

TO IVORY VALLEY.

By GERALD BRENNAN.

Dick Harley sat in the cool veranda of the newly-built Charter club, at Fort Rhodes. Before him lay the wooden butts of the mushroom frontier settlement, and across the level valley, into the distance, stretched the shining rails of the Beira & Mashonaland railway.

Dick was only a boy, fresh from an English grammar school, yet he had already managed to win the notice of the all-powerful South African company. As a result, despite his years, he was now formally installed as the private representative of Mr. Cecil Rhodes in Rhodesburg. It was his duty to keep the government at Salisbury supplied with information regarding all that went on in the tiny village. Very little ever did happen in Rhodesburg, so that Dick Harley was not overworked, but the position was, none the less, one of trust, and promised much greater things.

As Dick sat in the veranda there came a puff of white smoke on the horizon, and gradually a passenger train hove in sight, speeding at a goodly pace across the sun-baked plain. The boy jammed his broad straw hat over his eyes and strolled towards the little station platform, just as the clanging frontier locomotive came to a standstill.

"Anything for me, Mr. Wright?" he asked of the "guard."

Mail arrangements on the B. & M. are as yet very primitive. In answer to Dick's query, the "guard" threw him a letter, directed in somewhat sprawling characters, which he knew to be the writing of one James Greene, otherwise known as "Long Jim," an American engineer on the railway.

As the train pulled out on its way towards the eastern coast Dick opened Long Jim's letter. This is what he read:

"Dr. Dicky: Yr. father has been missing from the engine shops at Salisbury several weeks. He left here on a trip after antelope in company with a man named Durden. Great uneasiness is felt about both; and I have been filling yr. father's place as chief of the engine shops. If you can come to Salisbury right away, J. GREENE."

Now Dick Harley, chiefly on his father's account, and this news of Mr. Harley's disappearance caused him acute anxiety. Hastening to the little telegraph he wired for leave of absence. When the inland train arrived, a few hours later, he was already on the platform, ready for the journey to Salisbury.

The capital of Mashonaland was reached about sundown, and Dick made all haste to look up Long Jim Greene. He found that worthy in the midst of plentiful, if coarse, South African supper, and was spending out in possession of all the facts regarding his father's disappearance. Durden, it seemed, was one of the class of expatriated white men which infests the frontier. He was indeed a sort of tramp, and told wonderful stories of what he had seen and heard of in the as yet unknown interior.

Chief Engineer Harley, a simple, honest man, had listened to Durden's wild yarns, and it was supposed, had believed many of them. At last the two had left, ostensibly bound on a hunting expedition, but really, it was strongly suspected, on a search of some of the markets about which Durden was never tired of talking. Since their departure neither had been heard of.

"Your father," continued Long Jim, "was about the only white man whom Durden could get to listen to him. For the most part he consorted with the blacks on the western side of the town. Your father was a kindly man—far too good-natured, indeed—and he used to give Durden food and let him talk. But the rascal lived mostly among the Kafirs."

Dick Harley got up from the table at which he had been trying to eat.

"Jim," he said, "I am going over to the Kaffir section to make inquiries. During the fever at Umtali last year I saved some of those black boys' lives. They may remember me."

Before Greene could remonstrate, the lad was gone. Two hours later he returned, followed by a woolly-headed young Kaffir of his own age.

"This is John Beautybright," he explained; "the only one of the lot whom I could get to do any talking. John remembers the way I doctored him at Umtali, you see. He says that Durden took my father to visit Ivory valley."

"Ivory valley!" exclaimed Long Jim. "Yes, that is the name. It appears that a tradition exists among Boers and natives of a wonderful valley, many days' journey to the northwestward, on a spur of the Zambesi, wherein a great herd of elephants was trapped over forty years ago. The tusks of these elephants are supposed to be lying in the valley yet, and Durden has induced my father to go

range, many leagues to the northwestward of Salisbury, and beyond the furthest confines of the South African company's dominions. The range is called the Kommetje, from the resemblance of its highest portion to the cartwheel which the Boers use for a coffee cup. As yet no trace had been found of Engineer Harley and Durden, nor had any human being, black or white, been encountered for days.

The oxen labored onward, up the gradually increasing slope of the Kommetje, while those in the wagon kept their eyes fixed firmly upon the ground for any marks denoting recent travel through this wild region. At last, about the noon hour, John Beautybright uttered a guttural exclamation, and leaped out of the creaking vehicle. The others followed suit.

In the clay was the undoubted spoor of track of oxen, and the mark of wagon wheels. The spoor approached their own path from a more northerly direction.

"It is dad's wagon!" cried Dick jubilantly. "Don't be too sure, lad," said Long Jim gloomily. "There are other wagons in South Africa besides Mr. Harley's."

"Spoor 'free day old," cried John Beautybright, who had been examining the tracks. "Baas Harley, he got start."

