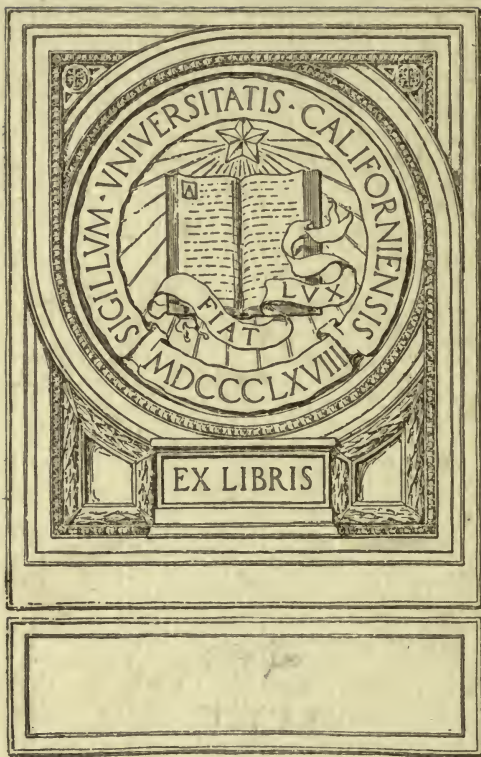


A

Doctor's Diary
in
Damaraland

H.F.B. Walker



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A DOCTOR'S DIARY IN
DAMARALAND



WHAT THE NATAL CARBINEERS LOOK LIKE AT GIBEON—SENTRY
OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL.

A DOCTOR'S DIARY IN DAMARALAND

BY

DR. H. F. B. WALKER

LATE CAPTAIN R.A.M.C.

ILLUSTRATED

BY
J. H. B. WALKER

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

1917

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I WISH to express my thanks to those who have given me photographs—namely, Major Pershouse, Captain Osler, Captain Bosman, and Staff-Sergeant Smiles.

H. F. B. WALKER.

NO. 1000
ANSONIA, CT.

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A DOCTOR'S DIARY IN DAMARALAND

CHAPTER I

CAPE TOWN

LIKE thousands of loyal South Africans, I offered my services to the Government when the rebellion broke out, but for several months I heard nothing. During the last week in January, 1915, I received a wire from the Director of Medical Services, saying that, if I were still willing to serve, I must report in Cape Town to the Senior Medical Officer not later than February 1. This was rather short notice, seeing that three out of the six days would be taken up in getting to Cape Town. However, feeling that I must be required to fill some important gap in General Botha's armies, I "mobilized" within the time specified, and arrived in Cape Town the last night of January.

February 1.—Nine a.m. seems to me a reasonable hour in war-time to begin the day's work, so I approach the Castle at that hour to report myself. A very new-looking soldier in very new-looking khaki stands at the gate. He salutes like a clockwork doll. Being still a civilian and inexperienced in taking salutes, I feel rather flattered thereby, until I reflect

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that perhaps he is only practising. At last he relaxes. Sentry-like, he can give no information, but he can call the sergeant, and he leaves his post to summon this dignitary. I am directed across the courtyard to the medical quarters, where a sick-parade is going on. A lot of young soldiers in various degrees of undress are waiting outside the doctor's door. They all look bright and well. A sudden silence falls upon them as a vision in khaki and red passes quickly and enters the door, tripping over its spurs as it does so. A moment's interval, and a corporal appears at the door and calls "Private Smith!" Private Smith's face instantly takes on that look of settled suffering so characteristic of habitués of a sick-parade, and he enters the doctor's room to receive a pill or potion, looking the picture of misery. At the second or third attempt I succeed in attracting the corporal's attention. The S.M.O. does not arrive before ten o'clock.

A little after this hour I return, and am shown into the great man's office. A Lieutenant-Colonel and several Majors, all humble practitioners in civil life, seem to have nothing to do or are leisurely driving a pen. The S.M.O. himself is at the telephone. Some important business transacted, he turns to me. "Yes, I think the D.M.S. wrote to me about you"; and he looks through some papers. "No, there is no mention as to the disposal of an officer of your name; but I will send you over to the A.D.M.S. of the Northern Force, and if he has nothing for you to do, I will try to find you something at Wynberg."

Feeling hurt, slighted, belittled, insignificant, I slink off to the A.D.M.S., who officiates in another building. As I enter his office, a red Scotchman emerges, brandishing his income-tax returns. "Look yu herre," he was saying—"look yu herre! See what I've given up to be slighted like this!" Inside, a military-looking old Major with a very raucous voice is explaining to the A.D.M.S. that he, and he alone, is fitted for a certain billet, and that billet he means to have.

The A.D.M.S. turns to me (we had met in civil life). "Hullo! you here? Come to help push the cart? What would you like to do?"

I try to stammer out that I am willing to serve in any capacity. He seemed surprised, and said: "Your middle-aged practitioner is simply impossible. They all want to be Colonels or Majors, and are huffed at the slightest thing." Then he told me that, owing to illness of an officer, there was a vacancy in the — M.B.F.A. I accepted with alacrity. Anything to avoid playing at soldiers at the base, where I hear medical officers are falling over each other. But I left the office with misgivings. Was it possible that I had made sacrifices—perhaps comparable to those of the red Scotchman—to take part in Gilbertian comedy?

The medical training camp is at Wynberg on a sandy flat known as Young's Fields, an ideal place for a camp in the summer, free from flies and dust. Several other Mounted Brigade Field Ambulances are in training here. To-day happens to be pay-

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day. Each man receives a sovereign for the month, non-coms a little more. The rest of the pay, £3 10s. or so, is allotted to wife or mother, and not touched by the men. A pound a week certain and no husband must be a godsend to many a poor woman.

With little enough to do, a nice clean tent, a personal servant, a good horse, and the whole Cape Peninsula at my disposal, the first stage of the campaign promises to be pleasant enough.

February 10.—Our medical service is being organized on practically the same lines as that of the Imperial Army. Each brigade of troops, numbering in the case of the mounted brigades between 2,000 and 3,000 men, is to have its own medical personnel, equipment, and ambulance. In the first place there are regimental medical officers, one to each 500 men. The duties of this officer, assisted by trained orderlies, are the health and sanitation of the troops. In case of fighting he is to establish a dressing-station or first-aid post in rear of the firing line, and then to hand over the collection and care of the wounded to the Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance. To assist in the collection of wounded before the ambulance can take over, each fighting unit is to have a few men known as "regimental stretcher-bearers."

The field ambulance is organized on the following plan. To begin with, it is really two complete ambulances, each capable of acting independently. It is cut up in this way to correspond with the brigade, which consists of two wings—"right" and "left"

they are called, and are really distinct and complete fighting units. Each section of an ambulance is therefore attached to a wing of the brigade, and follows it into action. A section of the ambulance has two subdivisions. One, called the "bearer division," goes out to collect wounded and render first aid, taking over the dressing-stations from the regimental medical officers. The other subdivision remains behind, and is equipped to form a field hospital. If there are more wounded than can be accommodated in the ambulance waggons, or if emergency operations have to be performed, the tent subdivision pitches its tents and establishes a field hospital. A bearer division is under the charge of a medical officer, and consists of mounted orderlies and stretcher-bearers, about fifteen men in all. It has three ambulance waggons and a motor ambulance. The tent subdivision has also a medical officer and the same number of men trained as nurses.

Now, it is not in the plan that a field hospital remain in charge of wounded for many hours, because it must follow the movements of the troops to which it is attached. It must therefore be evacuated at once. In the plan as we have it there is a missing link here, for we have no transport, no personnel, to convey wounded from the field hospital to the base hospital, and we can see it sticking out that our field ambulances will have to do this duty, and we shall thus become detached from, and out of communication with, our brigades. Another weak point, too, is the fact that the officer in command of the whole medical

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service to a brigade is not on the staff of the Colonel commanding the brigade, but is in charge of one of the tent subdivisions of the ambulance far in the rear, and out of touch with the movements of the troops. Further, we have no signallers, unless a couple of men carrying flags come under this category, who, of course, cannot be other than useless under the conditions in which we are likely to act. If movements are at all rapid, there can be no doubt that the ambulances will get left behind, get lost, and not be there when wanted. And, to make matters worse, it is not to be expected that irregular forces, like the Burghers, badly staffed, will always remember to give the ambulances timely warning of their intentions.

February 12.—It will be remembered that the rebellion last year delayed the preparations for the invasion of German West. But now, this being over, and General Botha having taken command, preparations for the campaign are being hurried forward. Four distinct columns are to operate against the country. General Mackenzie has his base at Luderitzbucht, the southern of the two German ports. He is held up at Aus, on the edge of the desert, and further advance towards Keetmanshoop is not practicable at present from the Luderitzbucht side. This army is known as the Central Force. Along the drifts of the Orange River from Upington towards the west is a diffuse force under Colonel Van der Venter, known as the Southern Force. Their objective is also Keetmanshoop. The Eastern Force, under

Colonel Berrangé, is concentrating at Vryburg. They have to cross the desert through Kuruman to Rietfontein to reach the German border, 300 miles of sand. Keetmanshoop is also their goal, so that these three forces may be said to mutually support each other. If the Germans concentrate against any one of these forces, then their flank and rear will be menaced by the other two.

What, then, is the significance of a small force of infantry collected at Swakupmund, the Germans' other port. They are the nucleus of General Botha's Northern Force. There are collecting at Kimberley, Potchefstroom, and I think Bloemfontein, four large brigades of Mounted Burghers, a total of close on 12,000 men. These are to be shipped to Swakupmund, or rather to Walfisch, quite near, when ready. Colonel Britz commands the 1st Brigade, Colonel Alberts the 2nd, Colonel Myburg the 3rd, and Colonel Marnie Botha the 5th Brigades, who are Free Staters and all volunteers. The 4th Brigade belongs to the Southern Force under Colonel Van der Venter.

Now, mounted men mean movement, and we foresee a rush from Swakupmund to Karibib, Okahandya, and Windhuk, which, if it can be done suddenly and unexpectedly, may result in General Botha's catching the Germans between the Northern Force on the one side and the Central, Southern, and Eastern Forces on the other. As far as one can gather, the Northern Force will be about 20,000 strong, the other three together amounting to a like number.

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February 14.—A good deal of time is taken up in lecturing to the men on first aid, hygiene, and so on. Some of our men are very expert, having had long experience in bandaging and ambulance work. The stretcher drill is also very good, and you can teach them nothing in the way of lifting and carrying wounded. In the — we have ten or twelve Germans. They come from a German colony in the neighbourhood of King William's Town. They will no doubt be very useful as interpreters, and as far as one can judge their sympathies are with their adopted country.

February 16.—A little to the east of our lines a large camp is being erected for the Burghers. Kitchens, shower-baths, and sanitary accommodation, are being built of wood and iron on a very lavish and extensive scale. Horse-lines are being made by pegging long thick ropes to the ground at intervals. We calculated that this one camp was prepared to receive 4,000 men and a like number of horses.

February 18.—The 3rd Mounted Brigade have arrived in camp here. Their tents, horses, and transport, seem to fill the whole plain. They are men chiefly from Northern and Eastern Transvaal and Northern Natal. There are a good many men of British descent among them, but these are mostly Africanderized and regard the Taal as their mother-tongue. They are of all ages—some mere lads, others are grandfathers no doubt; but on the whole they are a likely-looking lot of men well above average size,

and inured to camp life and hardship. The oldest among them fought at Majuba, and most of them remember the Tugela. One boyish-looking Burgher told me he was at Spion Kop, aged eleven. Being so young, he was left behind with the horses. A shell burst near and killed the horse he was on, and several others. Consequently he says he is rather nervous about the big guns, but is not afraid of rifle-fire.

They are dressed in khaki shirts and breeches, leggings, a soft felt hat with pugaree. A feather or a piece of coloured cloth on the hat alone distinguishes the commandoes. There is nothing uniform about them, for the Government have bought up all the makes and shades of shirts, breeches, leggings, and hats, that they could lay their hands on. Many of the men wear a coloured handkerchief about the neck, which, with the shirt collar loose, is useful and comfortable, if not very military-looking. Bandoliers are carried over each shoulder, and under the opposite arm. They hold 120 cartridges, but the latter are not arranged in clips. The rifle, for which they have a cover, is carried in a bucket attached to the saddle. They have no bayonets. An overcoat, a large water-bottle, a mess-tin, a haversack, and one blanket, constitute their equipment. Each man has brought his own horse and saddle. Consequently, the horses, if useful, are a very miscellaneous lot as regards colour and size.

Most of the officers, however, look very Anglicized in khaki drill tunics and breeches, irreproachable leggings, boots, and spurs, with helmet and Sam

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Browne belt complete. They are thus easily distinguished from their men, which is not a very wise arrangement for men going on active service.

February 27.—The Governor-General reviewed Myburg's brigade this afternoon. We were drawn up in squadrons. The whole thing was very impressive, and the march-past, which had been rehearsed in the morning, was very well done. The fine marching of the ambulance men and their military appearance seemed to receive special recognition.

March 4.—The powers that be have at the eleventh hour ordered a medical examination of the Burghers. For the last two days several of us have been engaged in this work. As we had no instructions to go upon, we just threw out a few who on account of defect or decrepitude were obviously unfitted to undertake the rigours of a desert campaign. On the whole these men from the Northern Transvaal are a well-set-up lot. We passed several tough old boys well into the sixties.

Just before starting this work, somebody told us the yarn that a man with a wooden leg had been accepted somewhere or other; but, although we did them at the rate of something like a hundred an hour, I don't think a man with this defect escaped us.

CHAPTER II

TO WALFISCH BAY

March 9.—Punctually at noon the —— M.B.F.A. arrived at the docks. Three or four troopships were filling up with the 3rd Mounted Brigade and their effects. Our ship is one captured on the west coast early in the war. She is very high in the water, and has main, upper, promenade, and hurricane decks, and a bridge. She looks as if she would topple over the moment she is released from the quay. There is plenty of accommodation for the officers, but the men are crowded together in every available part of the ship.

The holds are crowded with rough plank bunks as close as they can get them, strange housing for the Burghers, who are accustomed to the illimitable veldt. It is very peculiar to see a German ship crowded with Dutch Africanders going to fight the battles of the British Empire against the Germans themselves, and no doubt one that would evoke characteristic utterances from the Kaiser, could he be privileged to see it. By three o'clock everybody seemed to have got on board somehow, and the other transports departed, a Clan liner so crowded with our horses that they could not swing their tails, and

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another ship with the right wing of the brigade. Kind women had dispensed tea and coffee all round; Smuts, Merriman, and other visitors, had gone on shore, and we seemed ready to start. A cold mist came up, and the friends and visitors melted away. Somebody said we were waiting for some parts belonging to an aeroplane. At 7 p.m. our ship left the docks, steamed into the bay, and anchored in a fog.

March 10.—A good many men were rather wild last night as the effect of excitement. It appears that we are delayed owing to a shortage of stokers, who are expected at any moment. We hear it is quite a problem to find crews for these transports, the demand all over the world being very great for men with nautical knowledge. After breakfast we noticed a steam-launch approaching, and everybody thought it must be the stokers. However, when it got nearer we saw only a policeman and a woman who was standing upon the stern gesticulating wildly, to her imminent peril. Naturally, I thought she was on the tracks of an erring husband, but it turned out she was after a little Boy Scout who thought he would like to go to the war. He, when he found the game was up, quietly slipped down a rope into the launch, and took his seat beside his mother in a most complacent manner. She, too, as soon as she had got him, quieted down and took no further notice of him. I had seen the youngster knocking about the ship with a soldier. He had a shallow, shifty pale blue eye which suggested a doubtful career.

At 3 p.m. we left the bay, one or two very unprofessional-looking stokers having arrived, and several men from among the troops having also volunteered for the work.

March 11.—We are now well at sea, and many of our noisy landsmen are suffering from a reaction. The Captain and the P.M.O., however, are doing their best, and fatigues are being established, in units where discipline prevails, to clean up the ship.

In the evening we had an impromptu concert, of which an electrically driven pianola was the basis. A sergeant who in private life is a circus clown held the boards most of the evening with some rather risky recitations.

March 12.—It is cold this morning, and a thick mist hangs over the sea. The buzzer is going off every minute as a warning to other ships. At 8 a.m. we were 410 knots from Cape Town—that is, we are averaging 10 knots an hour. When I went to have a look at the log, there were two Burghers leaning over the stern and arguing as to how the ship maintained her course in the dark or in a fog out of sight of land. The one man thought that the slender rope towing astern kept the ship in her course. The other looked at this for a while, and then, noticing on the smooth ocean the track of the ship, said: “Kijk hier, on kerel! Daar’s die pad” (Look there, my boy! There’s the path).

March 13.—We are off Walfisch Bay now. Another fog is on. Indeed, they say there is always fog on this coast at this season of the year. In consequence

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of the fog we are going very slowly, and sounding every few minutes. About noon it lifted, and we caught a glimpse of a low sandy bank, and on the farther side of it smooth water where a few ships were anchored.

Walfisch Bay opens toward the north. It is protected from the Atlantic on the west by a long sandy bank four or five miles long, which runs out to Pelican Point, where there is a lighthouse. At the southern extremity of the bay is Walfisch itself, very inconspicuous, a few tents and small buildings marking the spot. Two or three miles north is a collection of eight or nine reddish buildings, which we are told is a whaling-station rented by a Norwegian firm; but when the war broke out the fishermen fled off to Norway or some equally safe place, leaving everything behind. Eastward is the mainland, a low and arid coast rising here and there into rounded sand-hills. Along the coast close to the shore we can see a train steaming north to Swakupmund. Five or six steamers are anchored in the bay.

A portion of our men went ashore this afternoon. Quite a lot of tugs and lighters seem to be available.

March 14.—Yesterday, talking to an officer who seemed very retiring and quiet, I made somewhat of a *faux pas*. I noticed he wore a black badge on his collar, with a leaf in gold thread. To lead the conversation into what I hoped would be an interesting channel, I said: "I see you belong to the aviation corps." He replied that he did not, and looked at me very hard. At lunch I pointed him out to a

friend, saying I thought he was an aviator. "That, my dear fellow," I was told, "is the chaplain to the left wing!"

This morning we disembarked. After an early breakfast all the officers came ashore in a tug—the *Stork*, of East London, by the way. Our Burgher friends were in the best of spirits, relieved, I think, to see *terra firma* again, however bleak it might appear. They sat there in the tug spinning yarns as only Dutchmen can. We were dumped down on the sand, this hot Sunday morning, without food or orders, and with nothing but our blankets.

Apart from man's handiwork, which is very scanty, there is nothing but sand and water to be seen at Walfisch. To the south and west are sand-flats and lagoons. To the east and north there are sand-hills, rising, in some places, in tiers to hills of considerable height. The surface of the ground looks as smooth as it would if covered by a heavy fall of snow, only instead of the snow you have loose yellowish-grey sand. Spoor, too, resemble those made in the snow, and the tracks of waggons can be seen over the sand-hills for miles and miles. Mirage distorts everything, buildings, hills, and especially men and horses, looking much taller than they are. Horses, particularly, often look very grotesque in the distance, with an ordinary sized body on very spindly legs about 10 feet long.

Buildings there are none, unless one included a few wood and iron shanties in that category. One of these places, distinguished only by a small belfry,

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does duty as a church for Anglicans, Romans, Wesleyans, and Dutch Reformed. There are one or two stores, and another place calls itself an hotel. All are in a shocking state of repair, iron rusting, wood rotting, and what little paint they may have had at one time now desquamating freely. When one thinks of our poor friends and neighbours with their fine town of Swakupmund on the open Atlantic, where with luck they can land every third day or so, it does seem as if Britannia had been playing dog in the manger with this splendid harbour, where only two or three ships a year call under normal circumstances. The white population is said to have been thirty-nine at one time, but I think this must be an exaggeration. One man, a store-keeper named Green, has done very well here trading in the Hinterland with Hottentots. He is quite a patriot, and in season and out of season he has emphasized the importance and splendid position of Walfisch, which is the only decent harbour on the whole coast.

Of course, it is all hubbub here now, for it is the one and only base for the whole Northern Force. Twenty-one thousand men and as many horses and mules have to be fed. This means that 500 tons of food, etc., have to be landed daily if a reserve is to be built up. Besides food, even water has to be brought from Cape Town in ships, to say nothing of locomotives, rails, sleepers, waggons, and a thousand and one things necessary to maintain an army in the field. Although Walfisch affords such good anchorage, the surrounding shore is so low that only little

bits of sand-bank here and there are not covered by the sea at high-tide. In order to provide space for camps and storage of material, it has been necessary to build an extensive sea-wall to keep the water off the flats. Piles have been driven into the sand, to which boards are fastened to the height of 4 or 5 feet, and the whole is backed by piling up sand behind. Dykes, too, are cut in all directions to drain off the water. So far these arrangements have not been very satisfactory, and here and there there are large stagnant lakes of sea-water, in which our war-material soaks continuously, or periodically.

