then he shut the window.

The drug clerk was asleep, too, and hard to rouse, but at last opened the door wide. Upon perceiving a young woman, however, he shut it again quickly, that his disheveled condition might not be too apparent, leaving, however, a crack wide enough for conversational purposes.

"Give me your prescription," he said, extending a hand through the aperture. "I'll turn up the light as soon as I get in the back room, and you can come in and sit down."

It was harder than she thought it would be to explain her errand. Mollie's tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth. She experienced difficulty in breathing.

"I—it isn't a prescription," she gasped.

"O!" said the clerk.

It was all he said, but it sounded like more to Mollie. She knew it meant more.

"I—that is, we—my mother and I, you know—are in great trouble—"

"Of course, I understand," said the drug clerk, instant sympathy in his tone.

"What does he understand?" thought Mollie wildly.

"Don't you know your physician's telephone number?" he went on. "I'll call him up right away."

"It isn't illness. It really isn't anything in your line of business. We are just locked out."

Mollie blurted it out at last. She heaved a little sigh of relief and hurried on.

"Our landlord said you had a big bunch of keys and were very clever about—about such things. And I hoped you'd help us, so I ventured to wake you. It really is a serious matter, or I wouldn't have dreamed of disturbing you."

There was a tremble in her voice that convinced the drug clerk. It was the same tremble that won the landlord. Moreover, she was young and he was young. And he did happen to possess a good temper.

"I ought not to leave the store," he said. "Trouble for me if I get caught. Is it near?"

"Just around the corner," Mollie hastened to assure him.

"Wait a minute, then, until I get dressed, and I'll come with you."

It seemed a long time before he emerged, jingling his bunch of keys, but he really made a hasty toilet. Together they repaired to Mollie's flat, and the clerk tried his best to unlock the door, but failed. Then Mollie suggested the freight elevator.

"You know there is a sliding door in our kitchen where we take the groceries and things off the elevator. Mary never locks it. I have to do that every night the last thing. So it is sure to be open. And it's quite a large door. I'm sure I could crawl through it."

Then she turned to the drug clerk gratefully.

"I'm afraid I'm heavy and the ropes are stiff. But do you suppose you could pull me up on the elevator?"

The janitor's wife's shawl had slipped off by this time, and Mollie looked so pretty that it would have



taken a far more seasoned youth than the drug clerk to withstand her, especially when she plead.

"I'm sure I can," he answered valiantly. "It's a good plan."

But Mrs. Carton refused to see in it anything but her daughter's doom.

"You'll be killed," she sobbed. "And then what will your father say?"

Mollie and the clerk descended to the basement, which, of course, was dark, but fortunately the drug clerk had a match. They found the elevator after a short search. It wasn't a large elevator, but Mollie squeezed herself in and sat like a quarter-opened jack-knife, her head bumping the top of the elevator and her elbows resting on her knees. It wasn't comfortable. As the machine reached the first floor a voice startled them both. It seemed to come from above them.

"Miss Carton," it said, "your door is open. Mrs. Carton, would like you to come upstairs."

"What!" exclaimed Mollie and the drug clerk in the same breath.

"How did it happen?"

But the voice vouchsafed no explanation.

It was an easy matter to drop the elevator the few feet it had ascended. Mollie scrambled out. She and the drug clerk ran upstairs. Mrs. Carton met them at their door beaming. A tall, athletic-looking young fellow stood beside her.

"My dear," she said, "let me present Mr. Moore, who has so kindly, I might say bravely, helped us out of our dilemma."

"But how?" demanded Mollie, heedless of conventions. "How in the world did he do it?"

"Very simple, I assure you, Miss Carton," said the deliverer.

"O, my dear, he ran a most fearful risk!" exclaimed her mother.

"I happened to be one of the bachelors that keep house just across the hall from you," continued the deliverer. "I came home late and found Mrs. Carton sitting outside our door in deepest distress. I naturally asked if I could be of service. And then—"

"And then, Mollie," interrupted Mrs. Carton, "he went into his kitchen and opened his door in the elevator shaft opposite to ours, pried ours open with an umbrella, and swung across that awful chasm right into our kitchen. Wasn't that splendid?"

Mrs. Carton stopped, out of breath. Jack Moore laughed.

"For a man with a Yale field day or two back of him it was nothing at all," he said.

But Mollie looked impressed. The drug clerk saw it and knew that his brief moment was past. It had been exciting while it lasted. Miss Carton was charming. He had never come so near to a girl of her class before. But he was glad he knew enough to realize that it was over.

