PIET PUTTER'S FORT.

How a Mother and Son Defended Their Home Against a Night Attack of Zulu Raiders.

By P. Y. BLACK.

The fires on the hills were the warning. The farmers were commandeered, that is, every able-bodied man between 16 and 60 in the district was called to take his horse, his "biltong," or dried beef ration, his rifle and ammunition, and proceed at once to the rendezvous, thence to proceed against the fierce and warlike Zulus, who had again raided the Transvaal. Farmer Putter saddled up and hurried off, as his first duty was, but first he called to him Piet, his son, and solemnly spoke to him.

"Son of mine," said the farmer-soldier, "you are not yet man tall enough to face the Zulu impis in open field, but to your care I give mein vrouw and your little sister Greta and Pretorius, your brother. You must, if need be, play a man's part, for, since the two gold prospectors left the farm at sing of war, there is none to take command of the Kaffir servants but you."

Then Piet said without bravado:

"You may trust me, my father, for, though I be not a man, still I am a Boer."

So the farmer rode away and Piet, thus promoted to command, withdrew into the sitting room and almost at once his trouble began. His first care was to clean and load all firearms. These hung on the walls and some were old-fashioned and without ammunition to fit them. But Piet's eyes, seeking his own pet light rifle, which he had won in a shooting match against all boys of his age for many miles around, missed it. He was startled, for it is almost criminal to meddle with another man's glory—his rifle—and he sought Pretorious to see if that ambitious youth had taken it down. Pretorius had it not and he ran out to call Malulu, a native servant, with sudden fear in his soul. Malulu did not come at the call and Piet, with a pale face, thought for a moment and then, taking his old gun and belt, leaped bareback on a horse, without a word to alarm the family, and rode off unseen at a gallop. He rode to the cornfield, where the native laborers should have been working. The green corn waved in the wind, deserted. Not a man was in sight. He dashed to the meadows down the valley, where the herders should have been with the cattle. Here, in spite of himself, tears sprang to his eyes, for the cattle were gone and the herders were absent. The great grassy fields were silent as were those of corn.

"They have deserted us as soon as my father's back was turned," cried Piet in dismay. "And they were not Zulus! Can it be a general rising among the Kaffir tribes?"

At that thought he trembled, but he had still vigor enough to ride to the top of a kopje near by. From the peak he had a view of much country and saw a cloud of dust far away, which he guessed was made by the stolen cattle.

"Never mind," said Piet, "if we beat the Zulus we shall get them back with interest."

Then he dug his heels into his horse's ribs and dashed down the hillside. He had seen, half a mile away, a black figure moving swiftly across the veldt, and the sun glanced from something borne on its shoulder—a gun, Malula. Before the traitor servant was aware of pursuit, Piet was within 400 yards of him. Then the kaffir heard the horse's hoofs, and turned. For a moment the black seemed inclined to run, but changed his mind, as the boy shouted to him angrily. Malula deliberately raised the stolen rifle to his shoulder. Piet threw himself from the horse, as a bullet whistled over the vacant saddle. The boy, already a hunter, replied, with but a hasty glance through his sights, and Malula uttered a howl and staggered and fell to the ground, struck in the chest. Piet felt a spasm of horror. Deer a-plenty had he shot, but never till

MALULER UTTERED A HOWL AND STAGGERED AND FELL.

now a man, so that his heart for a flash stood still, and his own face was deathlike. He rode slowly up to Malula, and found the Kaffir writhing in a death agony. Piet again dismounted and attempted to offer aid, but the savage repulsed him. With a look of hate he glared at the boy, and cried in his own tongue:

"I am one, but tonight come the Zulu, and no white thing on the farm shall live. For mine there shall be ten deaths!"

So he died, glorying in the hope of a speedy revenge, and the Boer boy leaving him recovered his new rifle and rode slowly and mournfully homeward.

II.

All day he worked busily, leaving his mother to the children, and by nightfall he had prepared a fort to withstand a siege. Two or three times during the afternoon he had slipped off to the top of the kopje, where he could look afar, but each time he came back, having seen nothing but the rolling veldt. They had supper, and again Piet slipped away and came back, but now with a grim face.

"Mother," he whispered, "from the west I heard the war song of the Zulus. It came faintly with the wind. In the direction, also, of Van Boeven's farm, the skies are red and if I go at dark I fear I shall see the flames rising from their barns."

The mother gathered her baby tight in her arms for a moment and then quietly asked her eldest:

"Are the guns cleaned and loaded?"