The camps, too, are below the level of high-tide, and are consequently very damp. We have been given a spot for ours which was previously occupied by horses, and is much contaminated; so that, where a tent is erected over this warm, wet, manure-sodden sand, the effluvium in that tent is not very pleasant. The flies, too, are numerous as the sea-sand, and are very energetic and voracious. The days are hot and windy, the nights are cold and damp. The water is bad, and there is not much of it. For the animals it is mixed with a certain percentage of salt water. Our food is contaminated with dust, dirt, and flies, so that altogether Walfisch cannot be described as a salubrious spot just now.

There is great difficulty in getting the material ashore, owing to very inadequate pier accommodation. The smaller things, such as boxes of food and perishables, are landed at a small jetty in tugs and barges, and stored on a little ridge of sand which is, fortu-

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nately, a little drier. The animals and heavy material are brought from the ships on rafts. A tug tows the rafts inshore as far as it can, then about fifty or sixty natives pull the rafts in until they ground. Through the shallow water the smaller things are carried, and the larger, such as rails, are towed through the water by means of a rope attached to a winch on the shore. About 3,000 natives are engaged in this work at two shillings a day and their rations. Gangs are working night and day, Sundays included, and their sonorous chanting as they pull on the ropes never ceases.

A very conspicuous structure in Walfisch is the Condenser, a row of boilers and four tall iron chimneys. It comes from America, and the man in charge says it is supposed to supply 80,000 gallons a day but is only doing half this amount. Similar plants elsewhere are also doing very badly. This condensed water is most insipid. The water is conveyed to the various camps in a large barrel *à la* garden roller, much being lost in transit and also when attempts are made to get it out of the barrel.

The camp is so malodorous and damp that the O.C. and I decided to take up our quarters for the night in some empty railway trucks standing near. We have chosen one with high sides and a little straw in it, which, besides being dry, affords some shelter from the cold, damp sea-breeze which comes up after sunset.

March 15.—This morning I explored the sand-flats towards the south-west; they extend for many miles, and every now and then there is a lagoon. Evidently

the sea is gradually receding here, and sand-hills can be seen in the making from the earliest stages. The wind and tide collect a little débris in one place. This débris consists of dry seaweed, dead birds, etc. A little sand is washed up around this nucleus. Every wind and tide adds to this little mound, which by-and-by becomes quite big. After a while a little coarse vegetation appears, and the growth and permanence of this embryo sand-hill is assured. These various stages in the growth of a sand-hill are so obvious on the flats here that there can be no doubt as to how they are formed.

Above the level of the water and among the sand-hills two species of beetles are to be found in great numbers. One is a greenish-bronze colour, and is about half an inch long. It runs in a quick, jerky way, and finally escapes by flying. The other is black and rather smaller. It is very timid, and runs with incredible quickness when approached, swaying from side to side as an ostrich does. These beetles are very conspicuous objects on the dunes, especially the black one, and they exhibit wonderful nimbleness and agility in negotiating the little irregularities in the sand.

Two kinds of birds were noticeable—a small wader and a pale salmon-coloured flamingo. The latter is a very beautiful bird about 3 feet high, and frequents the lagoons in small flocks of twenty or thirty.

Out on these flats there are ten or twelve block-houses protecting the camp. These blockhouses are

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small round huts constructed of sand-bags and surrounded by wire entanglements, and in the intervening spaces between them there is a wire fence. They are joined up by telephone to each other and to headquarters. The Durban Light Infantry are the garrison at present, and they have outposts on the neighbouring hills, with maxims; there is also a high-angle gun to ward off attacks of aircraft. If the Germans attacked and held Walfisch now for a week, the Northern Force in the neighbourhood of Swakupmund would be in a very precarious position; for it is living from hand to mouth, and has no reserve provisions for man or animal. The croakers in the transport and commissariat departments say that the arrival of the troops at Walfisch was premature, and that they should have been allowed six weeks or so to establish depots.

March 16.—During the night I heard considerable disturbance and the sound of moving water. Looking out of my truck as soon as it was light, I saw that a considerable portion of the camp was under water. During the night the tide had broken in, and the truck we were in had become an island. We hastily waded out to arrange platforms out of sleepers to protect our goods. Several units were less fortunate than our men. Their tents were flooded out, and their belongings were floating about. Men were to be seen on every side digging feverishly and throwing up banks to keep out the water, in most cases rather unsuccessfully, for the Atlantic laughed at their efforts. This inroad of water will make Walfisch a

worse camp than ever; and the sooner the brigade, which is now all here, is moved on to Swakupmund, the better.

March 17.—General Botha was here to-day. He came down from Swakupmund on a motor trolly. We hear his reason for coming was to buck the Quartermaster-General's department up a bit, in which case a move may be expected very shortly.

March 18.—Early this morning a messenger came over from Swakupmund. We asked him what sort of place it was. "Oh, fine place! Everybody lives in 'ouses and 'as 'lectric light." A contrast to Walfisch in two respects, at any rate.

A gale is raging to-day, and in all directions tents are flapping about in clouds of dust, for it is quite impossible to make the pegs hold in the loose sand, and men are spending all their time vainly endeavouring to hammer them in. The arrival of a few prisoners was the only diversion we had this day. Eight coloured men and three Bantus had surrendered voluntarily about forty miles to the south-east. The former were dressed in khaki, very neat in appearance, and clean-looking, active, intelligent fellows. They had with them a very heavy two-wheeled cart drawn by ten oxen in good condition. They were armed with Mausers, but are reported to have said that they would not fight against us, however much ammunition they were given, and that there were many more of the same opinion. This is good news, for we have heard frequently that the Germans have armed the Bastards, and

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that in guerrilla warfare they are very formidable, being excellent shots and knowing the country so well.

Our transport has arrived: 168 white mules, twelve spans of twelve each for the ambulance waggons and general service waggons, and four spans of six each for the water-carts and Scotch carts. Besides we have two motor ambulances, both having a Hupmobile chassis.

March 19.—To-day the —— M.B.F.A. was ordered to move on to Swakupmund. The transport and the mounted men went by road, or rather along the seashore, for there is no road. The rest of the brigade went by train. Preferring to ride, I accompanied the mounted men. For the first six miles or so the shore is quite sandy and easy-going. Here the water in the bay is very smooth. Afterwards the shore becomes more rocky, and, being no longer under the shelter of Pelican Point, the full majesty of the Atlantic can be observed, great billows rolling in and breaking on the rocks. The authorities have erected many beacons along the shore, and every thousand yards or so near the railway there is a blockhouse. The line is laid along the shore practically the whole way, and in some places it is built upon sand-bags. Consequently, at many spots it is at the mercy of a tide a little higher than the average, and almost every day at some point or other it is washed away. The line cannot be laid farther inland, for there is only a narrow strip of firm ground between the sea and the shifting sand-hills, which extend all the way

from Walfisch to Swakupmund. For the present the D.E.O.R.* guard the line.

Life in the blockhouses is terribly dull, they say, as there is nothing to do except to bathe and fish and wait for the train which brings water and food. The men look very well, and are tanned the colour of the aborigines, spending the bulk of their time in shirts and knickers, and often not even in these. At one blockhouse I saw two young soldiers engaged in a violent altercation over a young penguin. The man who was holding it wouldn't let it go, because he was certain it would fly away; whereas the other man was game to bet him anything that it couldn't.

We reached Swakupmund a little after noon. It is said to be twenty-two miles from Walfisch along the coast, and a very heavy twenty-two miles it is. Waggons generally take more than one day to do it, partly because of the heavy going, partly because of the tides and travelling at night being prohibited.

To suddenly come upon a city in the howling wilderness causes rather a strange sensation, and is the sort of thing one only expects in a fairy tale. Without any warning, when rounding a little bend, there suddenly sprang into view a conglomeration of unnatural-looking buildings standing on a sand-hill some 30 or 40 feet above the sea. It seemed to be a city of towers and turrets—white towers, pink towers, blue towers, little towers, big towers, church towers, and lighthouse towers. A few soldiers plough their way through the sandy streets; otherwise it is a city

* Duke of Edinburgh's Own Rifles, a Cape Town regiment.

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of the dead. There is not a civilian, a tame animal or bird, in the place. Windows are boarded up, and the blinds are down. Only a few buildings are occupied by various headquarters. The inhabitants left in a hurry at the beginning of the war, taking much of their belongings with them, and destroying water-tanks, surf-boats, cranes, and other useful things before they left. From August until about Christmas the place was empty; then a small force of Union troops occupied it.

CHAPTER III

SWAKUPMUND

NOTHING but sheer necessity would ever make anybody build a town in such a god-forsaken spot as this. As the name implies, the place is situated at the mouth of the Swakup. It is on the north bank, the south bank being British territory. Recently this river had been in flood, and had washed away the railway, which crosses it on trestles. This is a very unusual occurrence, for this river had been dry for fifteen years. Nevertheless, although the river is practically always dry, it is the only reliable source of water all through the desert in this region. At Swakupmund a plentiful supply is obtained from the river-bed by pumping, but it is very "brak" and nauseous. It also contains a large percentage of Epsom salts. It is really horrible water to drink, and strong coffee is the only thing which covers the taste of it. Tea made from it is vile and "mineral" waters are not much better. I suppose the Germans made beer from it, for there are several breweries in the place.

There is not the slightest shelter for vessels here, and even the anchorage is not good. An attempt on a large scale has been made to build a harbour

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by making an enclosure with walls, but it has been a costly failure; for it silted up immediately, and has been abandoned. There is a large wooden pier about 300 yards long, and close to it is a fine iron one in process of construction. The Germans made some attempts to destroy these piers, but a few rounds from a British cruiser drove the would-be dynamiters away. But at the best landing at Swakupmund is a doubtful business, for the sea is always rough, and it often happened that passengers could not disembark for several days, and that merchandise was lost. The Woermann Linie had ten or a dozen lighters specially constructed for this coast, but they blew the bottoms out of them before evacuating the place, rendering them utterly useless and beyond repair.

It is difficult to give an impression of this town. It is very un-English, big, and pretentious. I should say it is the whitest and largest of white elephants extant. The German spirit in it seems to say to us: "You British have taken all the titbits of the earth; but for all that, and in spite of you, we will have colonies, even if we have to make them out of nothing." I am sure the Kaiser said to his colony manufacturer: "Build me a port and harbour in Sud-west Afrika. Make it complete with customs, barracks, and railways. Make a town for 5,000 of my people. Take these 50,000,000 marks. Apply to the Imperial Chancellor when you require more." Result: Imperial Swakupmund.

There is plenty of room here for such schemes, with

the endless desert to fall back upon when the sand-bank is filled with fine buildings, wide streets, squares, promenades, and monuments of Imperial achievements in the Hinterland. What high pressure in the Teutonic boiler, what energy craving for outlet, with the British fleet and British repressive policy sitting on the safety-valve ! Little wonder that something has had to burst somewhere ! The streets are arranged at right angles, and are very wide ; but they are useless for traffic, consisting of the deepest and loosest sand imaginable. The Germans must have quickly realized this, for in all the principal streets they have constructed side-walks of wood, raised well above the sand, and are said to have brushed them every day. Now the sand, since they are neglected, is rapidly covering them. There are miles and miles of this paving, and the Burghers are finding it very good firewood. Down the middle of each street runs a two-foot gauge railway laid on metal sleepers, on which all the wheeled traffic must have moved ; for there is no evidence that there were any waggons or carts, and the most powerful motor in the world would not be able to move a yard in this sand.

There is a great sameness and tameness about the streets, and with the exception of Post Street, which is at the north end of the town, running down to the sea, they do not merit description. At the top of Post Street stands the fine new Lutheran Church, and it contains one or two other fine buildings, notably the new school, the Antonius Hospital, the post-office, and the public buildings. Near the sea is

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a little promenade leading round to the lighthouse, and just above this is a diminutive ornamental garden, where, as the result of much labour, a few sickly shrubs maintain a precarious existence. In this garden is the only really nice thing in Swakupmund, a monument erected to the marines who fell in the Herero War. On a great rough block of granite are two figures in bronze, weathered to a bluish colour. A marine, hatless, and with a bandage round his head, stands with fixed bayonet awaiting death, and protecting to the last a helpless comrade at his feet. The inscription on the table below reads as follows: "Mit Gott für Kaiser und Reich, kämpften Angehörige des Marine Expeditionkorps in folgenden Gefechten . . ."* The names of the battles are given, also the names of the fallen, numbering ninety-five.

Before taking a photograph of a large and impressive-looking building, I asked a soldier standing near what building it was. "The D.L.I.,† sir." "Yes; but before we came here what was it?" "I don't know, sir. It is the headquarters of the D.L.I." It turned out to be the railway-station. So much for the curiosity of the man in the ranks.

The camp of the Transvaal Irish is really a quaint sight. It occupies a hollow space in the middle of the town. As the men had no tents, they have used all sorts of material taken from the stores. A hut

* "With God for Kaiser and Empire, Members of the Marine Expeditionary Corps fought in the following fights . . ."

† The Durban Light Infantry.

is made as follows: A framework of wood, cubical in shape, and about 7 feet high, is covered with any material which comes to hand, rolls of cretonne, print suiting, etc. This material is just nailed to the roof, and the ends hang down at the sides and back like curtains. The huts are crammed with furniture. I saw a large double bed in one, and a whole bedroom suite. Most have chairs, tables, looking-glasses, and often large clocks. The huts are all different colours, white, pink, green, and blue, predominating. It looks more like an Oriental bazaar than the quarters of His Majesty's soldiers.

March 20.—There are three lines of advance from Swakupmund into the interior. The one to the north is along the Otavi railway, through Ebony and Usakos. In the middle there is the old railway through Jackalswater to Karibib. The third line is along the Swakup River. North and south of these lines the country is impassable for large numbers of troops, as there are neither roads nor water. And not only is the country waterless desert, but in many places there are mountains so steep, rough, and intricate, that any idea of finding a way through is out of the question.

Of these three routes, the one along the Swakup must be chosen for a rapid advance; for there is a more or less defined road, sometimes in the river-bed, but more often a few miles to one side of it. All along the river there are water-holes; and even a few miles from here, in the bed of the river, there is a certain amount of grazing for animals. If advances

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along the railways are attempted, the Germans will, of course, render them unpracticable as such; and any advance along them must be slow, and the positions consolidated at every step. Both these railways are only two-foot gauge, and the northern is the one more generally used. At present we are pushing on a wide-gauge railway along the upper line, and our outposts are now as far as Rossing.

Until a few days ago the Germans have been coming down to the very gates of Swakupmund almost every day, and there have been frequent little engagements. No attempt has been made to drive them back hitherto, and everything points to the conclusion that the General wishes to entice them down here as much as possible. It seems, however, that they are aware that we have a considerable force here now, for they are consolidating and fortifying a position at Jackals-water. Three days ago Botha with two mounted brigades (the first and second) left Swakupmund by the river route to attack this position. The 3rd Brigade (ours) has been advanced from Walfisch, and the 5th is expected any time. We have heard that these two brigades are intended for the rush upon Windhuk, and, although it is only rumour, we already feel that we are destined for something great.

The two infantry brigades are holding the line from Walfisch to Rossing, also the water-holes Nonidas, Goanikoutis, and Heiguinchab, along the Swakup. The I.L.H. are at Nonidas patrolling the line up towards Rossing, and along the Khan River. This river on the map looks a promising line of advance;

but in reality it has no military value, for the country on either side is impassable, and advancing up the sandy river-bed with high vertical banks would be courting disaster.

March 21.—To-day we went to church parade in a desolate sandy square in front of the Hotel Germania. About 800 men were drawn up on three sides of a square, harmonium and parson in the centre. It was an Anglican service attended only by the English-speaking men, for the Burghers have their own ministers and services. It was very impressive when a prayer for “our brethren now engaged in battle” was given out, especially as it was the first intimation we had that fighting was in progress. During the day various rumours of the fighting came through, stories of rapid advance and prisoners taken.

March 22.—To-day I was sent out with two motor ambulances and four ambulance waggons to bring in wounded from Nonidas, about ten miles east from Swakupmund, along the river. Fighting had been in progress during the two previous days in the neighbourhood of Riet, sixty miles farther on. The message said there were sixteen wounded men, and that they were expected at Nonidas about noon.

For two miles out of Swakupmund there is a high plateau where the sand is too heavy for motors, so they have to be towed out to a spot called Martin Luther, which consists of two derelict traction-engines, two tents, and a few extemporized shelters occupied by motor cyclists engaged as despatch riders between here and the front. From thence the road

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is well defined and quite hard, a thin layer of coarse flinty gravel or broken-up limestone overlying the rocks. To the south are the sand-dunes of Walfisch, to the north undulating hills, and away to the east there is a high mountain range, the Ha-Noas Berg. There is not a sign of vegetation except along the river-bed, to which the road runs roughly parallel. Nonidas is the spot where the road crosses over to the south bank of the river, and there is plenty of water, much superior to that of Swakupmund. The epicures are known to ride out to this camp to get a decent cup of tea, and anybody in Swakupmund who says he has a little "Nonidas water" is generally much sought after.

As we arrived we saw everybody running away to the left, towards a cloud of dust. Someone said it was German prisoners, and I hurried up to have a look. A detachment of the Rand Rifles was escorting 200 German prisoners to rail-head. Big burly fellows they were, marching slowly in rank, with their heads down, looking very dejected, dusty, and tired. They wear a long slouched hat of grey turned up on the right with a black rosette (centre red), stamped out of tin. Their khaki cord tunics and breeches are very nice, neat, and of good material; but the top-boots they wear give them a rather clumsy appearance—at any rate when they are marching on foot.

We moved over the river to where the Motor Transport Corps had a depot, and outspanned our waggons on a gentle rise. After a while sixteen wounded arrived in charge of a sergeant. It was a

most exhausted-looking procession that came in. The sergeant, his men, and the drivers of the four waggons were besmeared with a paste of dust and sweat. The waggons—of the type known as “general service,” rather lighter than the ordinary farm waggon, and without tents—came on at a crawl, only a mule pulling here and there in spite of the liberal use of the whip. With every jolt of the wheels somebody groaned. For two days and nights the wounded had been exposed to the heat, cold, wind, and dust, with little water and less food, previous to which they had had forty-eight hours of trekking under most trying conditions, and the excitement of a fight thrown in.

We lifted them out of the waggons and arranged a bandage here and there. Only one or two of the wounds were very severe, but several of the men were in high fever due to the wounds going wrong. Two of the worst cases had died on the way in. They were all very hungry and thirsty, and were very grateful for the tea and bread we were able to give them. One was bound to admit that with the first strain, not a very great one at that, the medical transport had broken down; or rather, I should say, it was brought home to us that we were without adequate transport for dealing with wounded in warfare of this nature. The sergeant told me that a much larger number of wounded might be expected down soon. So we got this lot off to Swakupmund as quickly as possible, and instructed the waggons and motors to come out again immediately.

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I gleaned a little disjointed information about the fight. The Burghers seem to have been most gallant at one point, and made a frontal attack without the aid of artillery; one of the commandoes was on the point of surrendering, but Britz and the guns had saved them. Subsequently the German rear-guard of 200 had been captured.

Save in the river-bed, where there is a little grass and scrub, there is nothing to see at Nonidas except an ocean of sand and rock; and soon after it is up the sun beats down in a merciless stinging way, so that all thoughts other than finding shelter from it are driven from the mind. At noon even the very flies, which abound, seem scorched.

The officer in charge of the motor transport kindly offered me the hospitality of his tent and mess. And here I waited all day for wounded who did not come. Just as we were sitting down to supper, a company of the Rand Rifles turned up. They had been marching all day with prisoners, and were now on their way back to a water-hole, twenty miles farther on, where they were stationed. They hoped to get motor lorries here to convey them to their destination, but none were starting until the morning. Their Captain, an old sport, called for volunteers to foot-slog it. One grizzled warrior only stepped out of the ranks. However, after they had had a little refreshment and rest, eighteen were found willing to proceed. Their officers behaved with childish glee when they saw the little loaf of bread I produced, for they had not tasted any for three weeks. After supper the

Captain started off with the stalwart eighteen. I remember he said it was his birthday, so I gave him two tablets of "Oxo" to commemorate the event and cheer him through the long night-march before him.