Next morning the party set forth on its return voyage. Mr. Harley leaning on Dick's shoulder, and Long Jim driving the wretched Durden before him. In the kloof at the foot of the Kommetje they discovered John Beautybright in a great state of rapture over the fact that he had discovered the hidden ivory in the long grass.

Then, both wagons having been loaded with the spoil of Ivory valley, the wanderers inspanned and turned the heads of their oxen toward Salisbury.

After the sale of the ivory, Durden was given a fifth part of the proceeds, and wanted to get out of Mashonaland as fast as the new railway could hurry him. Long Jim and others held out for severer punishment; but mercy prevailed when it was pointed out that the tramp had been the real discoverer of Ivory valley.

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father's wound, and gave the redoubt engineer some water and a scrap of biftong.

At last Mr. Harley was able to tell the whole story. "You come just in time," he said. "I could not have lasted much longer. That scoundrel Durden induced me to pay for an expedition for the recovery of great quantities of ivory in this valley. We made our way here, and found the ivory. For two days we worked, carrying elephant tusks down to the kloof where the wagon is. The ivory is hidden in the long grass—enough of it to make a tidy fortune. Yesterday morning, against my inclinations, Durden induced me to make one more journey to the valley. Watching his chance he attacked me from behind, gashed my head, and, while I was insensible, stole me up as you saw. When I recovered he was gone."

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WINNING A FATHER-IN-LAW.

By WILL S. GIDLEY.

"Never told you about the way in which I won my wife's father's permission to be a son-in-law, did I?" queried Bob Bloomer, an enterprising and successful western business man, as we sat before the glowing grate in my snug library one evening in December talking over old times and offering up incense to the god of Nostalgia, otherwise known as the cigar store Indian.

"Did I think you ever told me about it," said I, scenting a story. "I heard there was an odd romance connected with the affair, but I am completely in the dark as to the particulars. Won't you enlighten me?"

Bloomer flicked the ashes from the end of his cigar and settled back comfortably in his armchair.

"The matter has gone by so long now that all the parties concerned can afford to laugh at it; and even my wife's father thinks it is a pretty good joke—excuse me. I should say joke—now, though it was anything but a joking matter for him at the time.

"The story, as you know, opens, as the novel writers say, I was only a young college graduate, with plenty of brains and ambition, but little or no cash, dependent on my wages as manager of a western wheat and cattle ranch for a living, while the father of the girl with whom I was in love, was the president of the village bank, director in several different railroads and other concerns, county judge and a sort of general Pook Bah in that section of the country.

"All this, however, did not deter me from falling in love with pretty Jessie Granger, a girl of difficult words in herself. She blushingly capitulated after a brief campaign, in which I bombarded her chiefly with bouquets and billets-doux, and her mother, too, came gracefully around to my side of the question, but when I broached the subject to Judge Granger he put on his sternest judicial look and glared at me for fully a minute without saying a word—just glared, you understand.

"Finally I plucked up courage and said: 'Well, Judge, what is the sentence?' 'I was hoping he'd say 'hard labor for life, with Jessie for a jailer,' but he didn't. He glared some more, and then began to speak in a low, hoarse voice, and I could check and impudently, but as this remark seemed to have no bearing on the subject under discussion, I let it pass without replying. Finally he began to address his conversation to me. Said he:

"Young man, are you aware that the young woman whose hand you aspire to a prospective heiress could hardly come into the possession of a snug little fortune.

"I've heard rumors to that effect," said I, "but that won't make a particle of difference. Her wealth shall never be a barrier or stumbling block between us. Even if she had a million dollars and I had but just as much with it as I would if she didn't have a cent. So you needn't worry yourself any on that score."

"The Judge gasped once or twice, and I thought he was going to have a stroke of some sort, but he finally recovered sufficiently to call my attention to the location of the door and insinuate that a favorable opportunity for taking a walk for the benefit of my health was before me waiting to be improved.

"I improved it. I walked out of the judge's office and up to the judge's house, and informed his wife that her father was the most obstinate man I knew of, with one exception.

"And who is the exception?" she asked.

"Myself," said I. "Your paternal ancestor is inclined to be a trifle—er—mutish, so to speak, but when it comes to a game of obstinacy I can give him ninety-five points out of a possible 100, and then beat him without half trying."

"Can you," said she, with an encouraging smile. "Well, if you are bound to be obstinate I'm glad it is in a good cause."

"We agreed to stand together for good and for evil, and I was bound to have my opposition, even if it required a century to accomplish that desirable end. I am happy to say, however, that we did not have to wait the full 100 years. The exact time, I believe, was fifteen months, but it seemed like a century to me, principally because my interviews with Jessie during that time were somewhat brief and infrequent.

"From the date of my interview with him in his office he had never spoken to or recognized me in any way, shape or manner. Whenever we chanced to meet he stared straight ahead and passed on, paying no more attention to me than if I were a clod beneath his feet.