"Yes," said Piet, "and, mother, if you approve, we must leave the house. It is too big and rambling for us two to protect."

"Leave the house?"

"Not very far," said Piet, and explained.

In that land of few dwellers, space is not of much consideration. The farm buildings were quite widely scattered and Farmer Putter had built his cowbyres and pig pens and so on a proper distance away from his house walls. All the afternoon Piet had been marching, laden with packages and bundles, between the house and the outbuildings. Now, when it was dark he put out all the lights of the house and the windows and doors were stoutly barred.

"Where are we going to sleep?" the children asked, accustomed to rise and lie down with the sun, and Piet answered cheerfully: "In the chicken coop."

The children, at first astonished and incredulous, were delighted when they discovered that their brother meant what he

THERE WAS A FEARFUL CONCUSSION.

said, for the sight of the chickens feeding had given the boy the necessary idea. If the house were too big, the coop could not be accused of that fault. About the rocky kopje stones were plenty and more convenient than wood. Therefore, Piet had aided his father in building a solid affair to shelter the many fowls. It was stone, and high and roomy. Piet, during the afternoon, had made on each side, by careful removal of stones, loopholes, and carried to the hen house the more precious articles in the house with all the ammunition and guns. Now the chickens, squawking, were ruthlessly turned out, and the little family went in, the youngsters giggling. The door which Piet had strengthened, was closed, and the garrision prepared. Vrouw Putter was not without experience in war's alarms. She looked round with a brave smile.

"Well done, Piet," she said, and calmly began to examine the guns, while at the same time quieting the children, who, now in the dark and undisturbed by such preparations, began to be afraid. Again Piet slipped away to the kopje, and when he came back he said: "Flames are rising from the Van Boeven's and the war song is coming near."

"Loud?" the vrouw asked, briefly.

"Not very," her son answered, piling rocks against the door.

"A detached party," said his mother quietly. "If the Lord wills it, we will protect our own."

And she made them all kneel down and pray and then sing a psalm.

It was a fitfully moonlit night in the dry season, and chilly. White clouds pursued the snoon, after hiding it and leaving the veldt in darkness, then passing on and flooding the land with silvery beams. At last Piet, peering out of his loophole to the west, saw a shadow among the shadows, and this shadow moved and glided and came swiftly up the slope on which the chicken coop stood between the house and the trees by the river. It was followed by another and another and another and another, coming on like wild ducks in a V or wedge, and from the heart of the shadows came a low hum, the song of the impis.

"How many?" the mother asked, as the moon shone out, and Piet told her there were about twenty, with shields and assegais, for in those days firearms were not common among the Kaffir tribes as now.

"A raiding party," said Vrouw Putter, and took command. Piet was eager to fire at once, but she forbade. The children were very quiet, though trembling. The savages came on and halted, and came on again, now silent and apparently puzzled at there being no sign of life about the house. As the coop stood it could not be readily discerned in the shadow of the slope. Again the Zulus advanced.

"Mother," said Piet, "if they get close to the house they will fire it."

She nodded, but waited until the savages were only fifty yards away, then—"Fire!" she whispered, and from her own loophole and from Piet's at the same instant streamed a flame, and the Zulus gave one great cry of rage and astonishment, as two of their number threw their arms high and fell, their shields clattering beside them. At once little Greta and Pretorius did their part and with incredible bravery in such infants forebore even to tremble, but handed up fresh guns, while the two defenders passed the empty ones down to be loaded by these small but trained fingers. The Zulus, however, did not fall back; furious at being taken by surprise they dashed at the little fort and a shower of spears came clashing against the stone walls. Crack! again went the guns, and again a howl of pain resounded through the night. The Zulus were almost in touch of the fort and were pressing onward, one on top of the other, with their ferocious yells, when a tall man among them with an iron ring on his head, sign of an induna or chief, shouted a command and at once his warriors fell back.

"Mother," cried Piet, as they seized fresh rifles, "don't let them think that we are so few. Greta and Pretorius, load as fast as you can. Mother, let us fire continuously and, thinking we are numerous, they will retire."

