

UNDER THE KOPJE.

A Story of Early Days in South Africa.

By P. Y. BLACK.

Author of "The Post Chaplain," "A Lost Sensation," "The Outcasts," Etc.

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The guard over the convicts who worked on the village roads looked up from the work wearily. He removed his broad felt hat and brushed the sweat from his reddened brow and his cheeks and neck, sunburned almost to blackness. His Kaffir charges halted in their task and their gaze followed him. In the clearly bright African air the threatening gray stone walls of the strong jail, built commanding on a high bluff, considered Kople, looked close at hand, although a good mile away. Vryburg, the tiny capital of the British territory, lay to the left, hill-bound, silent, street deserted in the furnace heat, two rows of glaring houses with roofs and walls of galvanized iron.

Suddenly a quick-eyed Kaffir cried: "Dara!" and pointed to the flagstaff in front of the jail. With a grunt of relief the white man swung his rifle to his shoulder, and the Kaffir threw their tools into the wheelbarrows. There fluttered up the head of the flagstaff a red flag, the sign to all outside working parties to return. But today work ceased at 4 o'clock, and the convicts were not marching directly to the jail, but to a small lake beneath the Kopje, where twice a week they laved themselves. An instant change took place in the manner of the prisoners. They joked as they left their barrows in a shed and trotted forward as quickly as to inconvenience their warden. A big, glossy black man, his fine figure concealed by the prison clothes, led the way, humming as he went, in low, sing-song, pleasant melody, a chant of war times. The others took it up; one threw his hands

warden shouted to him to halt, but Sixpence ran more swiftly, yet not in a direct line. In a lightning-like zigzag course he darted from right to left obliquely, always onward, but in such short, swift tacks that he was an almost impossible target. Five guns were aimed at him; five guns swerved momentarily right and left to find a mark before they were fired. Sixpence waved his hand merrily over his head and dashed beyond the bluff, unhurt. A Zulu servant led down two saddled horses, but the warden looked at the setting sun and shrugged his shoulders.

"No use," he said, "it'll be dark in ten minutes, and the black fellow will be hidden somewhere. I suppose you know he was in for manslaughter."

"The village guard hung his head. "O, I don't blame you," said the warden. "Older hands than you can be taken in. I suppose he buried himself in the mud. Of course, there will be an inquiry."

There was, but a very short one, held in the jail. In the middle of it a thundering demand for admittance was made with a knobknory on the outer gate. The guard who opened the wicket led Sixpence before the court of inquiry, as cheerful and fat and with as broad a smile as ever. He explained to the court that he had been home, had suffered from homesickness, had enjoyed himself and was gladly back again.

"Very little food over there," he said, pointing to the north, "but plenty 'scoff here."

So the bewildered officials took him in, to his great content, and, after giving him

warden with grief, for in them the man's nature swung about, and he was boisterously jovial. Then the Kaffir held high his head and was filled with pride, because of the great cordiality and friendship the drunken white man evinced for the utterly unspiced and faithful black. These outbreaks lasted about two days; then the Kaffir would lead his master's horse home, the warden slouching heavily in the saddle. Reverence, affection for something, however poor the idol, is good for man, savage or civilized. The raw Kaffir in his kraal reveres nothing, loves nothing. Therefore, though such a prison life would have degraded a white man beyond hope, it was good for Sixpence; he learned to love. He became human.

After such a debauch, one night when the sun had gone down, the two went toward the jail. The warden was singing and abusing Sixpence, who tried to sing also, for not keeping the tune. They made a horrible noise, a hoarse and hideous bellow that spread far from them over the void, until it seemed to disturb the solemn echoes of the distant grimly darkening hills, and silence, above the plains, the gentler voices of the southern stars. Sixpence had his share of drink, and he took but little of it to turn his foolish brain. The moon, also, was not yet risen and, for these reasons, as they passed along the trek and were unaware of all but their own discordant music, a man stood in front of them and blocked their path before his approach was noticed. It was the resident magistrate, an English civil servant, just out, and a patron of the warden. The latter, when he saw who stopped him, strove to sit erect and proffer a salutation, but the effort only unsettled his balance and let him tumble sprawlingly in the roadway. He looked up in an almost sober spasm of shame and by starlight saw dusky the gentlemanly face of the magistrate looking down upon him with deepest disgust.

"Again, Mr. De Jough?" the high official said, coldly. "In spite of warnings! This is too bad. It is impossible that this can go on."

De Jough staggered to his feet suddenly. "Do as you like!" he cried, sulkily. "I can't stop it. I've been warden of the jail for years and no man can say I have not done my duty."

"I grant it," the magistrate answered, almost gently. "I grant it—but this cannot go on, you know."

"It's got to go on. It can't be stopped. Do you think I haven't tried to stop myself?"

The poor wretch thrust his face fiercely in front of the other's. The magistrate drew back with a shudder from that horrid breath. Then he said, firmly: "I am sorry for you, but it can't go on. You are under arrest."