It was a hot, stuffy night, and, although we were half a mile from the river-bed, mosquitoes were very bad. I had visions of malaria, which occurs in these parts a little, but when I had satisfied myself that they were the harmless *Culex* I went off to sleep.

March 23.—Our ambulance spent the day hanging about at Nonidas waiting for wounded, of whom we saw not a trace. I learnt a few details about transport and its difficulties from an officer in charge of eleven motor lorries, and whose base is here. These motor lorries are most serviceable, but, unfortunately, the condition of the roads limits their sphere of utility greatly. For although the general surface of the roads in these parts is hard if rough, and practicable for motors, sandy stretches or wide sluits occur every now and then, through which they are not able to go. Along this route, for instance, to get supplies up to the advanced base at Husab, the following procedure has to be gone through. Our new wide-gauge railway brings them to rail-head three miles from here; from rail-head to this depot mule waggons are employed, because it is too sandy for the motors across the bed of the Swakup. From here to a point called "42 Kilo" the lorries are able to work, but there another patch of sand intervenes, and mule

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transport is again requisitioned to complete the journey.

At the present time these eleven lorries are transporting everything for a force of 7,000 men over a distance of eighteen miles, and it means 500,000 pounds weight of stuff every week. As the lorries carry 6,000 pounds, each lorry has to make the journey eight or nine times a week. Some of the stronger ones are doing it twice a day. To drive a motor lorry eighty miles through a blazing desert in one day is a feat much greater than it may appear, but to continue to do so day after day and week after week, as these drivers are doing, without complaining, without kudos or reward, is a great test. While we were talking this over, one of the drivers came into the tent. He was filthy beyond description with grease, sand, and sweat, and his modest request was that he might be allowed to have to-morrow off to "clean himself up a bit," as he had had no opportunity to do so for a fortnight !

March 24.—The sick and wounded whom we were waiting for turned up at dawn, about sixty in all, including twenty of the enemy. Although they had been hit on the 20th or 21st, and had undergone considerable privation, none of the wounded, with the exception of one German, were doing very badly. More than anything else they were suffering from hunger and thirst, and they put away tea and bread as fast as we could supply them. The prisoners were subdued and obedient. From them and from our men we learnt a little of the doings of the last few

days. The Germans said that most of their troops had gone down to Aus to meet Mackenzie. The Germans held a very strong position along a ridge which they had fortified, and had guns in position. Two of our commandoes failed to carry out flanking movements, and Botha ordered a frontal attack partly because provisions and water were low and he could not delay. Albert's men were in a tight corner until relieved by artillery and Britz's advance. One battery of Germans was entirely destroyed—men, mules, and guns—by our artillery. In another place about a hundred of our horses were killed by maxim fire. They had been left in a kloof while the Burghers lined a neighbouring kopje. The Germans stalked them with a machine gun, stampeding the horses of a whole commando, and killing about a third of them. After their horses had gone, the Germans expected the men on the kopje would surrender; but they continued to hold the ridge until relieved.

Sunday and Monday our men followed up, occupying Jackalswater and Salem, the Germans offering little resistance, and retiring north after burning a lot of stores. Further advance for the present is not possible, owing to our long communications and the difficulty of getting up supplies. Infantry have been sent up to hold the positions won, and the tired Burghers are travelling back to Nonidas and Swakupmund. The Germans admit that they were very much surprised. They say they never expected such fighting, the Burghers riding at them in all directions, lying upon their horses' necks. Our losses were

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thirteen killed, thirty-eight wounded, and forty-three missing, mostly from Albert's brigade. I asked a German prisoner, "What about Maritz?" "Yes, he is at Windhuk." "You have not shot him, then?" "No; we are leaving that for you."

A Dutchman among the prisoners said to one of his compatriots: "My wife and children are at Karibib. When you go there, you must look after them. But keep to the ridges; the road and river are mined the whole way."

March 25.—At a dinner of medicoes to-night we discussed the periodic descent of soles and other fish in a stupefied condition to Walfisch Bay. Every year just at Christmas a very large number of fish, chiefly soles, are found floating in the bay, dead or dying. There is no doubt that this windfall of fish happened this year, for a well-known surgeon in Cape Town told me that when he went down to bathe one morning they were so plentiful that he filled his pyjamas with them, though he did not relate how he got back to camp. It is difficult to explain this phenomenon. People talk glibly of "volcanic action" and "sulphurous smell." But such agencies might be expected to operate at other times besides Christmas. It is much more probable that the fish are stupefied by gases resulting from vegetable decomposition; for, walking about in the lagoons here, one noticed in some places that bubbles in great quantity were escaping to the surface, and that the dirty black mud had distinctly the odour of sewage.

March 26.—Our camp is really becoming very un-

pleasant and insanitary. The men are much too crowded. This, combined with the dust, number of horses and mules, want of cleanliness on the part of the Burghers, and the prevalence of flies, is a grave menace to the health of the troops. Almost everybody who comes to Swakupmund suffers more or less from dysentery for a while, due partly to the laxative properties of the water. But there is a good deal more in it than that, and there seems to be little doubt that the men's food is being contaminated by dust and flies; for the illness our men are suffering from is in many cases severe and accompanied by fever in many ways resembling typhoid.

To give some sort of idea of the circumstances under which the men are living, I might describe the camp occupied by the — M.B.F.A. It is on a small patch of manure-polluted sand. To the north, 20 yards from the tents, is a railway embankment 20 feet high. On the same level, immediately beyond, is a dusty road up and down which horses and vehicles go the whole day long. To the east, 30 yards from the tents, are our horses and mules, 200 in number, as well as the latrines for the brigade. Beyond the horse lines in this direction are camps similar to ours. To the south, 40 yards away, are washing-places and grease-pits, a road along which 3,000 men and horses are continually moving to and fro. Immediately beyond this is the camp of the 3rd Brigade, and for about eighteen hours out of the twenty-four a strong wind blows from this direction. On the west, within 5 yards of our kitchens, are the transport lines for

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the 3rd Brigade, with hundreds of mules and natives. Thus we are surrounded on all sides by things any one of which is sufficient to condemn a camp.

In the town, Colonels and Majors of the medical and sanitary staff are falling over each other, and, in spite of our protests and entreaties, it seems to be nobody's business; for our camp is not even visited by those whose duty it is to attend to these matters. Nearly a quarter of our men parade sick every day, and, although the illnesses are not severe, the general health and *moral* will rapidly deteriorate if we stay here the month or so we expect to do. It is not very good for men to sit the greater part of the day and all the night in non-dustproof tents endeavouring to keep the flies off themselves and out of their food.

This evening we had a little diversion in the shape of a fire, a large store in one of the main streets making a fine blaze. The only explanation forthcoming to account for this outbreak was that it belonged to a firm of the name of Hertzog.

March 26.—The Burghers are a very peculiar army, wanting in discipline in camp, yet full of dash, energy, and endurance, in the field. I doubt whether any other troops would have made the sudden dash on Jackalswater and Riet as they did.

March 27.—I have learnt from a staff officer the real nature of the action at Jackalswater—how it succeeded, and where in part it failed. The Germans, about a thousand strong, occupied very good positions at Pforte, Jackalswater, and Riet, at the angles of

an equilateral triangle nine or ten miles apart. Jackalswater, at the apex between the other two places, is connected to them by railway, and was their line of retreat. The position at Riet was particularly strong. The German right rested on the



FIGHT AT PFORTE, JACKALSWATER AND RIET,

- G_1 , Germans at Pforte, captured.
- G_2 , Germans at Jackalswater, escaped.
- G_3 , Germans near Riet, escaped.
- W_1 , Water near Husab.
- W_2 , Water at Riet, partly destroyed by Germans.
- W_3 , Water at Salem.

Swakup River, their fire enflading its bed; the left was protected by a very steep mountain, Langer Heinrich, the foot-hills of which they had occupied and fortified. Between the river and the mountain, an open space 800 yards long rendered a frontal attack very difficult. The Germans expected General

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Botha to attack at one or other of these points. His idea was to attack and outflank all three simultaneously, so that reinforcements could not reach one point from either of the other two. With this object in view, he concentrated the 1st Brigade (Britz), the 2nd Brigade (Albert's), and the Transvaal Horse Artillery, 6,000 men in all, at Husab, about twenty-five miles from the German positions, on Friday, the 19th. This was done quickly and secretly, the bulk of the men only leaving Swakupmund on the evening of the 18th.

On the night of the 19th the left wing of Albert's brigade (Collins) was sent round the north of the Pforteberg to cut the line above Jackalswater, and also to attack the place at dawn. It meant a night march of some forty or fifty miles through most difficult and puzzling country, and the guide may be pardoned for bringing them on to the line on the wrong side of Jackalswater, between that place and Pforte. Collins attacked Jackalswater, but was, of course, between two German positions. The right wing of Albert's brigade attacked Pforte as instructed, and the Germans, here between the two wings of the brigade, surrendered during the day. Britz's brigade was detailed to attack the position at Riet, and here also the flanking movement was not carried out. In fact, it was a complete failure, for Bezuidenhout's commando never got round the mountain Langer Heinrich *via* Tinkas at all. It is not clear why this flanking movement was not carried out, because an officer who was there said there was a road, and that

his sergeant went along it right down to Salem; but instead of doing so this commando returned to Husab and the river early in the afternoon. In consequence of these flanking movements not being carried out, the Germans at Riet and at Jackalswater were able to escape, which they did during the afternoon.

A German artilleryman taken prisoner in the recent fight paid a glowing tribute to the manner in which his battery was stalked. They were on an eminence, and he had just trained his gun on some horsemen advancing on his right front. "Don't fire there," said his officer. "Shoot at these men in our left rear." While he was turning the gun round they were shot at by riflemen on their right rear, and the officer was slightly wounded. "What shall I do?" said the gunner. "Wait a moment," replied the officer. "I will be all right, and will direct your fire." Just as he spoke a shell fell on them, as if from the clouds. It decapitated the wounded officer and killed the mules. Another and another shell, and the gunner was the only living thing left in the vicinity. "I then crawled under the gun and took out my rifle. The battery never fired a shot," he concluded.

I have had conversations with a number of boys (most of them were little more) who took part in the fight and were wounded. In one bright little ward at the Antonius Hospital are three youths who were severely wounded. They are on the highroad to recovery, and are very cheerful and happy. They do not seem to realize in the slightest what they have

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gone through or what they have been doing; for they relate their experiences of killing and being killed in a flippancy, cheerful manner that is rather terrible. One with the eyes of a cherub, and another child whose downy beard may or may not have experienced the razor, were with Collins in the attack upon Jackals-water. Early in the afternoon they found themselves on a small kopje with but little shelter, only 300 yards from some Germans who were sheltering in railway waggons and in one or two small houses.

Said the Child: "We could not see the Germans very well, but whenever we saw a little smoke our fellows let rip at it. They had a little black dog which stood in front and wagged his tail, but we did not shoot at it." "Men kept crawling up behind us," interrupted the Cherub, "and firing off their rifles close to our heads, at anything they could see. It made my head ache. Somebody put his rifle very near my ear. 'Don't shoot,' I said; 'there is nothing to aim at.' 'I'll let them have it through the windows, anyhow,' he said; and he put a bullet through each of the four windows of the little house. Just then M—— hit a German, under a truck, in the leg. He got up and limped off to get behind a big stone. We didn't shoot at him while he was going; I don't know why. M—— looked out to see where the man was, and I saw the pith fly out at the back of his helmet. I thought he was shot through the helmet, but he sank down dead without a sound. The German looked out, and I shot him. I know he was dead because he threw up his arms." "But the

worst was," said the Child, "when we had to clear. We got on our horses, and bullets were falling all round. My arm was so painful I had to hold it with my other hand, and put the reins in my teeth. Twice my horse stumbled, but we got away. We came to a Scotch cart, and were put in, the Cherub and I. We lost our way all Sunday and till Monday. We had plenty of food, but no water. We tried to eat biscuits, but they came out of our mouths like powder. I shan't forget that drive! But I'm going back if the gov'ner lets me."

March 28.—I took a snap of the house occupied by General Botha, a large place north of the jetty. The General's underclothing was drying in the yard, and his fowls were in the same place, acting up to their great responsibilities, with a cow or two as well standing about. We hear he has to be very careful about food, on account of health; hence the milk and eggs. We were all very depressed a little while ago when we heard of his ill-health. "Who else would be able to keep this heterogeneous crowd up to the scratch?" was in everybody's mind. One hears many tales of his skill, humour, and kindness. There has been a good deal of feeling in certain regiments, caused by their not being employed in the recent fighting—a feeling which was quite unjustifiable, I should say. The Colonel of a certain mounted regiment was taking leave of the General. "Good-bye, sir; I hope you won't forget the regiment next time." Botha replied: "No, next time Briton and Boer shall bleed in the same field."

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March 31.—To-day the whole brigade was reviewed on the flat to the east of the town by the Commander-in-Chief. Thirty squadrons of well-equipped horsemen made a gallant show. Our position was on the extreme left of the line. At 10.30 the General, on a white charger, appeared with a small staff. He passed us, looking well and bronzed, with a "Good-morning, Major!" He then went and stood under the Union Jack, this man of the Tugela, and his friends and old enemies marched past, we with the ambulance coming last. We felt rather idiotic, for our motors stuck in the sand under the General's very nose, where we tried not to see them. Three cheers for the General closed the proceedings. His only advice to the men was to look after their horses. Men with horses in poor condition were a menace to themselves and to him. To our O.C. he simply said: "How are your mules?" Everything now depends on the energy of the transport to form other bases, the fighting units being in grand condition and high spirits. Four mounted brigades, 2,500 to 3,000 men each; two infantry brigades, 2,000 men each; besides a few units like the I.L.H., artillery, etc.—about 16,000 men altogether.

April 2.—During the night we had a very heavy thunderstorm—at least, tremendous thunder and lightning with a few points of rain. This is most unusual for Swakupmund. They say you might be here thirty years and never see another. So far we have not had a hot day on the coast. The highest the thermometer has been in my tent is 23° C., and

the lowest 15°. The prevailing wind at this time of the year is south-west, and, judging from the direction of the sand-hills, it must be the prevailing one at all times. A typical twenty-four hours here is—Six a.m. a cold mist, almost a drizzle. By 10 a.m. this has gradually cleared away, especially if a light breeze rises from the east. Then until three or four in the afternoon the day is bright and warm. Then a cool sea-breeze begins to blow, bringing up the mist which one can generally see during the day as a thick bank on the western horizon. This mist rarely extends inland more than five or six miles.

I visited the sand-dunes. This particular lot extend from Walfisch to the Swakup. Inland, at varying distances of several miles, they gradually merge into the desert. Imagine a hard gravelly substratum covered with a layer of fine sand 20 feet deep. By the action of the continual south-west wind this layer of sand is by degrees blown into irregular banks until the gravelly substratum is exposed, forming little intervening plains varying from a few feet up to many hundred yards in extent. The irregular banks are naturally raised like waves in lines running roughly at right angles to the direction of the wind—that is, their long axis is north-east. On the windward side the banks make an angle of 40 degrees with the horizontal, but on the lee side the sand is piled up at the highest angle at which it can stand, and this is, roughly, 60 degrees. The top edge of the banks is very well defined, and when the wind is strong it blows the sand away from the edge,

whirling it about and giving one the idea of a miniature volcano in eruption, the sand always falling down on the lee side. Consequently, each dune must be slowly but surely travelling in a north-easterly direction. The sand on the lee side is smooth and loose, and it is very difficult to climb a dune on this side, both on account of the steepness and also because the sand comes tumbling down when the attempt is made. But on the windward side the surface is hard and firm, horses' hoofs making but little impression. On very close inspection you can generally see the surface sand slowly creeping up this side when it is blowing. The wind also causes the surface to be "ribbed," as is often seen on the seashore as the result of the waves. The wind soon obliterates footprints here, and the stillness and desolation are not to be described. A few bleached bones of sea-birds here and there are the only signs of inhabitants, and, as one saw no sign of living birds, I presume they only come here to die in peace and alone.

April 4.—We explored the bed of the Swakup to-day for several miles from its mouth. At first it is very wide—say half a mile or so—and there are only a few bushes in it. The river had been down recently, and had deposited a lot of shining mica-mud which had dried and cracked into laminated plates, giving the bed an odd crinkled appearance. Several miles farther up there is grass in the river, and a few pools of water, which, however, is too salt for the horses to drink. Hereabouts the bed of the river is more constricted and has high banks. On the right there

is a beautiful reef of white marble scintillating in the bright sun, while the left is composed of loose sandstone.

Higher up is a farm-hotel known as the Egg Farm. It was a resort of pleasure-seeking Swakupmunders, and much in vogue for honeymoons. It is, however, only a third-rate country inn, and it had been practically destroyed, including a fine skittle-alley. We were much interested in the garden. Lilliputian beds planted with cabbages, etc., had been laid out with most elaborate care. Great pains had been taken to irrigate it, tiny concrete canals leading the water on, each bed having a little wooden sluice-gate. Cabbages must have been worth their weight in gold in Swakupmund to warrant such expenditure and labour on them.

April 7.—The Burghers are becoming restive, sitting among the dust and flies doing nothing, and getting not very good reports concerning farming operations at home. But to-day the General addressed the assembled brigade in a very masterful and tactful speech, and everybody seemed to go away pleased. Men who came scowling cheered, and went away smiling. Thus a few tactful words smoothed over what might have been a very awkward situation if roughly handled.

April 9.—We hear the Rehoboth Bastard Hottentots are favourably disposed towards us, and have offered help which the General has wisely declined. He has further warned them that German women and children are especially to be respected. Their chief

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Van Wyk has replied that it will be difficult to restrain his men, as the Germans had herded their women and children and shot them down during "rebellions."

April 10.—I went down to Walfisch by train on a little business. Very great improvement had taken place, and everything was being done in a much more systematic manner. The railway accommodation had been much increased, and there were new facilities for discharging vessels. A large aviation shed is in course of construction. It is shaped like the letter **E**, and is 90 yards long and 30 yards wide. The officer in charge hoped to be ready to begin operations at the end of the month. They were equipped with the very latest biplanes, but he feared their use would be limited in this difficult country. The bush would hamper observation, and alighting in positions unprepared would be fraught with danger. The absence of roads, too, would make it difficult for their motor-cars to follow up with supplies, and to effect repairs when necessary. Dropping bombs where you wanted to, he said, was most difficult, and greatly a matter of luck.

April 11.—The train was timed to leave Walfisch at 6 a.m. It was pitch black at that time, cold, and raining. We stumbled about among all sorts of obstacles, looking for the train. Finally I ran up against a man carrying a lamp in an aimless sort of way, and asked him where the train for Swakupmund was. He replied rather snappily: "Can't you see I'm the guard and I'm looking for it myself?" At last we found some loaded trucks, and, arguing that

these would probably belong to the train, we climbed into one in which there was a motor-car with the tent up. Here we were comfortably out of the wind and rain. It was a strange experience, bumping along the coast in the pale grey dawn seated in a motor-car on a goods-train.

April 17.—While we have been idle the transport and engineers have been busy. The wide-gauge railway is being pushed rapidly up towards Karibib, and the narrow-gauge from Rossing towards Riet nears completion. Lately many men have volunteered for this work, including some medicals who are working like navvies. The Burghers are also employed unloading lighters and putting the bales of lucerne, etc., into railway trucks, but they prefer to sit on the pier dangling their legs and fishing. Gangs of men are also employed tearing up the narrow-gauge railway in the town to be used on the Riet line. We are short of everything for this light railway, not only rails, but rolling stock, and particularly engines, only having two of the latter, I believe, and no chance of getting more. A Herero and his wife came to-day. They say all the German women and children have left the farms, and are flocking into the towns, particularly Windhuk. Very few troops are left at Windhuk, and they don't think the Germans will defend it. The Deutschers are "plenty frightened," "cannot sleep at night," etc. But we put little faith in what they say, because we know very well that a Bantu will always tell you what he thinks you would like to hear.

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Our scouts tell us the Germans are concentrating along a front from Karibib to Tsaobis. They know we have over 30,000 men, but they say we are not to be feared, for our men are only "dissipated farmers and swineful fat-bellies." The Burghers certainly treated the prisoners with scant ceremony. They were not long, either, in finding out that a German's water-bottle generally contained rum. In fact, there is very little doubt that a lot of the courage of our present enemies is of the variety known as "Dutch."