Vrouw Putter nodded consent, and at once these two valiant defenders of hearth and home began from the half dozen firearms at their disposal to pour bullets into the retreating crowd of naked blacks. They could not tell what actual effect their missiles had, save for an occasional cry from the warriors, but they hoped that so quick and withering a fire would deceive the party. In this manner, however, they used up a good deal of ammunition from the two boxes of cartridges Piet had carried to the chicken coop. With hardly a pause, the induna gave his savages their instructions, and suddenly they ran apart from one another in the moonlight and surrounded the hen house and came at it from three sides. Now, indeed, the besieged were hard put to it, but never quailed. Greta took the lightest rifle and, little girl though she was, her father and brother and even her mother had taught her to use it. She took position, a white-faced heroine, at one side, and her mother and Piet in their old places. Down came the Zulus, casting spears before them, and sheltered by their long, tough bullhide shields. Crack! crack! crack! swiftly the rifles rang out, and still the Zulus rushed on. The fingers of little Pretorious were busy on the floor of the hut, loading the rifles now getting hot. Crack! crack! The savages reached the wall; one scrambled to the roof; he thrust a spear down a crack. The Boer's wife cried out; her shoulder was pierced. But Piet's voice was triumphant, as a yell came from the induna himself.

"I aimed for the chief, and got him!" cried the boy, and indeed the induna seemed badly hurt, for he limped back, supported, and again called off his soldiers. Piet ran to his mother and helped her bandage the wounded arm.

"It is nothing," she said bravely, and added more softly, "nor my life either, if children and home are saved."

Suddenly little Pretorius cried out in dismay:

"Piet!" he said, "there are no more cartridges!"

It was true. One box was empty, and the other covered box did not hold ammunition. Piet looked, and despaired.

For a moment Piet was crazy, and then recovered himself. He looked through his loophole. The Zulus were in a group quite 100 yards away, almost indistinguishable in the night. Even as Piet looked they moved and he knew they were about to attack again. With a shout of rage the furious boy suddenly stooped to the dangerous box he had carried from the house, and then threw down the rocks from the door and burst out. In his hands he carried two sticks of dynamite, carried such deadly things in his hands that a stumble meant destruction. Yet he dashed ahead through the night, yelling. The Zulus turned on him in amaze, thinking him mad, and greeted him with a shower of spears. Unstricken, Piet ran to within fifty yards of them, and then, one after the other, he threw at them with all his might the fearful dynamite. There was a fearful concussion, which dashed the boy to the earth, a roar as of artillery, a medley of fearful shrieks from the unhappy Zulus and all was still. Vrouw Putter and the children came out trembling, and found Piet insensible, but of the Zulu raiders no trace, save scattered limbs, where the earth was thrown about, leaving a great hole. The dynamite must have struck fairly in their midst and had exploded with fearful effects.

That happened long ago. Piet is, today, a man and owns the farm. His father is dead, but the brave old mother lives on with Piet and his wife. Many changes have taken place on the lonely farm on the veldt, but one building remains unchanged, and reverently preserved. It is the chicken coop, which is known by the children for miles and miles as "Oom Piet's Fort."

CHOIR BOYS HERE AND ABROAD.

Better Supply and Larger Opportunities for Practice Across Water.

The choirmaster of a church in one of the largest cities in this country has just returned from a visit to England, during which he listened to choral services in seventeen cathedrals and learned for the first time that there is uniform method of training the boy choirs in England or of teaching the individual members of them how to sing. The question of producing the tones in the best way is no more settled there than in the United States, although England is supposed to be the home of the boy choir. Some masters teach the youthful singers that their voices should come from the head, while others say that chest tones produce the best effects.

This American choirmaster, reports the New York Sun, found that the three best choirs in England were at Magdalen college, Oxford; at St. Paul's cathedral in London, and at King's college, Cambridge. These are said to represent in their services the most that can be accomplished by the choirs of men and boys' voices. The choir of Magdalen college consists of sixteen boys and ten men. There are two daily services and a rehearsal also daily for the boys in the choir school. The music is without accompaniment and was praised by the American expert, chiefly for the beautiful quality of the boys' voices. This is said to be the result of the choirmaster's method, which insists on the use of the head tones and also on softness in singing. By the observance of this second rule the harshness likely to come into a boy's voice, when he forces it, may be avoided and one of the most serious drawbacks to the enjoyment of the average boy choir is overcome. No more painful use of music in divine service can be imagined than the effect created by two dozen sturdy boys singing as hard as they can with no apparent idea of anything but volume of tone and zeal of execution.