"Twice during the first six months of my enforced waiting I called at Judge Granger's

office for the purpose of talking the matter over with him, and if possible inducing him to change his mind, but on each occasion he peremptorily declined to see me.

"After this I took to writing. I wrote him several letters, setting forth my pros and cons and showing that I was abundantly able to take care of a wife. Needless to say, I received no reply. Of one thing I was sure, my pathetic pleas, instead of having a softening effect on Jessie's father, acted like a tonic, adding a fresh layer of obstinacy to his already superabundant supply of that article. After receiving one of my notes I noticed that the judge invariably carried himself with a more haughty and unbending air than ever, and in his eyes there was the constant, self-satisfied look of a general who has the enemy checked and beaten at every point.

"Three dreary months dragged by, and then the whirligig of time brought its re-

venge at last," as the poet tells about, and I suddenly became the obtuse and haughty dispenser of favors, with Judge Granger a trembling supplicant before me, not figuratively, but literally.

"How did this wonderful metamorphosis come about? Well, it seems strange, yet in reality it was the most simple and natural thing in the world. You see, Judge Granger was an enthusiastic horseman, fond of riding and driving, and one day when a stranger came to town and offered him a fine saddle horse for about two-thirds its actual value the judge couldn't resist the temptation to buy it.

"The animal had been stolen from a ranch only a few miles distant, but of course the purchaser knew nothing of this. The judge, in which the stranger got out of town after disposing of the animal ought to have opened the judge's eyes, but apparently it did not.

"Anyhow, the next morning the judge donned his riding suit and set forth to try his new saddle horse. He rode for perhaps a dozen miles out into the country, and then turning about he was leisurely jogging back to town, when he was overtaken by a party of cowboys who were riding posthaste in search of a stolen horse—the very animal, as the fates had arranged it, that Judge Granger was at that instant jauntily bestriding.

"The cowboys recognized the missing horse at once and they didn't recognize the judge, which was an unfortunate combination of circumstances for the latter. In considering less than it takes to tell it the excitable ranchers had, despite his indignant protests, unceremoniously separated the judge from the stolen animal and hustled him under a convenient limb which overhung the roadside. Persons found with stolen horses in their possession met with such considerations in that section of Uncle Sam's domain at that period and the crowd had a rope neatly adjusted about the judge's neck and were on the point of stringing him up when I providentially happened along on my way to town.

"Strange to relate, though he had been a first-class stranger to me for the past fifteen months, he now not only recognized me at once, but actually beamed with pleasure at the sight of my face.

"Why, how are you, Mr. Bloomer? Mightily tickled to see you," he joyfully exclaimed. "Just tell those crazy cowboys who I am! They won't believe me, although I have told them that I am Judge Granger of Boomville and that I bought this confounded horse instead of stealing it."

"That is rather rough on you, mister," said I, calm and cool as a cucumber on ice. "Sorry I can't help you, but the fact is you are just as much of a stranger to me as you are to the rest of the crowd."

"The judge's face grew fairly purple with rage. It was very poor policy to allow his wrath to get the upper hand of him at that critical moment when a word from me might have saved his fate and set him to lancing a horripile in the air, but he did so.

"You infernal scoundrel!" he howled. "You know well enough that I am Judge Granger! Haven't you been running after my daughter for the last eighteen months and trying to obtain my consent to make her your wife?"

"You certainly seem to be familiar with some of the facts in the case," said I, still calm and collected; "I am a suitor for the hand of Judge Granger's daughter, it is true, but the judge hasn't recognized or spoken to me in over a year and under the circumstances I see no reason why I should go out of my way to recognize him or do him a favor, even if he needed it as badly as you do this minute. Now, I don't admit that you are Judge Granger, but if you are, just introduce me to the crowd as your prospective son-in-law and I'll see what I can do for you."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" snorted the judge.

"You certainly will be if you don't," I retorted, grimly, starting to drive on.

"Hold on there, Bloomer," shouted the judge. "For heaven's sake, don't go on and leave me to the mercy of this crowd! They'll lynch me sure, if you do."

"Guess you're right," said I, carelessly. "But if you want me to help you out of your scrape I shall have to insist on your doing the square thing by me and Jessie in return. Just repeat after me: 'I am Judge Granger of Boomville, and I freely consent to the marriage of my daughter Jessie to Robert J. Bloomer, manager of the Big Six ranch, and hereby invite the entire crowd now present to witness the wedding ceremony and drink the bride's health at my home in Boomville at 7:30 this evening.'"

"Seems to me you're getting in a awful hurry, young man. Better give the women folks a chance to get ready, hadn't you?" demanded the judge.

"You needn't worry over that part of it; I'll take my chances on their being ready," said I. "All I ask of you is to repeat the sentence I just gave you, and I'll see that the rest of the program is carried out."

"Well, it was a bitter pill for the judge to swallow, but the cowboys were growing impatient, the rope began to tighten up around his neck at this opportune moment, and he swallowed it, repeating the sentence, word for word, as I had given it to him.