April 22.—There are several Ovampos working in the camp. They belong to a wild Bantu tribe inhabiting the Portuguese border, and have not been subdued by the Germans. Our authorities are alive to the fact that these men, who have offered their services as drivers, may be German spies, although they profess to have a great hatred for them. These Ovampos have a peculiar custom of extracting the central incisor teeth top and bottom. The lateral incisors are then filed to a point, which gives them a very uncanny and ferocious expression.

To-day we have received definite orders to move out from Swakupmund on the 26th. This is very good news, for the place and delay have got on a good many nerves. Sand has blown into the wheels of the army, with resulting friction, and there has been a good deal of petty quarrelling, in which the medical service has figured largely.

April 23.—One of our recreations is to visit the well-kept cemetery and read the inscriptions on the graves. All people seem to die young in Swakup-



GERMAN CAMEL CORPS.



mund. Very many young men in the twenties are lying here, the victims of enteric and malaria. Babies seem to have no chance at all. Most of them die within the first few months from intestinal complaints, I hear. Walking about in this depressing place, I met a very disconsolate-looking Burgher. I thought perhaps he was looking for the last resting-place of a near and dear friend. I started a sympathetic conversation. He was very depressed, rather wild-looking, and said he could not sleep. He was perfectly certain he would shortly be killed by a mine. He had seen much fighting, but the idea of mines was terrifying to him, and he considered it a very unfair and unsportsmanlike way of fighting. I tried to cheer him by telling him of our latest idea for saving the men from these explosions—namely, driving a large flock of goats in front of the advancing troops. He replied he knew about it, and had seen the goats. He thought it might have worked, but the natives had discovered the duties of these animals, and none of them at any price would undertake the work of driving the goats forward. So that the plan would have to be abandoned.

Beyond the European cemetery is what is said to be the native burial-place. Rows and rows of little heaps of sand occupy about a thousand yards of desert. Some of these heaps have rude little crosses of sticks placed on them. It was very puzzling to explain why so many natives were buried near Swakupmund, in a place that was not even enclosed. I decided to ask permission to open one or two of

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these graves, for it seemed possible that, if I did not find a fine specimen of a bushman skull, I might discover valuables that Swakupmunders had placed underground for safety's sake. Unfortunately, we were moved out of Swakupmund before I could get leave to do this.

CHAPTER IV

THE TREK

April 26.—This morning we left our fetid camp, our destination Husab, 59 kilometres from Swakupmund. The orders we received were to go out to Nonidas, and from there proceed with the artillery and their escort. We could see that a general move was on. The 3rd and 5th Brigades had struck camp at dawn, and were engaged in making great fires to burn their rubbish. Transport and guns were all moving out on the Nonidas road. A feeling of excitement and of great things impending seemed to be reflected from every face. Oh, the relief to breathe fresh air and have something to do! At Nonidas we outspanned to allow the heat of the day to pass, and we were a little disconcerted to see no sign of guns or escort. News has come through that the Germans are attacking our extreme left, the infantry on the line at a place called Trekkoppi. A glance at the map will show that this is a very strategic move, for if they succeed in pushing us in here they might threaten our railway to Riet, or even cut our lines of communication with Swakupmund. We are glad to hear that the 2nd Kimberleys are there, a regiment of old veterans, also the Rhodesians and the I.L.H.

on. During the night we passed them twice, and they passed us three times. As far as we could judge in the moonlight, the greater part of the country over which we were passing was a large plateau, and the Burghers, riding over a wide front, could not be avoided when we lay down to rest a little. It was like two men locked in an embrace rolling over and over each other. Once I awoke to see tremendous horses, as they appeared in the dust, prancing over me. When we off-saddled the second time, we made little kraals with our saddles to avoid being ridden over by commandoes coming on behind. It was very cold, and the night was fine; but a great pall of dust hung over everything like a cloud, often obscuring even the moon.

The bivouacs of the Burghers are very impressive. In the distance you would see a black patch on the sand, absolutely still and silent. This patch resolves itself into an orderly arrangement of men, saddles, and horses, perhaps arranged in long lines, each man lying with a horse and saddle at his head. Sometimes the horses are tied in circles of twenty or so, heads inwards, and the men sleep round. At other times the men would just dismount for a few minutes, and were leaning against their horses, quiet, motionless, and observant. Not a horse neighed or stirred, and on a dark night you might pass within 10 yards of a commando without realizing that they were there.

April 27.—About 8 a.m. we arrived at Husab. The Burghers had all passed us during the night for the last time, and the ambulance was rumbling along

sedately on a great flat plain, conscious that we were more or less up to time. With dramatic suddenness we came upon a yawning chasm, as if the earth had opened at our feet. This was Husab, just a volcanic fissure about 100 yards wide. Down the centre ran a narrow path, the sides studded with little spitzkopjes, irregular ledges of rock, and caves, all below the general level of the desert. Here our friends the Burghers were resting. Men and horses were crowded up the slopes of the little kops like chamois. The effect of mirage greatly elongated the figures, the rocks, and everything. The chasm seemed to be filled with bright pink smoke, due to the sunrise upon the dust. Attenuated little fires crackled here and there, men as slender as telegraph-poles crowding round. It was as if one had come upon some distorted, demented dwellers of the nether regions.

There is nothing at Husab beyond rocks and sand, no shelter, and the water is three or four miles away in the river-bed. Consequently, all the animals had to be taken this extra distance for a drink. Without resting, I went on ahead of the brigade to Riet, the next stage, taking the motor ambulances with me. The same primitive mountains continue on the left, and on the right is a dreary plain, the Tinkas Flats, marked on the map as a game reserve—I suppose to impress the Deutschers at home; for there never was, and never will be, any game on the Tinkas Flats, nor a blade of grass for them to eat, either. The road was hot and dusty, and the motors had all their work

cut out to get through. The road here was dotted with dead horses, but, except for an occasional motor-cyclist, we did not see a living thing, being well ahead of all troops now. The endurance and skill of these motor-cyclist despatch-riders is truly wonderful. Freezing nights and broiling days do not deter them. In the bad places, to get through, they run the engine and also push with their feet upon the ground, zig-zagging along at all angles with the vertical. How they maintain their equilibrium is a marvel. At Nabus the road enters the bed of the Swakup. Here I saw one or two acacias, the first trees of any kind we had come across in the country. The position the Germans had chosen to defend was very strong. To the south they had a great red granite mountain, Langer Heinrich; to the north the river-bed and a jumbled mass of rocks beyond. In front of the position a wide sandy slope extended for half a mile. They evacuated this place because their right at Jackalswater was turned.

Riet is a water-hole and a collection of fine trees in the bed of the river. There is but a single building, and this is only a tin shanty, now being used by us as a base hospital. The trees are quite a feature, and are a species of acacia known locally as the "anna." It grows as large as an oak, and the pods, the size of that of the broad bean, are used as food for animals. The river-bed here must be nearly a mile wide, the great trees giving it a park-like appearance; but the dust and heat are very trying, for the sand in the river-bed is of a light consistency, like

flour, and the rocks on either side of the river, sweltering in the sun, seem to focus the heat rays in the river-bed. It was two o'clock when our motors pulled up at Riet, and the padre, who was with me, decided that nothing short of a bath would restore him to the normal. We voiced this modest request at the hospital, but the best they could do was a small bucket. Padre, however, espied a foot-spray pump, and at once hit upon the brilliant idea of using this in lieu of a bath. So we took the bucket and pump to the well and sprayed each other until we were clean and cool. Here I formed the mental resolution that, were I ever responsible for the health of a body of men where water was scarce, a spray pump with a fine nozzle should be a *sine qua non*.

Last night the enemy came down to attack Riet; but it was a very half-hearted affair, for on their way they had accidentally exploded one of their own mines, which had damped their enthusiasm considerably. Another attack is expected to-night, and the garrison, the Rand Rifles, hope to cover themselves with glory. Nobody here except padre and I seem to know there will be 6,000 Burghers here before dawn to-morrow. But no doubt the Germans are aware of this, and are making themselves scarce. So that I think our gallant infantry will draw a blank among the cold rocks to-night.

It puzzles me why a Burgher force has a sanitary service at all. The Burghers certainly like to have doctors when they go into action, but they expect nothing elaborate. Just a bandage when hit, a little

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something out of a flask, and the assurance that they cannot possibly recover, satisfies. But that assurance must come from a real doctor, and they shout loudly until he comes; a Red Cross orderly suffices not. Transport of wounded, hospitals and operations are things that do not worry the average Boer General. If he has a docile Africander doctor with the commando it is enough for him; and for this kind of business his idea is not very far wrong, where mobility is everything. The reason why this Northern Force is such a medley is not far to seek. The fighting leaders have Africander ideas, and the administrative leaders have European ideas. The two at present are no more miscible than oil and water.

April 28.—The 3rd and 5th Brigades arrived at Riet early this morning. The bulk of them did not stay long, but watered their horses and moved on towards Salem. Later in the day the brigade trains came in, and our ambulance. After struggling through the sand for two days and nights men and animals were somewhat exhausted. Moreover nobody had had more than snatches of sleep, and we were in hopes that at least twenty-four hours' respite would be given us. But at 4 p.m. the order came to move on again to Salem. It was now gradually being borne in upon us that we were engaged in a neck or nothing rush, our objective Otjimbingwe, or even Windhuk, enemy permitting. Further, it was obvious that the transport would be out of it, for the heavy mule waggons could not be expected to live at this pace. At Swakupmund before leaving we

had reduced our kit to an absolute minimum. Here again it was obvious that more things must be left behind, and we modified our ideas of what the absolute minimum was.

From Riet to Salem the river runs in a gorge with precipitous mountains on either side, and to get there at all is a matter of keeping in the river-bed, which is very sandy and loose. It was as much as the mules could do to pull the waggons through, and in addition the motor ambulances had to be towed. It took the transport four hours to do this stage of seven miles. Troops and transport trekking up the river gave it the appearance of a busy thoroughfare, although, instead of buildings on either side, we had the glorious anna-trees, and beyond the gold, the red and purple mountains. German graves were dotted here and there, generally indicated by a white cross and placed on a little hill. Against the skyline these crosses were very conspicuous, standing up like ghosts with outstretched arms pointing to man's brutal handiwork.

It was just getting dusk when we came upon a commando, off-saddled on one side of the river. Suddenly several men ran out from the group with their rifles ready, and we heard the bolts click as they crept stealthily forward. "A lion! a lion!" passed from mouth to mouth. "Only a — old rock!" a laughing corporal predicted. And so it turned out, but we had had our thrill.

By the time we got to Salem it was almost dark. Several thousand men were trying to water as many

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horses at a long row of troughs. Pandemonium reigned; you could not see an inch for dust, nor hear yourself speak. In a trice I lost my bearings and all sight of my own corps. A lot of loose wire lay on the ground, horses were floundering and falling, men calling and cursing. As soon as I could extricate myself from this seething mass, I made towards some little bivouac fires on the mountain-side. Fortunately, the same idea occurred to most of our men, and by degrees, more by good luck than good management, we all got together again. Dry wood being plentiful, we lit fires on the mountain-side, and made hot drinks. The garrison, a company of the Rand Rifles, were camping in caves and so on. Their fires and ours looked like so many little infernos.

I was sitting apart, boiling a little water and waiting for my confrères, when the sergeant in charge of a picket came up and started a conversation. With very little encouragement, he began to talk about his family in Cape Town, and produced photographs of his children. He told me how he had saved a particularly delicate one suffering from diphtheria, after the doctors had despaired, his method being the application of recently killed and opened kittens to the throat. I think he said they must be black kittens. He continued in this strain to glorify himself, to the disparagement of my noble profession, until I offered him a cigarette, and as I held a match for him he was able to see that he was addressing an officer of the medical corps, when he suddenly re-

membered that his corporal was not very reliable, and German scouts were prowling about.

We entertained to supper two officers of the transport. They had been engaged in most tough and exhausting work getting waggons up from the coast. They assured us it would take nine days to get provisions up to Karibib or Otjimbingwe, and they disclaimed any further responsibility of feeding the troops. For the immediate future we must "live on the land." One of these officers was the D.A.Q.M.G. of our brigade. He said Karibib was our immediate objective. The 1st and 2nd Brigades, under Britz, were marching on this place. The 3rd and 5th Brigades, under Myburg, had for their immediate objective Otjimbingwe. Once there, the Germans would be in doubt as to whether Karibib or Windhuk was aimed at. If the Germans concentrated against Britz, we, the 3rd and 5th, were to slip into Karibib from behind; if, on the other hand, they concentrated against us at Tsaobis or Otjimbingwe, Britz might take Karibib without fighting. In the event of Karibib being captured and our receiving little check, we were to spread out on the railway from Karibib to Okahandya, and threaten Windhuk from the north, not from the west. If we got hold of the line from Karibib to Okahandya, then the German forces would be cut in two. Those in the south would be between Botha's army and Mackenzie's, Berrangé's, and Van der Venter's, who were all concentrating on Keetmanshoop. The Germans in the north, if they did not offer battle, would

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retire to Omaruru, possibly to Otavi and Groot-fontein.

At 11 p.m. we received orders to move on to Tsaobis, forty odd miles of river-bed and desert. There was no water between here and Tsaobis, and no doubt the Germans would destroy the wells or poison the water at this latter place. Ambushes and mines were highly probable. The troops had moved on towards Tsaobis at 6 p.m. The Germans were expected to defend it, so the ambulances must move up without delay. The base hospital from Riet had to-day been advanced to Salem.

It was now Wednesday night. Nobody had rested since Sunday. We had traversed eighty miles of desert, much of it on foot, every step an effort. In an exhausted condition we were called upon to do another forty miles to Tsaobis, possibly another sixty to Otjimbingwe. It did not need much reflection to realize that defeat or delay at either of these places would reduce us to a very critical state from thirst and fatigue, possibly from hunger, too.

Here our O.C. decided to push on with the ambulances, leaving the heavy transport behind to give the mules twenty-four hours' rest. As the road still ran in the river-bed, it was necessary to employ some of our mules to drag the motors through the sand until the road emerged from the river. We set off at midnight. The river was full of holes and gullies, and had it not been moonlight our waggons would very soon have come to grief. As it was, it took us all our time to get them along, and after an hour's

hard work the two miles of river-bed were accomplished and a fairly decent road seemed to lie before us. We were quite without a guide, and had nothing but the spoor of the column to direct us. Scouts had told us that after leaving the river-bed the road was quite practicable for motors. So we sent back the teams of mules we had used for the motors so far. The cars started off, and the rest of the ambulance followed. We had not gone more than a mile when we could hear that the motors in front were in difficulties, and we very soon came up with them in the river, again up to their axles in sand. Those of us who had the energy pushed them for three hours through the sand, finally emerging from the river again at 5 a.m. We were utterly done, neither man nor mule equal to another step. Referring to the map, I found that we had averaged a mile an hour since we left Salem. Two hours' rest were allowed. It was freezing hard, and the rocks we were on were like ice. In the confusion at Salem my orderly had mislaid my blankets, and I was much too cold to sleep at all, so sat drumming my feet on a rock, moodily contemplating the joys of a campaign without blankets.

April 29.—We had trekked so badly during the night that even our short rest had to be curtailed, and before dawn, without refreshment, we pushed on. A stiff climb brought us out of the gorge on to the high veldt, where grass and a few trees began to appear. The grass was perfectly white from the frosts, and, until it became light, was invisible. The

trees were all stunted acacias, just one here and there. To our right were the great granite mountains, bare, cold, and desolate. An undulating plain lay before us, as far as the eye could reach. On the horizon, perhaps fifteen miles away, we could see a cloud of dust rising up to the sky, no doubt caused by the tail end of the two brigades in front of us. We pushed on with all eagerness, well knowing that every moment it was getting hotter and hotter. At eleven we stopped a little while for refreshment, the sun being so hot that we were glad to have the shade of the waggon. We turned our horses and mules loose for them to graze. No doubt the animals would consider the word "graze" rather too euphemistic in this connection; for the grass, such as it was, needed careful looking for.

An "indaba" was held. Here we were, still thirty miles from Tsaobis, and our brigade, for all we knew, might by now be heavily engaged. Two officers were sent on in the motor ambulances, with orders to get to Tsaobis as soon as possible, to return and report to the rest of the ambulance if necessary. The O.C. and I with the mounted men were to push on as fast as we could. The dismounted men and the ambulance waggon were to do the same. This meant breaking up our unit most horribly, for our heavier transport was already twenty-four hours behind. It practically came to each man and each waggon making for Tsaobis as best he or it could. We had not gone very far when a man stood up and stopped us at the entrance to a drift across a small river; he

pointed out a mine area, and showed us how to avoid it. By making a *détour* we all passed safely over. After we had gone on a little way, it occurred to me that sooner or later a man left at a lonely drift to warn troops and convoys would either go to sleep, move on, or in some way or other fail to warn people of the danger. So I returned with the intention of putting up notices. Just as I got back to the drift, I was horrified to see an ambulance waggon making straight for the mined area, the leading mules being about where the contacts were supposed to be. It was tricky work getting the waggon off. The few brief moments seemed like an eternity. Past, present, and future were blotted out; my feet seemed to be the only things that mattered, and it was as if they were quite detached from me, and a long way away. "Look where you put your feet! Look where you put your feet!" rang in my ears to the exclusion of every other sound. How strange to put my foot down next time, and not to see it, not to see anything, now or ever!

We made some danger-signals with red bandanas from the necks of two orderlies, and long splints from the ambulance waggons. Then we rolled big stones into the drift on both sides, scrawled notices, and put them up. Never shall I forget the trials of this noon and afternoon; the sun blistered even the sand. Being now far behind, I travelled on alone several miles. Nothing but sand, rocks, dust, intolerable heat, thirst, and fatigue. I overtook a vet. and a scout travelling together. They seemed more woe-

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begone than I. We pursued the endless track together. I asked the vet. how long horses would be able to endure these conditions without water. He thought three days, mules not so long. We began to see signs that the troops in front of us were in trouble. Dead horses lay in the road, sometimes with a brown patch beside them, showing how their agonies had been terminated. Men had discarded their rations, their blankets, their mess-tins, in the mad rush. These things were to be seen in the road, and particularly at spots where they had bivouacked; everything a soldier uses might be seen, except rifles and water-bottles.

We passed an old Burgher escorting a young man who from excitement and fatigue had gone off his head; both they and their horses seemed *in extremis*. Without interest or notice of their surroundings, they were mechanically crawling along, the old man some 20 yards in front of the youth, whose wild and haggard aspect proclaimed his unhappy condition. I suggested to the old man that he should remove the lunatic's rifle, but he said it was not necessary, and it kept the youth quiet to think he was pursuing an enemy. I felt a little nervous that he might take me for the enemy in question, but he sat there clutching his rifle like an automaton without appearing to see us. Late in the afternoon I overtook the men of the ambulance struggling along, and we rested awhile under the shade of a bank. The men showed great restraint in not drinking the water out of their water-bottles, and every man seemed to

realize that he might be ten times more thirsty to-morrow. Blankets, haversacks, and tins of bully beef were strewn in the road more and more thickly the farther we went. I picked up a large twelve-pound tin of beef and fastened it to my saddle, but I could not persuade others to do the same. Salt beef without water seemed too great a mockery. The argument that they might be hungry to-night rather than thirsty did not seem to appeal to them. Under great privation men seem very soon to disregard the future or the making of plans concerning it; present miseries are all-absorbing. It is a dangerous condition to arrive at, and is speedily followed by the "let us lie down and die" state of mind if the circumstances do not improve.

Towards evening we began to overtake bodies of men trekking after the troops, engineers, ammunition carts, and so on. All were silent, and the animals looked ready to drop. At sunset we overtook our motor-cars at Franke's Well. We had encouraged ourselves with the expectation of finding water here, but the stones we threw in fell down with a dry, dry thud, and, looking down, one could see the well had been partially filled in with rocks. The men in the motor-cars told us that Tsaobis had been occupied by our troops, but whether there was water there or not they could not say. The motorists had had a most gruelling day, frequently having had to push the cars, and when we came up they were engaged in pulling one of the cars up a steep hill with a rope.

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When the sun went down we felt much happier, less thirsty, and more capable of effort. The un-wisdom of trekking during the day was made most clear to us, but in this case, in our endeavour to keep up with the troops, we were bound to go day and night. Soon we saw camp fires blinking in the distance, but they never seemed to get any nearer, and it was nine o'clock before we rode into Tsaobis. There was only a single building here, a police barrack, looming large and white in the moonlight and dust. Men and horses were moving about like ghosts in all directions, but mostly towards the sound of a pump that we could hear going.