St. Paul's in London has a choir of thirty boys and eighteen men. The enormous building demands that the maximum of tone shall be produced, but that is never accomplished at the cost of good music. The choristers are made to sing. They are not allowed to shout, whatever the required volume of sound may be. The boys and men rehearse daily and, as in other cathedral choirs, there is a school especially for them. Such an advantage exists in none of the churches here which have boy choirs. Head tones are also insisted upon at the St. Paul's.

The choir at King's college, Cambridge, consists of sixteen boys and ten men, and they are trained by their masters to use their head tones exclusively and never sing from their chest. The singing of these boys in its delicacy, shading and attack is said to be superior to that of any choir in England. These choirs possess advantages for rehearsal never found in this country and their skill is never likely to be equalled here. In most of the English choirs the entire tenor is sung by the men, as there are said to be only two boys in England who sing alto. They are at Peterboro and at Wells. The St. Paul's cathedral choir rejoices in the possession of two soloists who are said to possess the finest voices in England.

The choir at Westminster abbey is said to be inferior, in view of the position of the church, although some of the smaller churches in London possess the most highly trained choirs. It seems to be the opinion of this authority that the best results were obtained from the use of the head tones. Here the number of boys available for such chairs is small and there are no choir schools. In England there are not only plenty of singers to be had, but there are also ample opportunities to train them by daily rehearsals.

PRATTLE OF THE YOUNGSTERS.

Small Willie, accompanied by his father, was taking in the circus and menagerie. "Oh, papa," he exclaimed, as they stopped in front of the elephant, "look at the big cow with her horns in her mouth eating hay with her tail."

"Why was it forbidden Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit from the tree of knowledge?" asked the teacher of the juvenile class.

"Mebby he was afraid they's fall out of the tree an' get hurt," replied a little fellow who had his arm in a sling.

One night little 4-year-old Flossie was being put to bed and after repeating her usual evening prayer, much to her mother's astonishment, she added: "And please make me a better girl; and you might as well make my papa and mamma better too—if you possibly can."

Little Bessie, who was visiting in the country, had her own ideas about some things. "Where is the policeman, grandpa?" she asked.

"Why, my dear," replied the old gentleman, "we have no policemen in the country."

Bessie looked somewhat surprised at this and asked: "Who keeps the people off the grass?"

Teach a boy to be saving after the following fashion and he may grow up and become a much-sought-after bank cashier: "Yes," said the father to a visitor, as he stroked his little son's head, "Johnnie has started a bank for his odd pennies and nickels. How much have you saved up, Johnnie?"

"Seven cents," replied the youthful banker, "besides the $3.90 you owe it."

LABOR AND INDUSTRY.

Java furnishes two-thirds of the quinine.

The sunflower seed crop is 5,000,000 pounds.

Japan has sixty-five cotton spinning companies.

At Connellsville 18,236 coke ovens are active; 10,277 cars were shipped in six days.

A large number of the mills in South Carolina are making goods for the trade of China.

A line of telegraph has been established to Dawson City. The rate for twenty words is $4.35.

The output of coal in Colorado this year is said to be nearly one-third larger than in any previous year. It is sent eastward in increasing quantities to Nebraska and Kansas.

The Southern Pacific finds itself face to face with the fact that it does not control rolling stock enough to move from 'Frisco the merchandise for which the interior of the state is clamoring.

The Gibson Coal and Mining company of Des Moines, Ia., last week voluntarily increased the miners' scale to $1 per ton for mining screen coal. The contract scale, which is supposed to hold good until April, is 80 cents a ton. Managers of the large mines say they want 500 miners.

The Printers' exposition, under the auspices of Typographical union, No. 6, will be held in the Grand Central Palace, New York City, during next April and May. Everything in the printing arts will be displayed. James P. Farrell, John H. Delaney, Nat Newman, Charles E. Gehring and Claude Stoddard are the committee in charge.

Cleveland intends to give Buffalo a race for the largest steel plant in the world. It is stated that $5,000,000 is to be expended at Fairport, a few miles east of Cleveland, in the construction of such a plant. Buffalo has seen $3,000,000 paid for the land necessary for its "biggest steel plant" and its surroundings.

In a visit to Liverpool last Ausgust for the express purpose of studying what a large industry was doing for its employes, it was found by Dr. Josiah Strong of New York that $1,500,000 was invested in schools, highways, churches, playgrounds and cottages in the industrial village. The rents of the cottages were cut in half; the money loss was more than compensated by the gain of the employes' loyalty.