Mrs. Carton and Mollie both begged him to come in and have some supper. Mollie even said she'd do something on the chafing dish for him. But he declined. He said he had to get back to the store.

As he bathed his smarting hands with hamamells in the safe haven of the prescription room he indulged in a few bitter thoughts. He remembered how pretty Miss Carton was. Moore thought so, too. He knew by the way he looked at her. At this moment the Yale man was probably consuming the rarebit that he, the drug clerk, had really earned.

The ache where his hands were scraped by the ropes seemed to grow worse.

"It's a deucedly unequal world," he decided.

PREACHED IN SHIRTSLEEVES.

Kentuckian Thought the Episcopal Prelate a Plain Man.

Not long ago Bishop Dudley of Kentucky went to preach in a little town in the western part of the state, where there are no Episcopal churches, and only one, in fact, of any other denomination. The people are unfamiliar with any but the plainest and most simple church service and entirely unaccustomed to the vestments which the Episcopal clergy wear. The pastor of the "only church," a good, conscientious, narrow minded man, hearing that the bishop was coming on a certain Sunday to preach at the courthouse, told some of the "pillars" of his congregation that he hoped they would not desert their own church to hear the Episcopal service. On the appointed Sunday what was the pastor's surprise to notice half of his flock absent, and upon inquiry he learned that the court house was thronged with the villagers. The next day he met one of his chief supporters, whose accustomed seat had been vacant at the weekly service, and the pastor questioned him as to his whereabouts on Sunday. The man replied that he had gone to hear Bishop Dudley. "What!" replied the clergyman. "Desert me to hear that pompous prelate?" "You're mistaken in the man," answered the culprit. "Bishop Dudley is no pompous prelate. He preached in his shirtsleeves."

—Louisville Courier-Journal.

NAPOLION ON WELLINGTON.

"General Who Commits Fewest Faults is Greatest."

From O'Meara's "Talks with Napoleon" in the Century: "I asked him if he thought Lord Wellington merited the reputation he had gained as a general. He said: 'Certainly; I think he does. He is a very excellent general, and possessed of great firmness and talent, but he has not yet done as much as some others. He has not conquered upon so large a scale.' I observed that he had shown great judgment and caution latterly, but that at first he had been too precipitate in advancing into Spain. He said that he had shown a great deal of ability in the campaign of Spain. 'It is impossible,' said he, 'for man not to commit some faults. We are all liable to it, and the general who commits the fewest in number is the greatest general, and he has certainly committed as few as any one.' I then observed that still he was scarcely to be equaled to himself. 'Why, certainly,' said he; 'he has not done so much as I have done. He has not conquered kingdoms in the manner I have done, but he is an excellent general. His operations have not been upon so great a scale.'"

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Dangers of Night Parties.

"I abominate night parties for children," said a prominent city physician recently, while speaking of the care of the young, "and I believe every physician does. It is not so much the exposure and the eating in the night, but the breaking into the sleep habit. Equally bad is it for children to study in the evening. It gorges their brains with blood, and if they sleep they dream. I had a little patient of 12 years who was wasted and nervous, and whose dreams were filled with problems. It was a marvel and a pride to his parents that the youngster worked out hard problems in his sleep such as he failed to master when awake. But he came near his final problem. I locked up his books at 4 o'clock. He must not touch one after supper; he must play and romp and then go to bed. He is now robust. You cannot emphasize too strongly the mischief of children's night study."

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Three Kinds of British Colonies.

Great Britain has three general classes of colonies. Those controlled entirely by the home government are crown colonies, and their funds and laws are managed by the administration, which does as it pleases. A second class has what is called representative government. In such the crown retains the veto power and controls the public officers. Those of the third class have responsible government. In such colonies the crown has no control over any public officer except that it appoints the governor and retains its veto on legislation.

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Long-Haired and Short-Haired.

The following story is told by Dr. Pentecost. The incident is said to have taken place in the Boston tabernacle. An usher came in and said: "There is a man without who wishes to see you." "Well," said Moody, "I have no time to see him now." "But," replied the usher, "he says he must see you on important business." "What kind of a man is he?" "Oh, he is a tall, thin man, with long hair." "That settles it," said Moody; "I don't want to see any long haired men or short-haired women."

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Quite Up-to-Date.

She—is your physician of the new or old school? He—The newest, I believe. She—What is his distinguishing peculiarity? He—Small doses and big fees.