No music to my ears will ever resemble the rhythmic squeak of that little hand pump. But, alas! the sudden revulsion of feeling akin to dismay to find it dry! "Where's water? Where's water?" everybody was asking. "There's a dam five miles away with plenty in," somebody said. "No, that dam is dry; I been there," said another. "It isn't; houses could swim in it half an hour ago." And so on. We heard that some people were digging for water in the river and getting a little. Like a man who has seen another fail to get his pennyworth out of an automatic machine, I tried the pump handle. Not a drop came. Stones fell down with even a drier thud than at Franke's. One of our men climbed down and reported it dry. I noticed a little water in a cement trough under the pump, and I scooped out a billy-tin-ful. It looked like strong chocolate in the moonlight. I strained it through a towel. It then looked

like strong coffee. We decided not to drink it. My old horse "Joffre" sucked it up, tin and all almost, and swallowed it in one frantic gulp. I then took a sponge and mopped up another tinful muddier than the first. I offered this to our sergeant-major's horse, and was almost trampled by the other horses in my efforts to do so. We decided to try the river. We climbed over some rocks and a dead horse or two to get into the river-bed. Men and horses—the latter at least half frantic—were struggling, slipping, and thrusting, in their endeavours to do the same. By going farther down the river-bed I found a hole already dug, 6 feet deep, the moonlight reflected at the bottom. I jumped down the sides, falling in as I tried to get to the water. By scooping away with my mess-tin I managed to hand up to the O.C. enough water to give ten of our horses about a gallon each. Then at dawn we desisted and lay down, our thirst slaked a little with water that appealed to the palate rather than to sight.

The Germans had managed to slip out of Tsaobis before our men got round them. As to their numbers I could gather nothing definite, but it is probable that there were not more than a hundred. The commandants had intended to remain at Tsaobis until to-morrow, but General Botha came up and ordered an immediate advance to Otjimbingwe. This was a very fine effort, and the tired troops moved out at 3 a.m. I was glad when they went, for some of their hungry horses were on the opposite side of the wall against which I was lying, and to hear them

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chewing at sticks and tree-trunks was not very cheerful.

April 30.—I suppose Tsaobis owes its existence to the fact of having a little water under normal conditions, for beyond this it has nothing to recommend it. The police camp and a pump are on the bank of a small river surrounded by a few decrepit-looking trees. Opposite the camp are three regular little spitzkopjes which give the place a quaint appearance. The greater part of the day was spent by us in getting water out of the river-bed. Hundreds of men were engaged in the same way, digging holes in the sand 5 or 6 feet deep, and then waiting for a little muddy water to collect at the bottom. Fortunately, the ambulance had spades, but many poor fellows were digging the sand with meat-tins, billy-tins, or even their hands. At times there was a good deal of competition for the best situations, but on the whole the thirsty men exercised much self-restraint. I had found a good hole the night before, a long way up the river and among some secluded rocks. So I went there again, but was disappointed to see the tousled head of a Burgher pop out of it, and so had to begin operations anew. By working all morning we managed to get sufficient water for our needs, and, by allowing it to settle for an hour or so, really decent drinking water was obtained. We treated some with alum, which quickly made it quite clear and limpid, although it detracted considerably from its palatableness.

There was no grazing for animals in the vicinity,

and there were many hungry men, too. An officer in charge of the rear-guard came to us saying they were literally starving. After a little consideration I gave him the big tin of bully I had picked up, but we could spare nothing else. I said he had better open the tin before leaving. Great was the tension until it was discovered that the meat was fresh. During the day we fed several stragglers who seemed to be on the verge of collapse. In an outhouse, too, we found some men who were not well enough to proceed. We collected water, food, and bedding, for them, and left them to their fate.

Our transport turned up during the afternoon. One mule had to be shot. The condition of these animals made us set to work to lighten the waggons still further, and much useful kit and equipment was left behind here, including one of our operating-tables, tents for hospital, and much bedding. The Colonel in charge of our brigade had gone off, leaving us only the vague instructions "to follow the spoor of the ammunition carts." Hardly liking to act upon such orders, we managed to get into communication with the Chief of Staff, who ordered us on to Otjimbingwe at sunset.

As soon as it was cooling and the animals had rested a little, we moved out on the Otjimbingwe road. This trek was almost enjoyable, although we walked the greater part of the night, our horses being so done up. From various distant hills we could see the Germans signalling with lamps to one another, and occasionally a rocket went up. General Botha

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with his body-guard was trekking immediately in front of us. He had six splendid mules in a Cape cart, and of course we did not expect to overtake him.

About 11 p.m. we halted in a nice open place among some acacias, where there was plenty of grass and firewood. We made a fire and enjoyed some chocolate, turning the horses loose. I gathered a big bundle of grass as well for my horse, and gave him a handful of mealies, the last he was likely to have for some while. We got a few hours' rest by a big fire, the night being as cold as the day had been hot. By 4 a.m. we were trekking again, stiff, tired, hungry and thirsty, and cold. However, we were cheered to see the country improving at every step, and as we neared Otjimbingwe saw indubitable signs of cattle and plenty of grass.

CHAPTER V

OTJIMBINGWE

May 1.—Otjimbingwe, the old capital, is just a straggling village on the right bank of the Swakup. A Noah's ark church much in evidence, a store, an hotel, a windmill, a police camp, and a few houses, all looking bright and clean in the morning sun, constitute the place. The sight of the windmill actually at work, and horses grazing, cheered us greatly. So we stopped outside the town, cleaned ourselves up a bit, and marched on to the market square in review order. Lots of troops were camping about, but, as they were busy cooking fresh meat, they took very little notice of our imposing entry.

Not knowing where to go or what to do, we halted on the square. The General's ubiquitous Cape cart with its six splendid mules was standing near. The animals had done as much as we had, and probably much more, during the night, yet they looked as fresh as paint. "All a matter of feeding," observed our somewhat jaded conductor. Two or three batteries of field artillery were packed on the square. Their business-like appearance gave one a feeling of security, but I caught the eye of a gunner, and it seemed to say, "You gentlemen of the ambulance

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are a little bit late, aren't you ?" And so we were, for the doctor of the 3rd Brigade, coming up, told us there had been an action yesterday, and we were to take over the hotel converted for the time being into a hospital. The police barrack, next to the hotel, was also a hospital for the 5th Brigade; and our disappointment at not being in at the finish was mitigated a little by seeing on the barrack stoep the O.C. of a rival ambulance, his waggons and men still far behind, and, although he seemed otherwise engaged, he saw us all right. Seven wounded, four of our men and three of the enemy, were in the hotel in beds or on stretchers. Everybody had been too utterly exhausted to do much for them. The place was in an indescribable state of filth; the Germans must have used the rooms as stables, and the wounded were still in their dirty, torn, and blood-stained uniforms. A tired orderly was sweeping aimlessly, and two German soldiers with very conspicuous Red Cross brassards were pretending to take temperatures. There was nothing for it but to set to work immediately to try to get the place into order. Beds, sheets, and furniture, were commandeered, and by three o'clock we had a respectable hospital of three small wards and an operating-room in working order, and the wounds, which were all of a severe nature, cleaned up and dressed. The whole ambulance worked with a will to accomplish this, and one felt very proud of the men, who, fatigued as they were, did their work manfully.

We were soon to learn that we had others to deal

with besides the wounded. As soon as it became known that a hospital was in existence, all sorts of stragglers worried us—men slightly sick, men without horses, men without food, men without heart. The resources of the hotel were commandeered for the hospital, practically only meat, fowls, and milk. Hungry men were to be seen in all directions, leading what animals they might to the slaughter; but I think the authorities soon got these matters in hand, stopping individual buying or looting, and rationing meat in a systematic manner. Goodness knows we were tired enough this night, but rest was only to be intermittent, for, in spite of liberal supplies of morphia, there was much groaning and restlessness among the wounded. A guard, too, turned up to arrest our most assiduous, urbane, and obliging German orderlies, for it had transpired that they were wolves in sheep's clothing, one being a notorious mine-layer. They were unceremoniously routed out, and went off without protest, but were brazen enough to attempt to get away with the dressings, instruments, and drugs, the enemy had left.

May 2.—During the night two of our wounded died, both hopeless cases shot through the body. I am afraid that the Anglican padre attached to our brigade was disappointed that the deceased were members of the Dutch Reformed Church. During the trek he had but little opportunity of practising his avocation, for we were never long enough in one place for him to organize services. True, a native driver had been killed by a waggon on the way up,

and the holding of a burial service over this poor unfortunate had encouraged our padre a little; for to-day he set about and arranged to have church in the afternoon; but it was not to be, for word went round that the brigade was to move on again at 3 p.m. Poor padre! I fear he will never come up with his congregation again; both he and his horse seem not a little discouraged.

This Sunday was another day of great exertion for the ambulance. Half the men were to move on, and half remain with the hospital; so there was much sorting, packing, and arranging to be done. Here, as at Tsaobis, a lot of equipment had to be left behind, and we who were remaining benefited, but the best horses and mules were to go on.

Water had been the problem on the march; now for us it is to be food. The place supplies water, meat, a little milk, and scanty grazing for the animals. We have three days' rations, and have about sixty mouths to fill in all. We expect relief in a week, but everything is so precarious and uncertain. The brigade trains may overlook us, and pass in the night, or the rations may be wanted more urgently ahead. The horses and mules, if not the men, will certainly have to live on the land.

I gathered a few scrappy details about the fight. Otjimbingwe is in the middle of a square, and at the four corners are Tsaobis, Karibib, Okahandya, and Windhuk; but a glance at the map will show that it is nearer to Tsaobis than the other places. When the 3rd and 5th Brigades arrived at this latter place,

the Germans at Otjimbingwe signalled to Karibib for help. Karibib replied that, as they themselves were also threatened with an attack, Otjimbingwe must be evacuated. The Germans here never expected that our men would be able to attack them on Friday morning; but our men by a very fine effort pushed on during the night, and at dawn had partly surrounded the place, and would have done so completely had orders been carried out. The attack was quite a surprise. An officer of ours blowing his whistle prematurely is said to have betrayed our presence. The Germans, less than a hundred in number, tried the various exits, but, being fired upon from several directions, finally broke up into small parties. One party, with great gallantry, charged direct at a dismounted commando at a distance of 50 yards, fired a volley, and literally escaped through our men. I hear they mostly got away towards Windhuk, dragging two field guns with them, one party of fourteen only being captured.

It is quite likely that, if our junior officers had remained in the positions assigned to them, all the Germans would have been taken; but troop leaders were constantly trying to better their positions, and consequently there was much overlapping. A fat old German "Colonel" was under fire at 300 yards for a long time, but he seemed quite unperturbed. Finally he mounted his horse and rode slowly away. This sounds strange, but the explanation of such shortcomings is easily found, for the men had been tried up to the limits of human endurance. "There

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was not a sane man amongst us," was the comment of one officer. Men were to be seen asleep in the saddle or on the road, indifferent to the danger of passing guns and ammunition waggons. One poor tired wretch attempted to shoot himself. Many had peculiar illusions, one of which was so common that it is worthy of mention. It took the form of large and beautiful buildings, often grouped together so as almost to form towns. I experienced the same thing in a minor degree, and think it was due to a tired, overwrought brain mistaking the images of blurred trees in the dusty moonlight for houses. So sure were these seers of visions about what they saw, so irritable and ready to argue about it, that it was wisest not to contradict them. Even two days after the fight, so jumpy and nervous were sentries, seeing Germans everywhere, that wise people kept at home after dusk.

May 3.—The feeding of our patients and our men exercises our wits day and night. The Major bargains every evening with the hotel-keeper and his wife, and the latter is very keen. They are to supply the hospital as far as they can, and are to get a signed requisition form from us each day for things supplied. In addition they are to let us have 60 pounds of meat a day for the men. These people are very subdued and anxious to please. The old man particularly seems to be in a constant state of nerves, and stands before you hat in hand in a very pathetic manner. They have a married daughter with them, who has two little children, a girl of six and a boy younger,

funny little square heads and not a bit shy. Their father is either a prisoner or still fighting. The numbers of our troops passing through yesterday quite overwhelmed them all; they stood at the door awhile watching the troops passing, and then, unable to hide their despair any longer, went inside. The two brigades with their guns and ammunition waggons took nearly all the afternoon to pass. Occasionally one would see a Burgher with a sheep or goat upon his saddle, and one man passed struggling with a live goat, his horse consequently very restive. They all looked rested and cheerful again, and the horses were wonderful.

Last evening, at supper, the Major, after two or three ineffectual trials, ventured the mild protest that the tea was not very nice, that it tasted like pepper. I said, "Impossible!" and took a fair drink. It was a terribly pungent concoction, and it came upon me like a flash that I had in the dark given the boy tobacco instead of tea. Apart from the burning sensation we experienced in the throat, the loss of two teaspoonfuls of condensed milk was distressing. Then I remembered that I had mixed some of this supposed tea with our stock of tea, and the depression which followed was not wholly attributable to the effects of nicotine. I waited until to-day before looking at our tea supply, and there, sure enough, was the tea and tobacco mixed. We now spend our spare time trying to pick the tobacco out with a pair of surgical forceps.

The Major is always nosing round for food and

interviewing the few inhabitants left. In the middle of a conversation he will suddenly say, "I wonder if I could get any eggs!" I reply, "Considering the nervous strain under which the fowls of this locality must be living, I should think not." However, to-day he managed to get three at a tickey each. We decided to give one to the querulous Lieutenant wounded in the foot, and two, one being broken, to a patient old Burgher with a ghastly wound in the groin. "I have got a little butter," he will say, but how many kilogrammes I can't say.

May 4.—To-day the 2nd Brigade arrived. They have had a terribly hard journey from Riet, practically up the bed of the Swakup the whole way. They certainly had better water that way than we had, but the going was very hard, and mines worried them considerably. Three men were killed by them. In one instance two men were blown to pieces, and a third is said to have been found at the top of a high tree, with not a scratch on him. Another mine blew up a water-cart and its driver on the ground over which an artillery column had already passed.

May 5.—To-day the ambulance attached to the 5th Brigade moved away from the police barrack, leaving only their motors behind, having no petrol for them. Of course they asked us to take over their patients, which we did, though not with a very good grace, as they were leaving no rations for them. Judging from their weary and dejected appearance, I don't think they were taking very much with them, either; but they made no complaints, and did not

ask us to help them, for it seems to be an unwritten law that each unit bears its privations silently and alone. Indeed, when you ask an officer of another corps to a meal, his distaste for food and lack of appetite is positively alarming.

As soon as they had gone, we swooped down upon the barrack like a lot of vultures, going through everything; but we found only drugs, dressings, bedding, etc. No food, of course, the carcass of a sheep that I had admired so much on a previous visit having disappeared to the last bone. The building is a large rambling place, and has terraced gardens, pretty and well arranged, with palms and trees, stretching down to the river. In these gardens our cook found the remains of some cabbages, just outside leaves and roots, but very acceptable. In the yard were two maxims left by the Germans. They were large things with limbers, and not mounted on tripods as ours are. Everybody who passed by helped himself to some of the cartridges or a movable part, so that before long, as weapons, they had ceased to exist.

The 2nd Brigade are a great worry to us, for their weaklings, their sick, and their lazy, try to get some or any benefit from the hospital. The Major is most polite to them: nothing would give him more pleasure than to take their sick in—but they must have at least four days' rations. As they have not four minutes' rations, the plan is very effectual. A burly quartermaster-sergeant, who was really ill, said he would rather die on the veldt than starve in hospital.

Him we took in, on learning his occupation, and fed him on the fat of the land thinking of future benefits. We hoped we had seen the last of this brigade when they moved on this evening to a place called Uitdraai, where the grazing and water were said to be better.

May 6.—I went down to the town to-day. The place is deserted, for the only people of ours there are a sergeant and three men of Engineers. I went through the large store. This store, which had been of considerable size, belonged to a rich old man who lived on the premises with his married sons and daughters. Behind the store were the dwelling-quarters, and, judging from the amount of clothing, furniture, beds, toys, and utensils, scattered about, a large number of people must have lived there. I was told the old man had fourteen children and numberless grandchildren, but, hearing the "English" would send all women and children to Cape Town, the whole clan had cleared off to Grootfontein.

A very polite old German, who was only on a visit from Europe, and unable to return on account of the war, came to the hospital in the afternoon. He said he had lost everything while away from the house, even his return ticket home. It comforted him little to learn that a return ticket to Europe by the Woermann Line was not likely to be available for some time to come.

An old Rhenish missionary is a daily visitor at the hospital. He has a most venerable appearance, and is most courteous and mild. In fact, the behaviour and manner of all the old German people I have seen

leaves nothing to be desired, and I have heard one of them say that he did not know what modern Germany and Germans were coming to. The aggressive, bumptious manner so general among the younger men seems to be a growth of the present generation.

When the 2nd Brigade turned up a few days ago, they were so short of everything that there was no keeping them out of the houses, though there is little enough here; for no supplies have come in since the war began, nine months ago, and the German soldiers had also removed all they could. It seems to me that it will be necessary to feed not only our own troops, but also what Germans remain here, to say nothing of the natives.

For a whole week we have had no news from anywhere, for no people are passing up at all now, and to-day our last communication with the outside world was severed, a branch of the Field Telegraph Service having packed up their wireless apparatus and departed, like the rest, northward.

The 2nd Brigade are still only seven miles away. They are out of touch with headquarters, and don't seem to know where to go. One of their officers was here to-day looking for cattle. He seemed quite worn out, and said the brigade was without food. The Major let him have five of the ten oxen he had commandeered.

We, too, are feeling the pinch a little, and, as our unit are mostly boys with healthy appetites, it is hard to get them to exercise restraint. Some of them have small private supplies of food. We would like

to call these in, but fear such action would lead to further depression or panic. We cannot understand why the transport has failed us so utterly, and are haunted with the idea that possibly supplies are being forwarded by another route.

May 7.—Our horses and mules look very poor. We have nothing to give them, and the grazing near the town is very thin, one may say “tramped out.” In these parts stock depend upon two things chiefly for food: a fine feathery grass, each plant growing separately, the stalks of which are very brittle; the other food is a low bush with bright yellow leaves and a blue flower. The tops of this bush are very succulent, and some horses prefer it to the grass. Low thorn-trees are fairly numerous, but not thick enough to make riding irksome. In every direction within a radius of three miles of the town everything is eaten down. I don't think our horses are entirely responsible for this, because lately, on account of the war and the unsettled temper of the natives, many German farmers have brought their stock into town for safety.

This evening we received a little news of what was going on outside Otjimbingwe. We were sitting on the stoep after supper, discussing the eternal food question, when two men loomed up out of the darkness, and asked unceremoniously for something to eat. They were very much exhausted, and said they had tasted nothing for forty-eight hours, and that they were trying to make their way to Karibib to join their corps of signallers. They brought the news

that General Britz had occupied Karibib without resistance, and that the 5th Brigade had cut the line at Wilhelmstaal, a station on the line between Karibib and Windhuk; and, what was particularly pleasing to us, they said the 2nd Brigade had now moved on towards Groot Barmen and Okahandya.

This 2nd Brigade (Albert's) had been a constant source of anxiety to us, for they were rapidly depleting the town of stock, men coming in at all times to look for cattle, sheep, or goats. After hearing all this good news, we fed the signallers to the best of our ability. In fact, had the news been otherwise I think we would have fed them all the same, they were such fine fellows, full of grit, and regarding their privations lightly. As soon as they had finished their meagre supper, and with a biscuit each in their haversacks, they started off in the direction of Karibib, forty miles away, with nothing but the stars and their instinct to guide them.

May 8.—The wounded are all improving, and are beginning to take a little interest in things outside their own particular miseries. But their accounts of the recent fighting are contradictory and indefinite. It seems fairly clear, however, that only the Pietersburg commando and the B.B.S. took up the positions assigned to them. All the killed and wounded belonged to the Pietersburg commando. In fact, the wounded officer states that they all belonged to his troop, and he says that only from their side, a ridge to the north-west of the village, was the attack made. The Germans admit that they were taken completely

by surprise, most of them being in bed when the fighting began. They say they waited with machine guns for us along the Tsaobis road until 3 a.m., and then returned to sleep; but, as usual, Brother Boer did not come along the road, but made the wide encircling movement his heart loveth, which, as I have said, was only partially successful.