The striking street car men in Cleveland are determined to carry their fight against the Traction company to a finish. An automobile stock company will run a complete line of automobile omnibuses in opposition to the Traction company and it is expected the new cars will be in operation in about six weeks. The automobiles will have a capacity in addition to their own weight of 10,000 pounds and, it is said, will have an average speed of twenty-five miles an hour. They will be finely equipped and heated by a system of exhaust pipes from the motors.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

Attorney General Remley of Iowa says the penny-in-the-slot and the nickel-in-the-slot and all similar devices are gambling machines and amenable to the gambling law.

The current appropriation for horse shoeing in the fire department in the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx is $12,000; for forage, $35,000, and for harness $4,000. For 1900 these are the appropriations asked: Horse shoeing, $18,000; forage, $40,000, and harness, $4,000.

Of the 146 cities in the United States having a population of 30,000 or over all save forty-one own and operate the municipal water supply. Only four have municipal gas works—Duluth, Richmond, Wheeling and Toledo; while thirteen own and operate electric light plants.

An Oswego man, Ephraim Latulip, is the latest one to claim that he has rediscovered the lost art of hardening copper. He says he can make it as tough as steel, so that it will hold and carry an edge as keen as a razor. His brother is the man who made a cannon at rawhide.

Gettysburg is now the most carefully marked battlefield in the world. Though the number of men engaged on both sides was 160,000, the position of every regiment, battery and squadron has been accurately located. In addition to monuments, stones have been set to define actual positions.

Mr. John J. Albright of Buffalo has presented to the Botanic garden of that city a collection of rare palms and tropical plants valued at $40,000, and two fine conservatories in which they are housed. The buildings are so constructed of steel and glass that they can be taken apart and set up again in the garden.

The potato crop of this country this year is one of the largest ever raised, a matter of a good deal of importance as affecting the question of food supply. The yield is estimated at 242,000,000 bushels, or about 10,000,000 bushels larger than in 1898 and 68,000,000 bushels larger than in 1897. The yield per acre this year is estimated at eighty-one bushels, which is slightly below that of 1896, but far ahead of last year, or 1897, when it was but sixty-four bushels.

"Our Dumb Animals" tells this story: "Ernest Whitehead captured a young seal near Anacapa island, California, recently, and took him on board his ship. As the vessel started the mother seal was noticed swimming about, howling piteously. After reaching the wharf at Santa Barbara the captive was tied up in a jute sack and left loose on the deck. Soon after coming to anchor the seal responded to its mother's call by casting itself overboard, all tied up as it was in the sack. The mother seized the sack and with her sharp teeth tore it open. She had followed the sloop eighty miles."

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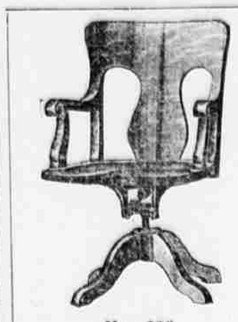

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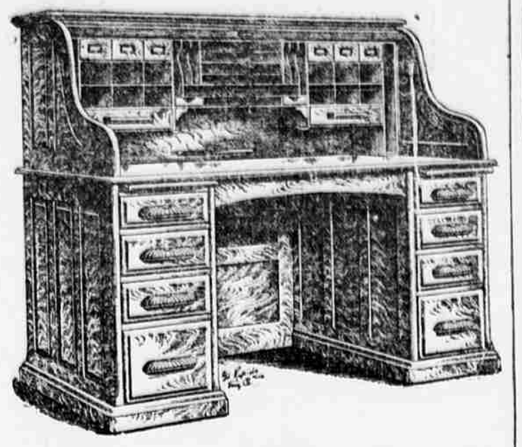

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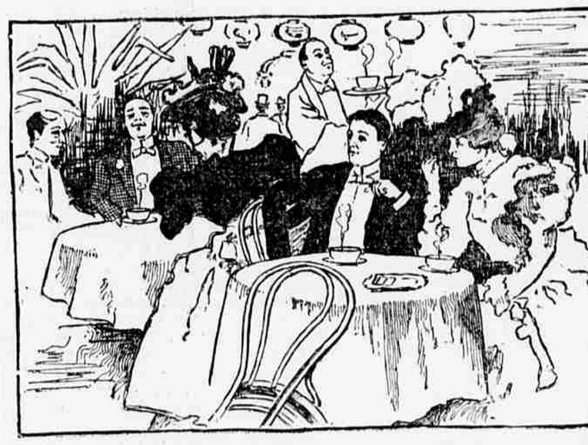

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