

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 disappeared 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 knockery 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 knob-kerry, 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 at the moon and his 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-

turned to the jail. He saw the warden's children in the jail live without him? By any means, but each one knows his way through the big desert, Kallibar! I will show the baas the path to the kraals, and my people will hide us and protect us."

With a sudden, prolonged wail he recoiled to the delights, the plenty, the comforts of his prison home. "We starve!" he cried, and he groaned. "We starve!" In the jail there is plenty "scoff."

For a moment the warden's face brightened. He knew as well as Sixpence that he would be hanged if caught, and he knew that he could trust himself implicitly to the Bechuana's guidance. But his eyes gloomed again. Would not hanging be better than that? To live among savages, to starve and be cold of nights and suffer from fever? Surely—some other way.

Something in the moonlight by the dead man had drawn his attention. The dead man had left his hand lay spread on the road, the fingers pointing reproachfully at his murderer. On one finger gleamed a diamond ring. A Kaffir, dying, would have strength to steal a diamond. Forgetting everything else, Sixpence passed the ring to the warden, sitting on the antheap, thinking, thinking in a panic of fear and doubt. Sixpence dropped by the body and seized the dead man's hand. Dully, the warden watched him and, as a lightning flash reveals the hidden things, so a sudden, lurid thought banished the mist from his brain and showed him what to do. He considered rapidly. The convict had brought his horse to him and met him on the road. No one had seen them together that night, save the magistrate, and he could not tell. It could all be explained, in easy sentences, to the warden, sitting on the antheap. He felt his revolver, a little bullock's tusk, but quite, quite big enough. Sixpence knelt by the body. The warden sprang upon him and grasped him by the shoulders, so that the black man looked round at him in dumb amazement.

"Baas angry?" he asked, like a child.

"Then the look in the warden's eyes terrified him. "Baas! The Baas!" he wailed, but before the wail died on his tongue the pistol had cracked close to the nippin on his neck, and he had been hanged beside the magistrate. In his hand he grasped the ring. De Jough seized the blood-stained knob-kerry and put it beside him. Then the white man leaped upon his startled horse and galloped away.

A simple ending, he thought, with a horrid chuckle, of course he murdered the thief for the diamond; of course, coming home, I found him rifling the baas; he resisted, and I shot him. The poor beast—well, it's only a Kaffir."

In the moonlight, face up, they found Sixpence, when the guards from the jail came to see the kopje. His face was not distorted at all, but rather the reflection of a pained surprise, as he thought, in the moment of dying, that he had been deceived.

MACAULAY'S IDEAS OF AMERICA.

Extracts from the Glueck Collection of the Buffalo Public Library contains much that is interesting to the student of history and letters. The collection includes a number of poems by great authors, which are not included in ordinary school books. The first of these is a poem by Keats, which is represented; so are Keats and Leigh Hunt, each by a sonnet. The Keats manuscript is dated January 16, 1818, and is entitled, "To Mrs. Reynolds' Cat." Mrs. Reynolds was the mother of Keats's friend, John Keats, and the sonnet is addressed to the Hood. She was the friend to Hood, who published it in the Comic Annual for 1830. It is given in the "Poetical and Other Writings of John Keats," edited by Forster, but does not appear in ordinary editions. It is as follows, the spelling, capitalization and punctuation of the manuscript being followed:

TO MRS. REYNOLDS'S CAT. Cat! who hast past thy grand Clatterer. How many mice and rats hast in thy den? Destroyed? how many tit bits stolen? Gaze With those bright, languid segments green and prick Those velvet ears—but prythee do not stick Thy gentle mew, and tell me all thy trays Of F and Mice and Rats and tender chick. Nay look not down nor lick thy dainty tail For all the weazy Asthma, and for all Thy tail's tip is nicked off, and though the cat of many a Maid has given thee many a still, Still that fur so soft as when the lists In youth thou enter'st on glass bottled

There are two manuscripts by Leigh Hunt; one a report of a lecture by Carlyle on German literature, the other the following sonnet, "which is not found in ordinary editions of Hunt's poems."

TO FAME. Oh, Fame, what art thou? Who can know, Alas! His claim to any share in thee or thine, Till he has passed? Which do men ever pass'd or e'er shall pass. Prizings, gifts! Rare beings still amass Treasures that after ages count divine; Yet ere they pass from earth thou giv'st them.

That they in memory shall outlive the mass. How in life, they pine for very bread, While wordy critics smirch their lays with blot.

How oft above each unremember'd head, Year after year, the dock or hemlock rot. And thou, thou nam'st their love, or woe, or mirth; And those that let them die, boast that they gave them birth.

There is a characteristic letter by Macaulay, written from London March 25, 1849, to an American friend in response to a letter of congratulation on his "History of England," the first two volumes of which were just published. The letter is a curious revelation of the historian's conception of American taste and habits:

My Dear Sir: I have received a very kind and welcome letter from you, which it would be ungrateful to me not promptly to acknowledge. What you tell me of the reception which my book has found in the United States gratifies me much, but at the same time surprises me. For it seems to me that very few books have in as high a degree the merit or demerit of being intensely English as the first two volumes of which were just published. The letter is a curious revelation of the historian's conception of American taste and habits:

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I should greatly enjoy a trip to the United States if I could be sure that I should be free and unobscured as I am when I go to Paris or Brussels, that should be a liberty to choose my own associates, and that I should never be forced to make a show of myself at dinners and public meetings. But my dislike of exhibition, which was always strong, and which never yielded, except to clear public duty, has since I quitted politics, become almost morbid. And what I hear of the form in which your countrymen show their kindness and esteem for men whose names are at all known deters me from visiting you. I need not tell you that I mean no national reflection. Perhaps the best of all would be to have some one able to the American character; but it must cause annoyance to sensitive men. Brougham and O'Connell would have liked nothing better. But Cowper would have died of

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 tried and 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.

"Good evening," one replied. And the other added quickly: "Come, sit down!"

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 occasion. 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 nuisance in the east. It was his first visit to a 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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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 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."

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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 occasion. 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 nuisance in the east. It was his first visit to a 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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