Another of the German wounded declared that he was shot at a distance of 5 yards after he had put his hands up; but the man who shot him, and was himself wounded, said it was not the case. Among the German wounded is a nervous, æsthetic-looking clerk. His story is that he was taken from his office in Swakupmund, and a rifle put into his hands. He knew nothing about soldiering, and before he had fired a shot a bullet through the leg terminated his military career. From what he said, I gathered that the attitude of the regulars to the reservists was not too cordial, and mutual recriminations were rife.

I feel that to-day our spirits have reached a very low ebb, and, to cap all, eleven of our mules are missing to-night. These animals are taken out each day to feed, but as the bush is rather thick, grazing scanty, the drivers lazy, and I fear disaffected on account of their privations, it is not surprising that the mules go astray. Hitherto they have always been found, but to-day the drivers come in early in a very surly mood and report the disaster. I can feel that mutiny is in the air. These drivers are mostly Cape boys with a sprinkling of Kaffirs, and are intelligent and capable. They are engaged by

the Government for a fixed period, generally six months, and it is forbidden to officers in charge to administer corporal punishment. Consequently, to enforce obedience among them is not always easy, and to-night one of them flatly refused to kill a sheep. The conductor in charge laid violent hands upon him, and I, having first removed the offender's knife, stepped round the corner not to witness a very necessary breach of regulations. Afterwards, with a little persuasion from the O.C., the man slaughtered the sheep, and the incident had a very salutary effect upon all the boys.

Biscuits and coffee are now at an end, so that henceforth the men will have to live almost entirely on meat until we are relieved. Fortunately, there is a little rock salt on one of the waggons, and only those who have lived any length of time on meat only, without salt, can appreciate the value of this find.

During the campaign men lived for many days entirely upon fresh meat, in some instances as long as three weeks. All the men I saw who had lived so were emaciated and weak, shortness of breath and extreme lassitude being the chief complaints. One man declared that they became too weak to kill the sheep, so they used to wait for the sheep to pass, and then shoot them. We who have salt and the cabbage leaves aforesaid generally boil together the meat, salt, and cabbage, drink the fluid as soup, and eat the residual mush as joint. Soup without salt or vegetables leaves a full-empty feeling almost worse

than hunger. The men who are continually moving often have to eat the meat quite fresh. I have seen the still quivering muscle being grilled on skewers of wood, with a resulting indigestible mass, charred outside and raw inside. A much better plan, which is adopted when possible, is to cut the meat into ribbons and partially dry it in the sun. So treated it remains fresh in the men's haversacks for several days, especially if it has been salted a little. This meat is much nicer than the fresh meat, and causes less indigestion and discomfort.

May 9.—This morning I was up before it was light, and went off to look for grazing and the lost mules. Arguing that the boys and what men could be spared from camp would search for them where they had been lost, I decided to break new ground, and made for the mountains in the direction of Karibib. After going six or eight miles I found quite good grass and plenty of the succulent yellow bush, and I also saw one of the large conical ant-heaps which, although not very common, are a feature of these parts. These heaps are nearly always built round a thorn-tree, so that the trunk of the tree is hidden and the branches of the tree stick out on all sides. What can be seen of the tree looks green and flourishing, and usually the apex of the ant-heap exceeds the tree in height. They may be as high as 15 or 20 feet, having a diameter of 10 or 12 feet at the base. They are composed of a very hard grey substance which looks like a mica mud. They are inhabited by a little black ant, though I always found

the larger ones deserted, monuments rather than dwellings.

This little ant is also a great road-builder. The roads they make are concave furrows in the sand about an inch wide. From one of the smaller heaps I traced one a distance of over 100 yards. It appeared to go straight to some destination, skirting obstacles often, but always resuming the original direction. Numerous branches were given off from the main road, generally at an angle of about 20 degrees. The ants were to be seen going along, some in one direction, some in the other, but never hesitating, turning round, or leaving the road. One felt sure they must have a General Botha directing and encouraging them in their efforts to cross their miniature desert.

Quite unexpectedly I came upon three white mules grazing quietly in a little hollow. I thought they would make off when they realized my evil designs; but, the halters and chains of servitude being still about their necks, they just looked up, as much as to say, "Why didn't you find us before?" and walked sedately back to camp in single file. That they were not our own did not detract from the pleasure of the find; for it transpired that they belonged to another ambulance which had moved on nearly a week ago. So that these mules, which looked in very good condition, must have been in the bush all the time without water; for the only water anywhere about is the well in the Swakup River, from which water has to be pumped.

The question as to how wild animals obtain water in many parts of this country is very puzzling; for one finds such creatures as buck, baboons, and birds, in areas where standing water is to be found only during rainy periods, and then only for a short time, for it usually sinks into the porous sandy ground very quickly. Occasionally one finds small pools in the river-beds, but they are few and far between. The atmosphere is so dry that, although the nights are often cold, the fall of dew is very slight, so that this source of moisture can hardly be considered. The only explanation as regards herbivora seems to be that the food they eat contains sufficient water for their needs. As to how the carnivora, such as leopards and jackals, manage I can offer no solution at all. I have seen a jackal looking sleek and well thirty miles or more from the nearest known water, and that was in a deep well. Why he was there at all in the desert I could not imagine, for nothing living was to be seen except a very occasional lizard or beetle.

May 10.—A few Germans here, now that the troops have passed, are beginning to pop their heads out, and one is not a little surprised to see several able-bodied men among them. No doubt their uniforms are snugly hidden away somewhere, for here, as elsewhere, the conscience of the Hun is very elastic. He is soldier to-day, Red Cross man to-morrow, civilian and spy combined the next, whichever serves his purpose best. On more than one occasion I have been asked to release German wounded because they

were "civilians." "Surely," said the German matron of a hospital, with affected surprise, when a batch of convalescent wounded prisoners was being sent down, "you're not going to send this man and that man with the prisoners? They are only poor civilians."

It was galling, too, to see the large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep appearing as if by magic, which had been hidden away in the mountains when the danger threatened. When our troops had asked for meat, the owners of all these animals had declared they had only a few old cows and goats. Now they have not only the effrontery to bring in their stock, but to ask in a most importunate manner for police protection and compensation. They declare they are in danger of attack from "wild" natives living between here and Windhuk, and make claims for large quantities of stock which they say we or the natives have taken. No doubt the natives have made use of their opportunities, for they are now to be seen with small quantities of stock about their dwellings, whereas under German rule they were practically debarred from the ownership of cattle or sheep. A well-to-do farmer, who had entertained General Botha in his town-house during his stay here, sent the following letter to us, with the request that it might be forwarded to the officer commanding troops at a little place, Potmini, twenty miles away, on the Swakup River, and where his farm was situated.

"The order of General Botha is—to protect every

private property, to do not kill any angora goat, wool sheeps, or other animal of Potmini, and to do not prevent the animals of Mr. C. [himself], who presently is at Otjimbingwe, do his work on this place. On the 30th of April at Otjimbingwe the General has had the kindness to promise me that my private property at Potmini shall be protected. I afterwards heard from officers that perhaps before the General come to Potmini plenty of my cattles already were slaughtered. Directly after taking of Otjimbingwe I have offered all my cattles to General Myburg, because at the first the soldiers had no victuals enough. I only have invited not to consume my last cows, Australian wool sheeps, and the three hundred best angora goats there with I can breed again. Beautiful angora goats, merinos, and ostriches, are very scarce in this country, and must be imported again from South Africa. I beg the General to engage that the slaughtered animals be compensated, and the rest of the animals can return again from Potmini to the little water Hasis in the next neighbouring, where in this bad year is a little more food. I should be very grateful if the General would permit me to go myself with a patrol to Potmini to prevent more loss of cattles, date palms and other trees, by the going away of my Damaras. Mr. C——."

He was allowed to send a native girl over to Potmini with this epistle, and we took the opportunity of sending a message as well, informing the officer in charge of the precarious state of the hospital. She returned in two days with the report that all the

stock had disappeared from the farm. "I am a poor man!" wailed Mr. C——. "What shall I do now?" What he did was to sit down and write a long rigmarole to the Minister of Defence putting in a claim of £1,600 for alleged losses. As for us, we received the laconic note: "There are no troops at Potmini. Have informed Swakupmund of your position!" For any help Swakupmund can send us, he might as well have informed Timbuktu.

To-day some enemy subjects were found in possession of two shot-guns and two sporting Mausers, although all firearms were supposed to have been handed in when the place was taken. We are very anxious to get hold of a shot-gun, or even a rifle, so that we may vary our menu a little. Boiled mutton and cabbage stalks are getting a little monotonous, and the latter are showing signs of coming to an end.

To-night the welcome news is circulated that a brigade train is three miles away; but our joy is tempered with apprehension, for, not belonging to our brigade, they may be unwilling or unable to give us anything. It seems very curious and difficult to realize that we strong and healthy men are suddenly shut off from the common necessities of life and all communication with the outside world. So far we have joked about being hungry, but the Major leaves no stone unturned in his efforts to keep the place going. Yesterday he exchanged a sheep for 18 pounds of mealie-meal and 5 pounds of rice. To-day he has been negotiating for a little milk for the men, but without success, for it would mean the patients and

children going short. So far the wounded have lacked nothing, but the preparing and carrying in of their savoury meals must be a considerable strain upon our hungry orderlies.

May 11.—The brigade train of the 2nd Brigade has arrived. The Major, through the good offices of our patient the quartermaster-sergeant, managed to get two sacks of mealie-meal and a box of biscuits out of them, and this has heartened our boys more than a great victory would have done, although it only means one biscuit each a day and a little mealie-meal porridge. The inhabitants made attempts to buy rice, coffee, sugar, and mealie-meal; but, of course, they could not have any, for twenty half-loaded waggons seemed to be little enough for the 2,500 starving men waiting for them. It is to be hoped that this transport will come up with their brigade, for nobody here can tell them in which direction the troops have moved. We also heard with some concern that our own supplies have been diverted from this route, and are being sent direct to Karibib; but the certain knowledge that General Britz has occupied this place more than compensates us for this bad news.

The brigade train had experienced a most gruelling time dragging the waggons up the sandy bed of the Swakup for nearly a hundred miles. Whoever is to blame for failures in the Q.M.G.'s department, it is certainly not the men who are in charge of the waggons or motor-lorries. One and all have worked like heroes, day and night, with little expectation of

kudos or reward. If I were a sculptor, I would design a great monument of men and animals of the transport, with a mule chafed and scarred at the top, and put it in front of the Government Buildings in Windhuk.

May 12.—It is becoming abundantly clear that we cannot maintain a hospital here much longer unless we get stores. We would very much like an explanation from the army medical staff as to why we are left here to live or die, without orders or assistance. If we had sufficient petrol, we would risk mines and chance of capture, and motor our patients over to Karibib; but without petrol and oil our four motor ambulances stand there useless, grim witnesses of their own limitations. However, by putting what little petrol and oil remains in all the cars into one, the driver “thinks” he will be able to do the forty miles between here and Karibib; and, the Major taking his courage in both hands, they set off on what no doubt is a perilous journey: for the road is said to be mined, and as yet no vehicles have been that way. All day long I hear explosions, and see bits of Major, mechanic, and motor, flying skywards in my imagination. It is nine at night before we see, with feelings of great relief, the lights of the returning car, and presently hear it grinding its way through the river-bed and so home. “Nobody knows anything about anything,” is all I can get out of the tired Major. However, they got some rations and promises of more. General Botha, they say, has formally entered Windhuk to-day without resistance.

While the Major was away I interviewed the

garrison commandant, a sergeant of Engineers, in charge of a squad of three disaffected privates, the sole protectors of the town. He said they were put here to grind mealies; but as there were none to grind, as the supply of food was finished, and as his horses were daily becoming weaker, it was his intention to evacuate the town.

The idea of being without protection is very alarming to the German inhabitants. Already they declare that their native servants have refused to work; and if they are left alone, they expect that the "semi-wild" natives who live in the mountains to the east, and who exist upon game and roots, will raid them. Here, as elsewhere, the German farmer and villager are living in constant dread of natives, both Hottentot and Herero; and if an evil conscience makes people afraid, they have every reason to be so. Before the Herero rebellion in 1904, Otjimbingwe seems to have been a centre of these people. The town itself suffered in the rebellion, buildings being fired and a few people killed. The brother of our present landlord was killed outside his own door, and his house gutted, as photographs in the possession of the family show. But the Germans here are reticent as to what has become of the natives in these parts; for although a large Herero reserve is shown on the map, none are to be seen except a few herds and servant-girls, all very subdued and tame, and given to the singing of German hymns. Ugly rumour has it that most of them were driven into the desert to die of hunger or thirst.

The climate here at this time of the year is on the whole pleasant. The atmosphere is very dry, and all the time we have been here I have seen neither cloud nor dew. Just before dawn each day a north-east wind begins to blow with great regularity. It gets stronger towards afternoon, and ceases at sunset. The days, especially the afternoons, are hot, the thermometer in the shade generally registering over 100° . As soon as the sun goes down it becomes chilly, and before dawn the temperature may be down to freezing-point; so that there is a diurnal variation of 70° , which is, I should think, rather exceptional.

Moon and stars are very bright in these parts, and both the Great Bear and the Southern Cross are visible. For the sunrises and sunsets alone the country is worth a visit. So still is the atmosphere at these times that one can often distinguish all the spectral colours, from the violet at the zenith to the red on the horizon.

To-day I explored the bed of the Omusemu River, which joins the right bank of the Swakup at Otjimbingwe, cutting the town into two parts. As this so-called river is typical of a great number of water-courses in Damaraland, I will describe it briefly. The first thing one notices is the absence of surface water. Only very occasionally do these rivers come down, and then only for a short while. Two factors are responsible for this—the porous nature of the soil, and the comparatively slight rainfall; but they all have steady streams of underground water, often

very abundant and good, and this at no very great depth, generally anything from 10 to 50 feet. The Omusemu varies in width from 200 to 600 yards; indeed, in many places its limits are very indefinite, so low are the banks.

But the most striking thing about it is the luxuriant vegetation. Away from the river there are only a few stunted thorn-trees and a little sparse grass. As soon as you get to the bank of the river this is all changed. Gigantic acacias larger than the biggest oak, and of the same spreading habit, which denotes strength of limb, fringe the banks at intervals, or grow, in family groups and sometimes singly, in the bed of the river. Thorn-trees of smaller varieties abound on the numerous islands, and there is very thick undergrowth in places. Several varieties of grass grow freely and to a considerable height. All this goes to create a very beautiful and park-like appearance. Viewed from a distant hill, a river like this is a very conspicuous feature of the landscape, a broad belt of verdure winding through a comparative desert, to be lost to sight in the distant mountains.

May 16.—A Cape cart arrived from Karibib to-day, bringing some stores and petrol. We also received orders to evacuate our hospital to Karibib, and to proceed to Windhuk via Groot Barmen without delay. With a little squeezing it would be possible to get all the wounded into the four cars, including the prisoners, one or two of whom were now almost well. As we had no escort, there was a



TRANSPORTING WOUNDED TO KARIBIB.

TO THE
LEGISLATIVE
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possibility of the prisoners trying to escape, especially as they were never tired of telling us how they were looking forward to their visit to Cape Town. To prevent this contingency, orders were issued that they were to go clothed in pyjamas and overcoats, boots and water-bottles being withheld.

May 17.—We were up at five this morning, and had all the wounded dressed and fed by seven. To stow them comfortably for a long and rough motor journey was not very easy, especially as three of them had leg wounds and were unable to sit up. However, by propping them up with pillows and bags, and by suspending the splints from the frames of the cars with bandages, we got them all arranged to their satisfaction. Just before starting, each man received a good dose of morphia, including the Germans who we suspected might attempt to escape. All were in the best of spirits; even the man who had done nothing but whine and complain for the last three weeks seemed to be buoyed up with hope. In spite of the morphia, and in spite of the fact that we only travelled at the rate of ten miles an hour, the journey left something to be desired from a wounded man's point of view. The cars were much too heavily laden, the road very rough and uneven. Consequently, the frames of the cars came down with a bang on the axles every few yards with great regularity, which was followed with equal regularity by a chorus of groans. It was almost humorous the way the poor beggars sat with a rigid, fixed expression, anticipating every bump, and occasionally, I thought, emitting

the groan before the jolt occurred. For the first ten miles or so the road ran north along the bank of the Omusemu, when it crossed a loop of the river where, in a beautiful little dell, a deep well is situated, with its sides protected by masonry, and operated by means of a windlass, chain, and bucket. Turning westward through a poort, we came into fine upland country with plenty of grass, and near to Karibib passed a large farm enclosed with a wire fence, belonging to a wealthy Jew engaged extensively in horse-breeding.

Karibib itself is not an interesting place. Standing almost on the edge of the desert, it is very nearly devoid of trees. A high wind was blowing, and this combined with the movements of numerous troops and waggons caused the place to be almost obscured in a great cloud of dust, through which one could make out a few roofs, and a great mountain on the farther side. This place is important for its railway workshops. Here the two-foot gauge railway from Swakupmund ends, and a three-foot-six gauge railway begins the line for Windhuk, Keetmanshoop, and Luderitzbucht. With their usual thoroughness and attention to detail, our sanguine foes had constructed a large wire cage with sidings into it from both railways, wherein they hoped to, and possibly did, exhibit any of the Union forces who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands. "Nothing I have seen during the whole campaign," said an officer, "has given me so much pleasure as seeing the ungodly Huns in their own pit; and if I had only

had my camera with me the day I saw them in it, my cup of joy would have been full."

We took our patients straight to the hospital. Though the medical authorities knew four days ago that we were coming, the officer in charge of the hospital had not been informed; consequently our arrival was quite unexpected. Still, the hospital authorities did their best, though the patients had not the nice beds they had with us, and the rooms were small and unsuitable. The accommodation, too, was quite inadequate for a large base hospital, and all but the most severe cases had to be content with shake-downs in a large shed adjoining. A general order had appeared forbidding commandeering even for the hospital, and as a result many of our sick and wounded had to lie on the ground, although there were plenty of beds in the town. In fact, not only here, but everywhere, the General was most careful to protect the interests and property of the inhabitants. I had occasion to visit headquarters, for the Rhenish missionary at Otjimbingwe had asked me to take a letter to the General explaining the precarious condition of the inhabitants, who were on the verge of starvation and expecting native raids. The Chief of Staff was most sympathetic, but explained that at present it was quite impossible to police occupied towns. But, with regard to feeding German civilians, arrangements were being made, and he gave me ten days' rations for such people as I could assure him were badly in need of them. And this, too, at a time when the troops in Karibib, General

Britz's brigade and an infantry brigade, were on half-rations, if that, and we ourselves could only obtain half-rations for our trek to Windhuk. I think it can safely be said that General Botha's soldiers went short of food without a murmur, in order that the wives and children of men who were in arms against them might be fed.

The general military situation with regard to the Northern Army is now as follows: The infantry are along the line from Walfisch to Karibib, and the Burghers are spread out like a fan, also along the line, but in a semicircle almost from Karibib to Windhuk, the left wing of the 3rd Brigade at the latter place, under Colonel Mentz, being engaged in capturing or dispersing the remains of the enemy east of the line. The Burghers are occupying their time in reorganizing, which means, chiefly, trying to get their horses into better condition preparatory to making another rush. The Germans are watching us in a line parallel to ours, but some distance north, Omaruru being, perhaps, their headquarters and point of concentration.

CHAPTER VI

THE TREK FROM OTJIMBINGWE TO WINDHUK

May 18.—Windhuk lies almost due east of Otjimbingwe, but there is no direct road connecting the two places, because a large waterless, irregular plateau known as the Komass Highlands intervenes. This region, which constitutes the watershed for the greater part of the whole country, must be skirted either to the north or south. The Burghers had taken the northern route, partly on account of the better water-supply, and partly to avoid having an extensive waterless and difficult region between themselves and their base, but chiefly in order that the wing marching on Windhuk should not lose touch with the rest of the army.

Now we were free to move on to Windhuk, and our orders, too, were to take the northern route and not to delay. Journeys in this country are dominated almost entirely by the water-supply, and the treks must be so arranged that the water-holes are reached at reasonable intervals. Further, trekking must be done at night, for two reasons: first, because the days even in the winter may be unpleasantly hot; and, secondly, because the horses and mules must graze in the daytime, so that they can be watched. In our

particular case we are faced with additional difficulties. Our animals being in very low condition, they are not in a fit state to make long treks. We have no food at all for the mules, and only 1 pound of mealies a day for each horse for five days. For the men, too, we have only food for five days. But, worst of all, we have no knowledge of the country through which we have to pass, and do not know where the water and grazing may be. Without a guide, we shall have to rely entirely upon the map, which is quite unreliable with regard to the water-holes, or, rather, with regard to the water in the water-holes. At dawn to-day we are ready to leave the place where we have spent three anxious and strenuous weeks, weeks that have seemed to us like eternities. The inhabitants seem to be sorry that the ambulance is leaving, and express their gratitude for the little we have done for them by making us gifts of foodstuffs, which we know they can very ill afford to do.