De Jough gasped, in sudden sobriety. Arrest? Inquiry? Dismissal meant ruin. The official stepped forward in the night. Sixpence was standing, vacantly grinning at the horse's head, understanding nothing of what was said. In his hand he carried a knobknory, which the warden, as a defense, always allowed him on his night expeditions. De Jough snatched it, a heavy-headed club, studded with nails. The magistrate slowly walked away. De Jough took a quick step after him, and the club crashed into the official's skull. De Jough dropped the stick as the man fell and stood still, shaking with passion, staring at the body. Then the frenzy passed, but the trembling continued, the chill of awful dismay. He lurched to the roadside and sat down on a dead ant-hill. The night was quite still. The late, round, big African moon was slowly rising above the tall walls of the kopje, more than a mile away. The lonely trek was soundless of the feet of passengers, the low of wagon oxen, the lash-snap of the driver. In that lonely wilderness there was no traffic. The Kaffir still held the horse, still stared vacantly, his drunken grin not yet dead on his lips. De Jough looked up and met the warden's eyes. He motioned to him, and called faintly for a drink. Sixpence went to the saddlebags and brought a bottle, and his master drank greedily. Then his gaze was diverted to the body in the path, and he was conscious of thankfulness that it had fallen face downward, so that the eyes were hidden. He spoke in "taal" to Sixpence.

"Is—his dead?"

The Kaffir slipped the horse's rein into his master's hand, went to the body and felt of it, and strove with his foot as he might have done that of a horse—not from contempt, not from hate, but because a dead thing is a dead thing to a Kaffir, and little more.

"Ba-as," he said, in broken English. "His very dead."

De Jough gulped another drink and soon the trembling ceased. He was far from being a stranger to death by violence and soon he was able to collect his wits and think, his face buried in his hands. But the face of Sixpence underwent a change as he re-

his children in the jail live without him? By any means, and I have stronger nerves than Cowper's, and, I hope, a better temper than Byron's. I should suffer much pain and give much offense. I assure you that I and many others remember your visit to us with pleasure, and hope to see you here again. We have gone through rough times, but a quiet season seems to be before us. But I must stop. Ever yours truly, T. B. MACAULAY.

The collection contains, and this remarkable catalogue prints, several long letters of distinct value to students of American history. There is a heretofore unpublished letter by George Washington, addressed to "The President of Congress," and dated New York, September 13, 1776—the day that consultation of Washington and his generals, which decided the evacuation of New York.

A LYCHING THAT FAILED. Trip of a Mining Company's Treasurer suddenly Cut Short.

The miners employed by the Antrim Gold Mining company were getting out of humor, says a Montana letter to the New York Post. Their wages were long overdue and the store refused further credit to them and to the boarding house. The manager had been keeping the wire hot, and finally the treasurer came on. This was his third day in camp. He had met the men and discussed the situation. And now the case would be referred to a city council, it was about dusk when he lighted his cigar and sauntered calmly about the camp. No one paid much attention, and he strolled down to the station. In the course of twenty minutes or so he came out and sat down to read his paper. After a while he folded it, and yawning once or twice, rose and stepped down upon the ties. His gait was even and slow at first, but when he reached the turn he walked faster and then with a glance over his shoulder broke into a trot. Before his breath was quite gone he came to two men sitting on a log.

"Good evening!" he said, somewhat startled, but not stopping.

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The invitation was given as one would say, "Come, have a drink." But he came and sat down. The two men grinned and chuckled, but no one made any remark. After a while one said carelessly, "Let's go back," and station they started. They stopped at the station where the treasurer countermanded the special that he had ordered, and the two proceeded to the camp, who whose population had turned out. The treasurer invariably shrank from such an ovation. He felt himself helpless in the hands of lawless men. But his face was as blank as that of a poker player. They took him to the hotel and placed a guard around the building. A drunken man is rather a city the east. It was his first visit to mining camp, and he wished that he had not come. This was not the kind of strike to which he was accustomed. He missed the bright uniforms and brass buttons that held in check the eastern labor trouble. It was about dusk when he lighted his cigar and sauntered calmly about the camp. No one paid much attention, and he strolled down to the station. In the course of twenty minutes or so he came out and sat down to read his paper. After a while he folded it, and yawning once or twice, rose and stepped down upon the ties. His gait was even and slow at first, but when he reached the turn he walked faster and then with a glance over his shoulder broke into a trot. Before his breath was quite gone he came to two men sitting on a log.

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their laugh. In most any other camp than Pony horse would have been trouble. But there is no more orderly community in the world than this little gold camp, and you cannot get one of us to believe that the man was in any danger. He knew that the men ought to have their money, and "conscience does make cowards of us all."

MILLIONS OF DICE. They Are Made of Various Materials and Sold in Large Numbers.

The bone dice used in the United States, reports the New York Sun, are all imported from France, though it may be that the bone of which they are made comes originally from a manufacturing district not far from Paris in which are produced various articles of bone, and also things partly of bone, as, for instance tooth brushes. Bone dice are made in eleven sizes, from 6 to 10 inclusive, the square corners and round corners, as are all other kinds of dice. In all kinds of dice there are sold of the square cornered variety ten times