Soon B section of the —— Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance is on the road again, three ambulance waggons, three general service waggons, and a water-cart bringing up the rear. Men without horses walk to save the mules; men with horses walk to spare the horses. The road is very heavy, the wheels clinging to the sand with a grinding noise. Two or three hungry German dogs follow us, hoping thereby to prolong a miserable existence. The dust rises and hangs in the air, and as soon as the sun is up it becomes unpleasantly hot. The dust of many parts

of this country is quite a feature, being often very light and powdery. This is due to the fact that it is composed very largely of mica. A moving column will raise a dust that ascends like steam or smoke, and remains in the air a considerable time. Troops or herds of animals are easily localized in the daytime by the dust they create, which is often visible for many miles, so that surprising an enemy during the daytime is generally out of the question.

During our stay at Otjimbingwe we had collected a good many stray horses, most of them in a most wretched condition, left behind because of their uselessness. Our orderlies would appropriate these animals, and make attempts to improve them, and also to acquire old and discarded saddles and bridles. Amongst our men were a good many from the towns, with no knowledge of horses and little of horsemanship. These were the very ones who had made such efforts to convert themselves into mounted men, and on leaving we were not a little surprised to see several of these gentry booted and spurred and mounted on these sorry nags. But before many miles were done they were all on foot again, the effort of propelling these animals, combined with lack of skill, proving more irksome than walking.

We continued to advance along the road parallel to the Swakup for an hour or two until we reached a spot called Uitdraai, where it was our intention to pass the day and wait until the evening before beginning the real trekking. We had been told that there were both water and grazing here. There was a little

water in the river, but no grass was to be seen; for the 2nd Brigade had been here nearly a week, and had eaten up everything. The place, too, was a regular Golgotha, the bones and other remains of slaughtered animals lying about in great profusion. Dead horses and mules there were, too, in abundance. We spent the day under the trees, as far as possible from the unsavoury camp of Albert's men, and at five in the evening we spanned in, the order being to trek until 10 p.m. This evening the travelling was very heavy, for the road leaving the river on the right rose higher and higher; the surface, too, left much to be desired, sandy patches alternating with rocks and boulders. With every step the country improved, and at ten o'clock everybody was quite ready for a little rest. The night was very cold and frosty, but with the aid of large fires and hot coffee we managed to keep fairly warm, and would have been quite happy but for the thought that at 2 a.m. we must be up and off. Of all the abominations one has to undergo in this country, I think nothing is so trying as getting up for the early morning trek. Cold and stiff, you rise more fatigued than when you lay down. With difficulty you mount a tired horse, and with greater difficulty still you make constant efforts to keep awake. In fact, I think it much the best plan to walk as much as possible at this time—at least, until you are thoroughly warmed and roused.

May 19.—About dawn the road ceased to ascend, and we began to cross a series of beautiful river-beds

running into the Swakup from the north. Here the country is like a park; grass is plentiful, especially in the beds of some of the streams, and the thorn-trees are numerous and large. In the hopes of finding water, I rode up or down several of these river-beds for a mile or so, but in vain, for not a sign of water was to be seen. It was now about twenty-four hours since the animals had had a decent drink, and, although the sun was beginning to get hot, there was nothing for it but to push on to the water. To crown all, about breakfast-time the dissel-boom of the water-cart broke off short going down a steep hill. Our conductor, in despair, wanted to leave it behind, but of course the Major would not hear of this, and after considerable delay we managed to fix the water-cart on behind the last general service waggon.

My horse being better than most, I pushed on alone to Klein Barmen to search for the water. At noon I came to the spot, just a drift in a river, with two derelict buildings, but no sign of water or grazing. Hunting down the river-bed, I came upon a well of large dimensions, but it was filled in with rocks and the winding apparatus broken. Coming back to the drift, I saw two small notices, one in German, "Neither grazing nor water here," and the other in Dutch, "I hear there is water and grazing three miles farther; I am trekking on." Cursing the mocking German, and blessing the Dutchman for his message of hope, I off-saddled my now exhausted horse, sat down under a tree, and waited for the ambulance. It was 2 p.m. before they arrived, the

mules looking ready to drop. I pointed to the notices. The conductor, after reading, said: "I must span out; I cannot go another step." Nothing for the animals, not even sufficient shade; they were just tied to the waggons. We made a little porridge and coffee, the first food we had tasted this day; but looking at the mules and horses, and thinking that we were probably going to try to urge them on another fifteen or twenty miles to Groot Barmen, made one too utterly wretched to have any desire for food or drink. Most pitiful is it, throughout these trying marches, to witness the endurance, patience, and sufferings, of the animals. A mule will pull gamely until it drops to rise no more and a merciful bullet puts an end to its career. One would see them trying to nibble bushes as they went along, or swaying out of the course to get at a little grass by the roadside. Our great difficulty was that we rarely found grazing and water in the same place; for the troops preceding us had always eaten up the grass near the water, or, the water being near the homesteads of the farmers, the stock on the farms had done so. Often we would find good grazing, and the mules would be too thirsty to eat, or we dared not stop until we came to water. Then, when we arrived at the water, no grazing was to be found near. Attempts were made to gather grass as we went along, but the quantity obtained in the time at our disposal was never more than a few mouthfuls. Let no man lay flattering unction to his soul for his share in this war, but rather give the full meed of praise

to the gallant beasts whose bones will whiten the sands of German West for many a long day.

Encouraged a little by the rest, but more by the Dutchman's message, we moved on again at 3 p.m. We struggled on three miles, four miles, five miles, in the heat and dust, without sign of water. The conductor, able to stand the strain no longer, and probably not wishing to see his animals give in altogether, came up and asked me to ride ahead with him to see if we could find water. In our anxiety we forced our horses into a gallop. Mine felt so weak under me that I thought he would never gallop again. Mounting a rise we saw a roof, then several, then some large farm buildings, and as we descended we saw a large cement dam full of water glittering in the sun, wherein several men were leisurely bathing and washing their clothes.

For the moment I think, if I had had a revolver, I would have fired upon those men, for they seemed to be fouling, with their filthy shirts, the water we wished to drink. But, as a matter of fact, there was water in abundance, and they were only washing in the place appointed for the purpose, for somebody had made arrangements for both drinking and washing. I turned my horse to a drinking-trough. He seemed to hesitate. I jumped down to taste it; it was quite hot. Later I made a careful examination of the spring. It came bubbling out of the soil at a single spot, whence it was led by furrows and pipes to drinking-troughs and the large tank. The water came out of the ground at a temperature of 49° C.,

and I could not maintain my hand in it at this spot, although grass was growing up to the edge of this spring and algæ were there in plenty. I noticed also a water-beetle or two. The water was quite odourless, colourless, and tasteless. I was told it is radioactive. A three-inch pipe carried the overflow away. It is in reality a little spa, and a shed at hand had two cement plunge baths in it, with the water laid on. We camped under some massive white granite rocks on the bank of the Swakup, within a hundred yards of the spring. The wide bed of the river, with vegetation down to its edge, the glistening rocks, and the distant mountains, all tinted a peach colour peculiar to African sunsets, made a serene and beautiful picture.

We had hardly outspanned when a commando rode up from the Windhuk road. They watered their horses expeditiously, and moved on at once by the road we had come. A dusty staff officer galloped up to our camp and saluted the Major. "The Colonel says you are to follow the wing immediately to Okasisi." Okasisi, fifty miles to the north-west! Excuses rushed to the Major's lips: the mules, the horses, the men, his orders. More to the point, he finally asked, "What brigade is this?" "Colonel Collins' left wing of Colonel Albert's brigade, sir," replied the staff officer. "But I am the ambulance attached to Colonel Mentz's brigade," said the Major in a tone of relief I have never heard equalled. "In that case I have nothing more to say," replied the staff officer, putting spurs to his horse.

Thinking it rather strange that the troops were passing through in the direction away from the capital, I hailed a passing officer, and gleaned from him the following somewhat disconcerting information, that only a few of the Northern Army were now at Windhuk, and that a concentration was taking place towards Karibib. What troops were still in Windhuk he thought might belong to our brigade. He said that they had captured a German ambulance complete with nine wounded prisoners; about 300 Germans were still watching General Mackenzie's troops in the region of Gibeon, not knowing that Windhuk was lost, and Colonel Mentz was engaged in rounding them up; all fighting south of the Karibib-Windhuk line was now over, the German forces having retreated towards Grootfontein and the Waterberg. When asked how the Burghers had been faring, he said that at times they had been very much reduced from want of food; they had been in the saddle every day for twenty-five days, and often they had covered as much as fifty miles in twenty-four hours. Since he left Swakupmund he had received seventeen biscuits only, no coffee, tea, or sugar, and only very occasionally a little mealie-meal, so that they had lived almost entirely upon meat.

Our daily allowance of biscuits is six per man, so that these men had been, not on half or quarter, but on "tenth" rations, and, as a matter of fact, they had been out of touch with all supplies for twenty-one days. They had still a trek of forty or fifty miles to the line at Okasisi, and there was no reason to believe

that they would get much when they arrived there. Both they and their horses appeared to have plenty of vim. They were cheerful and keen, although the less said about their clothing and toilet, the better.

The ambulance was now in a regular quandary. Orders were to proceed to Windhuk; but all troops, we were told, were now making for Karibib, preparatory, no doubt, to making a new rush northward along the line. The Major was for obeying orders, no doubt a good soldierly precept. I, on the other hand, counselled remaining where we were until we could get fresh orders, arguing that since we had received orders the whole military situation might have changed. But we were very soon to discover that staying here was out of the question, for there was not a blade of grass for the animals to eat within four miles, and there was nothing for it but to move on first thing in the morning to Groot Barmen, where there was, so we were informed, both grazing and water, also a telephone-station.

May 20.—This morning I interviewed the manager of the neighbouring farm, a blond and communicative Hun mounted upon a mule. He was taking the imminent change of Government in a very philosophical if not cheerful way, and prognosticated a speedy conclusion to the campaign. He said the war would last another five months, and then he dismissed an unpleasant topic with a shrug of the shoulders. This large farm, Klein Barmen, belongs to the German Farming Company, which was really Liebig's, but went under a German name in this

country, London capital being at the bottom of the enterprise. At present they were milking 200 cows, making butter and cheese which they sold to the military. Altogether there were on the place 4,000 head of cattle, and when the number reached 50,000 or 60,000 it was their intention to start Liebig factories. Labour was a great problem with him, especially, of course, since our arrival in the country. The natives, he said, are very "low-class," and only work if compelled. "For disobedience we give them twenty-five sjamboks, and then they are all right for another six months. It's like medicine," he added with a laugh. "We don't flog them ourselves, but just send them to the police with a note, saying, 'Kindly give bearer twenty-five lashes,' which is done without inquiry. Every native capable of working is registered, and wears a brass label with a number on, and the name of the town near which he dwells. When we require labourers, we simply ask the police to send them, and the natives have to come whether they want to or not."

The Germans must have had very large numbers of men and women so registered, for I subsequently bought a good many labels from natives, bearing numbers such as "Karibib Pass 8,376" and "Omaruru Pass 11,347." The natives themselves parted most willingly with these passes, as if they regarded them as badges of servitude, as indeed they are.

It seemed rather strange to see a man so well dressed as this manager, and controlling such large interests, riding a mule, so I asked him why he was doing so.

"Because I have no horse," was his trite reply. Horse sickness being very common from here northward, very few horses were to be had, and they were very expensive. In fact, people often rode oxen, and recently he had sold 400 "good riding oxen" to the soldiers of the Kaiser. Land, he said, was cheap, the Government selling good farms at 50 pfennigs per hectare.

Lizards are very plentiful in these parts. One small, very agile variety I noticed first in the desert between Salem and Tsaobis. The body is the colour of the sand, and the long tail a vivid transparent salmon colour. When disturbed it makes for cover like a streak of flame. Another very beautiful variety is found on the sunny rocks. The largest I saw was about 10 inches long, including the tail. The body is rather more squat than a lizard's generally is—half-way between a lizard's and a frog's. The head and neck are marked like a tiger's, but of lemon, yellow, and black. It holds its head well up, and looks about in a very perky way. It has scarlet epaulettes, and the body is grey marked with white. Its power of holding on is phenomenal, and I saw one running up and down the smooth cement side of a house, just to show what it could do.

Immediately after breakfast I was despatched to Groot Barmen, a distance of ten miles, in order to select a site for the camp, and to try to get into telephonic communication with headquarters. This short journey to Groot Barmen is along the Swakup River, which the road crosses several times. The

white sandy river-bed, the great trees and mountains, combined to make it very picturesque. Mica here is very abundant, large flakes glistening in the sun like diamonds. Sedimentary rocks, not noticed nearer the coast, were in evidence on account of the strata being twisted and bent in a most marked manner. In one place a layer of sandstone could be seen following the ups and downs of the mountains with great regularity.

Groot Barmen consists of a farm, a deserted police-station, and a ruined Roman Catholic mission. At the farm there was a telephone, and we were able to talk to Okahandya. There is a hot spring here, too, the water being hotter than at Klein Barmen. "You can cook an egg in it," they say. On the farm was a young Dutchman who hastened to tell us that he was a "British subject." Subsequently it transpired that the farm belonged to a German who had fled north, and that he had got the "British subject" in at the outbreak of hostilities, thereby, no doubt, hoping to protect his property. He possessed 300 milking cows, a thousand oxen, and several thousand sheep, all in very good condition. We were able to buy butter, cheese, and milk, in abundance, and our hungry orderlies were soon to be seen literally filling themselves with milk at threepence a litre. The police-station, or rather barracks, stands on a little hill with a very good view of the surrounding country. It has the appearance of having been out of use for years.

At a distance of about half a mile it is surrounded

by four or five small buildings, which were no doubt blockhouses employed to guard against a surprise from the Hereros during the rebellion. The precautions had not saved the mission-station, which had been set on fire one night. Whether the holy fathers escaped or not I did not learn. We camped near these ruins under some giant acacias and date-palms. The church, of simple Norman architecture, is almost intact, only the roof, windows, and doors, having disappeared, a wooden ceiling, panelled, and supported by wooden pillars, being quite in a good state of preservation. The only article of furniture in the church was what I took to be the pulpit, but on closer inspection, it turned out to be a Berlin lucerne press. Two rude confessionals built of mud and stones, and whitewashed, stand at the west door.

The adjoining monastery showed signs of having been burnt, charred ends of the bamboo and fern thatched roofs and ceilings being visible. The building was large and rambling, suggestive of both poverty and toil, which no doubt the missionaries gladly endured until they were driven out by their own flock, to return no more. Bats innumerable inhabited the rafters, hanging in clusters like grapes, and I captured one with ease. They were of a small mouse-coloured variety, with tiny deep-set eyes, quite unlike those possessed by nocturnal animals generally. The ears, on the other hand, were very large and funnel-shaped, pointing forward. From this it would seem highly probable that bats rely chiefly or solely upon their sense of hearing for

capturing insects at dusk, and, as their food consists only of the mosquito class, it seems all the more likely that this is the case. The sudden changes of direction these animals make in their flight lend support to this view, for they often alter their course at an angle which, judging from the position of their eyes, cannot possibly be in their line of vision.

May 21.—We stayed over at Groot Barmen the whole of this day in order to feed the mules and to give them a chance of recovering from recent exertions. Fortunately, there was an acre or two of ground round the spring, fenced off, so that we were able to leave them to feed during the night. The two nights we were here were exceedingly cold, the thermometer registering 4 degrees below zero Centigrade.

Four signallers belonging to the 2nd Brigade visited our camp. Both they and their horses appeared very worn. They told us that the road to Windhuk was very rough and difficult in parts, but with regard to grazing and water we would have no difficulty. Their whole brigade was on the way to Okasisi to reorganize, and the one wing under Colonel Badenhorst would pass here either to-day or to-morrow. We gave these men a few biscuits and a little coffee. They seemed hardly able to believe their eyes, and their delight and gratitude were quite touching. Later we had to send out an ambulance five or six miles to bring in a sick man belonging to this brigade, as they had no waggons or ambulance of their own with them. What the poor fellow must have suffered

trekking from Windhuk, with his disabilities, I can hardly bear to think.

May 22.—Before we left, part of the 2nd Brigade turned up, and one of their scouts recognized a horse among ours which he said was his. It was a fine grey in good condition, but, as it bore the German Government's brand, we could not very well understand how it could be the legal property of a scout of Albert's brigade, and said so. The trooper rode angrily away, saying he would bring witnesses to prove his claim. He returned bringing witnesses who no doubt swore false witness; but the Major was obdurate, and the man retired this time threatening us with his officer. He returned with his officer *plus* the Colonel of the brigade. We meanwhile, fearing violent seizure of the animal, hid it away. But the diplomatic Colonel soon wheedled the horse out of us. "Of course," he said, "my scout has no title to the horse; but scouts are scouts, and they cannot scout without horses, and my brigade is now very short of horses." "In that case," replied the Major, "I will surrender the animal, although I am very short of horses, too." Thus ended an incident which promised to be unpleasant, for the Colonel told the scout to thank the Major for "giving" him the horse, which the latter did with a good grace. Later I saw our man who had lost the horse consoling himself with a fine brindled bulldog, which he said the scout had given him for the horse. This remarkable dog had trekked from Swakupmund to Windhuk and back to Groot Barmen with the brigade. He became much attached

to the Major, following us all the way to Windhuk, where he unfortunately disappeared.

I had an opportunity of watching the Burghers' behaviour while they were at this farm. They arrived in a famished condition, and, with the exception of helping themselves to a few pumpkins, they paid for everything they took. It spoke well for the docility and restraint of these men to see them asking the price of butter and cheese, and paying without cavil the somewhat exorbitant sums demanded. By four in the afternoon it was cool enough to make a start. The pleasure of travelling was much interfered with by the number of dead horses on the road. One saw dead animals as early in the trek as Riet, and they became increasingly frequent, until now one might be seen every few hundred yards. The corpses nearly always lay in the road, pointing to the conclusion that they had been ridden until they dropped.

We trekked this night to Davisdrohe, and most of the way the road was in the actual bed of the river, high mountains on either side making it impossible for a road to be constructed on either bank. In places it was only with great difficulty that the mules were able to pull the waggons through, for the river-bed here is composed of loose shingle interspersed with boulders and rocks. But, however the river punished us, nobody was ever heard to grumble about it. In or near the river there was always a road, there was always water for the digging, if not wells or springs, and there was always some grazing, even at Swakupmund. Had there been no Swakup

River, the advance of the Northern Army could never have been made; the water problem alone would have baffled it. At Swakupmund, Nonidas, Husab, Riet, Salem, and Otjimbingwe, the river and the river only had supplied us with water. Even after we had passed the desert we drew our water from the same source, for Klein Barmen, Groot Barmen, and all the water-holes up to Windhuk, are on the river-bank. At Tsaobis only did we rely upon other water, and this failed long before the requirements of the army were satisfied. The inexhaustible supply of pure water gushing out of the rock in a waterless waste, as at Riet or Salem, is as much a miracle as when Moses smote upon the rock in Horeb.

It is interesting to notice how the composition of the bed of the river changes gradually as one ascends from the mouth towards the source. At Swakupmund it consists of a fine impalpable mica mud which, when it dries, breaks up into laminated plates with curled-up edges and of considerable hardness. At Otjimbingwe the material in the bed is sand like that of the seashore; not a stone or pebble is to be seen in it. This gradually changes into a coarse gritty sand, and at Davidrohe, as I have said, the bed is of shingle. Higher up still, boulders and stones predominate. One may conclude that a large stone starting at Windhuk is in the course of ages gradually ground down to powder in its passage to the coast. We get a faint glimpse of what geological time means when we are told that previous to this season the river had not been in flood for about fifteen years.

At Daviddrohe we were obliged to camp in the bed of the river, so broken or precipitous were the banks. It was very cold there, camping on low-lying ground, and whenever possible it is much better to choose an elevated spot to camp on during winter nights. Throughout the campaign cold nights were the rule, and many of the men were very ill supplied with blankets and coats. On some of the treks they were only permitted to carry one blanket or a greatcoat on their saddles. The infantry particularly suffered in this respect, and had not the supply of dry wood to make fires with been most plentiful, I am sure men would have died from exposure and cold.

May 23.—Not finding any water at Daviddrohe, it was necessary to make an early start, and we spanned in at 5 a.m., a heavy frost lying on the ground. During the night the mules had stampeded, and, although the drivers had searched for them all night, two were still missing. At 11 a.m. we came to the farm Otjiseva, where there was a good supply of water pumped up from the river by a gin into a cement tank.

The farmer here, who looked more like a Berlin clerk, did not receive us with enthusiasm. He told us most emphatically that this was a very bad place to outspan, and that good grazing was to be found at a spot three miles farther on. Disregarding his advice, I searched about, and found very tolerable grass near-by, much to his disgust, I fancy; so we outspanned near his house, and borrowed some of

his neatly chopped firewood. The lady of the house, popping her head out of the kitchen door, said to her husband in German, "Are there some more of those things here? I thought we had seen the last of them." Unfortunately for her, a sergeant near-by understood her remark, and on the spur of the moment could think of no better relief to his feelings than pirouetting his horse on her flower-garden until he felt cooler. After this our host and his spouse went inside, and we did not see them again. We left this inhospitable place in the afternoon, passing through rich pastureland along by the river. There were several empty dilapidated houses near the road, and on close inspection one could see that some while back they had been destroyed by fire, in all probability the work of the Hereros during the rebellion. The dust here was worse than any we had encountered. It was as light as flour, and lay on the road a foot thick. The drivers could neither see nor hear the waggon immediately in front of them, so that collisions were frequent, and the mules were constantly leaving the road.

It is quite impossible to do justice to the beauty of the country we passed through this night. The road and river were winding up a narrow gorge, frequently crossing each other. Giant acacias fringed the snow-white bed of the river, and extended to the green-sward beyond. White rocks shone like silver in the river or on the mountain-sides, which towered high above everything. Down below on the road a slowly moving cloud of dust represented our cavalcade.

All this, illuminated by a most brilliant moon, has left an indelible impression in my memory.

It is wonderful how soon man adapts himself to his surroundings. When we arrived at Walfisch we found walking in the sand most irksome; at Swakup-mund we gradually got used to it, though one generally arranged one's peregrinations so that maximum use could be made of the wood pavement and the sleepers of the railway. Now we can walk for hours in the heavy sand with little fatigue. Many men have adopted unconsciously a shortened step and a high vertical lift of the foot. It may be inelegant and like a goose-step, but it is efficient and to be recommended. It seems especially to minimize that fatiguing backslide which is experienced when walking in sand in the ordinary way.

We found a nice wooded rise with an open space for the waggons to outspan on near Ongosi, and soon had a dozen fires going worthy of Guy Fawkes. Seven hours' fast, and most of it spent in walking in the sand uphill, made the despised clinkers with jam and butter most acceptable.

May 24.—The last stage to Windhuk was entered on with great enthusiasm by all, though the formal occupation had taken place nearly a fortnight ago. For five months the word Windhuk had been continually on our lips, and pessimists in Cape Town had told us that we would lose a third of our number in the attempt to take the place, that we would be ambushed in the narrow defiles, and that finally big guns would have to be faced and trenches stormed.

North of Windhuk are beautiful undulating highlands, rising higher and higher until within two or three miles of the town. The country here is well wooded with thorn-trees, and grass is plentiful, now bleached by the winter frosts. About here a few fences are to be seen, separating the farms, but, compared to what we have in the colony, of very inferior construction.

Windhuk lies in a basin on the top of the watershed of the whole country. To the west the land gradually slopes down to the sea, to the south to the Orange River, to the east to the Kalahari, and to the north towards the Kuneni River. It is the pinnacle of the country as well as of our hopes and ambitions. An irregular ridge runs across the basin from north to south. On the eastern side of this ridge is the hamlet of Klein Windhuk, and on the western side Groot Windhuk. The Windhuker Swakup winds through the valley on the eastern side, its source being in the Aus Mountains, which form the southern boundary of the basin. This range of mountains, the highest in German South-West, rises to nearly 9,000 feet, and is the most conspicuous feature in the landscape for fifty miles in every direction. On the west of the town is a conical hill, the Kaiser Wilhelm Berg, beyond which are the Komas Highlands, stretching away to the western horizon. Finally, to the north are the undulating hills through which we had approached.

The whole landscape had a dappled appearance due to the green thorn-trees scattered freely amongst

the white grass and sand. The inevitable columns of dust were rising at several points, and the sombre aspect of things was only relieved by the bright red roofs and white walls of the houses. But what riveted the attention above everything else were seven slender black towers standing together in the plain west of the town. Five of these towers are 400 feet high, the other two being a little shorter. They belong to the renowned wireless station, or, as the Germans call it, the "Telefunken."

CHAPTER VII

WINDHUK

The first building, or, rather, block of buildings, we came to was flying the Red Cross. We congratulated ourselves on coming to such a fine hospital. It was only the native hospital, however, and still under German control. A smiling caretaker directed us to the military hospital. Not understanding him, but seeing another Red Cross in the centre of the town, we made for that. This was a large building near a church, and in a third building, which looked like a school, we could hear children at a singing class. A nun came to the door. This, she said, was the Catholic Hospital for Women and Children; but again we could not follow her directions, only gathering that the hospital was a long way off. Away to the west, on a hill well out of the town, there was another large building with a flag flying, and with the help of glasses we made out the Geneva Cross again. We charged at this hill like Burghers at a kopje. The building appeared to be a large private house, and a very neat nurse all in white gave us to understand that the soldiers were not here, as it was the Elizabeth Maternity and Nursing Home.

Utterly routed we again descended to the town,

and for awhile wandered aimlessly about. Women and children there were in the streets in plenty, and not a few men, some of whom wore semi-military khaki; but they were all obviously Huns. At last we met a single ragged-looking man, carrying rifle and bandolier, and we assailed him with the Dutch and English languages simultaneously. He thought the hospital was away to the south end of the town, and directed us up a steep hill, at the top of which was a new stone church of the modified Noah's Ark type, taller than it was long, with a very high-pitched roof and a slender spire, a gilt clock-face reminding us that half-past three was well past our breakfast-time. A little beyond this church is the Feste, a sort of old fort with a splendid equestrian statue in front of it; and here we had the first and only proof that we were masters of the place—namely, a cheap little Union Jack about the size of a handkerchief, which was fluttering at the end of a sort of clothes-prop.

The military hospital is at the south end of the town, and a new wing was in course of construction for fever patients. The German contractor was working away at this as usual—so convinced are they that the occupation of the place is only temporary. There is very little of modern construction about the hospital; the administrative block, built round a quadrangle in which are some small coniferous trees, seems to have been an old barracks. The two buildings used for the reception of patients are cold, dark, and cheerless, but the two operating theatres are

quite new, and have every modern convenience, and there is a fine X-ray installation. Behind are several large buildings for stores and laboratories. There are good arrangements for sterilizing bedding, etc., and, what seems a little unusual to us, a large aerated-water plant.

We had heard there were vast stores of medical requirements here, but the things we found were not very useful. It seems that when the Germans decided not to defend the capital, the military removed all medical equipment likely to be useful to them; and after the soldiers had gone, civilians were allowed to come and take away anything they liked. Even after we had taken over, German ladies were in the habit of visiting the stores with baskets, and they always seemed to resent being told that everything in the hospital now belonged to His Majesty King George. Among the things in the pharmacy store were large quantities of hypodermic medicaments manufactured in Lisbon. These, the Germans said, had been captured at Naulella from the Portuguese, whom they claimed to have utterly defeated there.

We found nice quarters in the dispenser's house, within the hospital grounds; and having removed most of his mural decorations, which to us seemed a little depraved, we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable therein.

May 25.—To-day our section of the ambulance took over the charge of the hospital. Although the wards, beds, and patients, were very clean, the

THE SURRENDER OF WINDHUK.



SURRENDER OF WINDHUK.



sanitation and general arrangements had been much neglected of late. A German matron is in charge with four German nurses. These are assisted by a few ladies belonging to the Red Cross Society. We find the trained nurses very capable and self-reliant, for it seems that much more is left to them by the doctors than is the case with us. One nurse told me that she was in the habit of doing minor operations, and that she gave all the anæsthetics. When we had occasion to do an operation on a German to-day, this same nurse kept a careful watch upon the doctor giving the chloroform, feeling the patient's pulse and examining his eyes; but she subsided into her proper sphere when the administrator said to her in a loud voice, "I suppose you think that, not having succeeded in killing a German in battle, I am trying to do so on the operating-table?" After this she never questioned our ability to administer anæsthetics, although she seemed to be a little apprehensive at times.

Until to-day a German doctor had been in charge of the German wounded and sick, about eighty in number. Fortunately for us, he has quarrelled with the matron, and has refused to continue to attend unless she is discharged. As the Major considered her the more useful of the two, he has been allowed to depart, and is now, we hear, spending his time accusing us and her of neglect of duty. Later in the day a petition comes in almost demanding the discharge of the matron and reinstatement of the doctor. We reply by running up the Union Jack

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and having sentries posted round the hospital. There are a good many German soldiers in the hospital suffering from typhoid, and they tell us it has been very prevalent among them, also that their inoculation against the disease has been a failure. Up till now, on the other hand, the disease has been practically non-existent in our army, and among the inoculated men no case has occurred. This result is a striking testimony to the efficacy of inoculation, for our men at Swakupmund and elsewhere often lived for weeks together under most insanitary conditions.

The German wounded, some forty in number, are now under my care. It seems they nearly all received their wounds in a battle they had with the Bastards near Rehoboth on May 8. The Germans claim to have defeated these people, but admit having lost a good many men. The Bastards, although for the most part armed with rifles of 1871 pattern, seem to have done some very good shooting, one man under cover killing five Germans by shooting them through the head, while another rendered a machine gun useless. The wounds of the Germans also point to accurate marksmanship. Three men have superficial wounds in the back received when lying on their faces, while in the act of raising themselves a little to alter their positions. Another was shot through the right hand, as he rolled over a little, the better to open the bolt of his rifle. Apart from their wounds, these men are in very good condition, and do not look at all like men who have been engaged in arduous guerrilla warfare. Their uniforms,

boots, and hats, are quite new, clean, and untorn. Herein is found a cue to their ill-success in this campaign; for, unless they were compelled to do so, they did not leave the railways or roads, and never moved without ample transport and food. Whenever they attacked us, they came down the line or along the road. They prepared fortified positions, and built light railways up to them, and whenever we captured them they had transport and food and drink in abundance. General Botha's men had quite different ideas about fighting. They trekked without transport and without sufficient food or clothing; they crossed deserts and mountains irrespective of roads; and the last thing they thought of was to make a frontal attack or fight when the Germans expected them to.

I cannot say that I am very much impressed with the German methods of treating wounds in this hospital. The healing strength of nature has been given very little scope, the surgeon apparently taking full responsibility. The wounds are plugged to overflowing with gauze and various chemicals in what appears to the uninitiated an indiscriminate manner. To say the least of it, the patients themselves are very uncomfortable with these dressings on, for under our simpler methods the complaints of pain and discomfort were immediately fewer.

The German soldier at home may be a stoic, but he certainly is not one here, and the way he endures his hurts does not impress one. I found him nervous and excitable, taking a morbid interest in his wound

and in the minutiae of treatment. For the most part he sleeps very badly, and demands and expects to get an hypnotic for the asking. He knows the names of these, and prefers veronal or chloral. He is quite familiar, too, with the hypodermic syringe, and both the patients and the nurses in charge were surprised when I ordered that morphia was not to be given without my consent. I talked the matter over with the matron, and she readily admitted that life in the colonies did not improve the physical and moral fibre of the men. She admired the way our wounded behaved, and especially the nonchalant manner in which they came up for anæsthetic and operation.

I think it is not very far from the truth to say that the Germans here have lived in a constant state of dread and apprehension of the various native inhabitants, and this, together with every form of self-indulgence imaginable, has sapped their virility and confidence. "Poor man!" a nurse would say when a certain individual put up a very poor show during the dressing of his wound; "he is very nervous; he has been two years in the Kameruns, and has had fever." One felt like replying: "Maybe; but he eats too much and drinks far too much; he indulges in tobacco, and possibly drugs; his licentiousness is unequalled; and no doubt the dying agonies of the natives he has witnessed worry him a bit, too."

I believe the Germans here are heavy drinkers, although I must say that since I have been in Windhuk I have never seen one the worse for liquor. But there is very conclusive indirect evidence to show

that they drink a lot. A small place like Swakup-mund had over thirty hotels and beershops. Breweries and distilleries abound; I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that it would not be safe to walk anywhere in the country with bare feet, because you would cut yourself with broken glass. On the mountain-tops, in the desert or bush, you find bottles; you see buildings and walls made of bottles and mud; garden paths and beds are ornamented with them; and where German troops have camped you see regular pyramids of them. Whenever we captured their convoys we found quantities of liquor, chiefly rum of good quality.

May 28.—There has been a good deal of talk about mines since we have been here. To delay our advance, the Germans relied almost entirely upon this mode of fighting. On the line of advance to Karibib, in the bed of the Swakup, and along the road from Riet to Otjimbingwe, dynamite was placed in great quantity. Not only were these mines put in places where we were likely to go, such as drifts in riverbeds, or near wells, but the Huns also laid traps for us. A favourite ruse was to put a mine in a riverbed, and then near it to put up a notice, such as "Wasser 3 kilos." In these places we never found the water, but generally the mine. Another trick was to place a stick of dynamite above a house door, so that when the door was opened an explosion occurred. As soon as our men discovered this kind of practical joke, everybody was to be seen entering houses by the windows.

The number of mines the Germans laid was very great. In one place alone between seventy and eighty were taken out. At Tsaobis we slept within a few yards of a large one which was subsequently accidentally exploded by a native. It was cunningly placed between the well and the river, and hundreds of people must have walked over it. By putting down so many the enemy defeated their own object, for our men became very quick at finding and avoiding the places where they were. Later on, too, when so many failed to explode or did so little damage, we became more or less indifferent about them. In all only nine men lost their lives in this way, which was due in great measure to two causes, the first being the straggling, scattered way in which our troops moved, so that very few were near when a mine did explode; and, secondly, for some inexplicable reason, the mines generally failed to explode at all, or only exploded after nearly everybody had passed, as in the case already mentioned, where an artillery column passed over safely, and the harmless water-cart and its driver, following far behind, were blown up.

As far as I know, the well at Riet was the only place where the Germans might have done us real damage by mines. There after the fight, and when the Germans had evacuated the place, hundreds of men and horses crowded down to the water in spite of warnings. Had the large mine there gone off, 200 or 300 Burghers must have gone into the air, which would have had a most deterrent effect upon them; for it was their first experience of mines,

which, until they became familiar with them, they held in great awe. As it was, they regarded the incident as a very good omen and evidence of Divine intervention, a point of view their astute leaders made the most of. As a matter of fact, somebody favouring our cause had tampered with the wires, unbeknown to a German who was vainly endeavouring to explode the mine when discovered; as, of course, the Burgher leaders very well knew, but they wisely allowed their men to think otherwise.

The Germans employed both contact and observation mines, using the latter only at very important points where they hoped to do great execution. I only heard of observation mines at two places, Riet being one; the other was the narrow neck of beach between the sand-dunes and the sea just south of Swakupmund, the only way our troops could approach the town from Walfisch. Contact mines were arranged in various ingenious ways, the commonest being exploded by connecting an innocent-looking peg or stump to a detonator consisting of sulphuric acid and a mixture of chlorate of potash and picric acid. These chemicals were in separate glass phials, and when the peg was touched the phials were broken and the resulting explosion fired the dynamite beneath. Another kind consisted of a small wooden box with a hinged lid, which was buried in the sand, with the lid propped open a little bit. As soon as any weight was placed on the sand-covered lid, the box closed and an electrical contact was made which fired the dynamite.

If anything, I think the mines encouraged our men to fight rather than the reverse. They considered it a very unsportsmanlike way of fighting. On one occasion in the Swakup, when the troops were very much done up and discouraged, a mine exploded, destroying the eyesight of one man and partially that of another. The effect on the troops was magical; every man forgot his fatigue and thought only of revenge. From the German point of view, too, the indiscriminate scattering of dynamite about could only be considered foolish; for it had no military significance, and only irritated their enemies. On one or two occasions our troops were made so angry by these pinpricks that they were with difficulty restrained from putting Germans to death who happened to be in their hands at the moment.

May 30.—The Germans were very wise when they made a capital at Windhuk. Perhaps I should have said “manufactured” a capital, for the town at once gives one the idea of having been placed here in a new and complete state, and not to have grown, as towns are generally expected to do. Of course, what primarily brought them here is the water-supply, which seems to be inexhaustible. Wherever a bore-hole is put down, there water seems to be, and, besides these, the hot water gushes out of the rocks in several places, just as at Barmen. At one of these springs is a bathing and washing house where a hot bath can be had for the asking. Then the site is splendid; for although there are mountains on every side, the outlook is not in any way restricted by them,

and, as the bulk of the buildings are on the irregular slopes of a well-wooded hill, there has been no difficulty in making the place very picturesque. The streets run north and south, more or less parallel to the hill and at different levels, and the broken nature of the ground has prevented the place taking on that rectangular arrangement which spoils so many colonial towns.

The main street, known hitherto as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse, is just at the foot of the hill. In it are nearly all the shops, stores, and hotels, as well as the bank and post-office. This street alone is well paved, all the others being still in a very rough and stony condition. Below the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse are what one might call the "slums," and at its lower or northern end it opens out into a sort of square where the station, gymnasium, and gaol are situated. I had occasion to visit this latter place several times. Outside it is not so bad, surrounded as it is with an attempt at a garden and pepper-trees, but inside a more dismal, dark, cold, forbidding place it is difficult to imagine. The gaoler told me that, when he took over, the place literally swarmed with bugs, and that it would be the refinement of cruelty to put prisoners in many of the cells. Yet it was here that many British subjects, military and civilian, were confined for many weeks.

The Governor's palace, the public buildings, and the residences of Government officials and the well-to-do, are all built on the side of the hill. The palace is not much of a place, but it has beautiful gardens

in which palms predominate, and is surrounded by trees. The houses in this part of the town are very nice, often perched on high rocks with winding paths leading up to them, and terraced gardens below. What strikes one about them is that no two houses are alike. Some of them have very fantastic shapes, especially as regards the roofs.

For a long time before Windhuk became the capital, it was a Rhenish mission-station, and the buildings belonging to this period can easily be distinguished from the more modern ones; for, instead of being plastered and of ornate design, they are built of plain red brick, and are of simple and severe pattern.

When Windhuk surrendered, not many able-bodied men were in the place; but there were a great number of women and children, mostly belonging to the poorer classes, who had come in from distant parts when the Union troops approached, or who feared to remain on the farms after their men-folk had left. Altogether there were about 3,000 young children in the place besides grown-ups, and the bulk of them were very badly off for provisions, and had to be fed by the Union Government. We were told that only those civilians who could provide themselves with three months' rations were allowed to retire north to Otavi and Grootfontein, which explains why so many people were left at Windhuk.

The shops are open from ten to twelve and from four to six, but, with the exception of the butchers, very little trade is going on, for the shopkeepers have little to sell and the people but little to spend. A

certain amount of trade is being done with the military at very exorbitant rates, the Provost-Marshal not having fixed any tariff. The inhabitants pretend to go about their ordinary avocations as if we were not here. They dress up in the afternoons, and parade the streets or drive about in their cumbersome spiders. Men are to be seen in the beer-gardens making shift with one mug of beer, the supply of which is very low on account of the shortage of grain. One cannot help but admire the way they brazen it out. The fact that they have been in a state of siege for ten months, the fact that we have taken their capital without a blow, and that their troops are scattering and fleeing before us, does not depress them; for they *know* that their Emperor's troops are on the way to relieve them. Meanwhile they kill us with looks or ignore us altogether, except a few dashing ladies whose duty it is to glean what information they can from our officers. In consequence of this sort of thing I hear, though how true it may be I do not know, that a general order has been issued forbidding all social intercourse with enemy subjects.

I am very much impressed by the German colonial woman. In spite of her somewhat flat feet, loose, rotund figure, and cold blue eye, she is a very fine animal, full-blooded, active, and self-reliant. In the absence of the men, many farmers' wives and daughters are managing estates, riding about among the natives, protected only by their own rifle or revolver, acting hostess and spy with a sang-froid which compels admiration. Her father, husband, brothers, and

sons, are fugitives or prisoners, her larder and purse almost empty; but pride and determination alone are written on her countenance. She rears a goodly number of white-haired, sturdy little square-heads whom she will give to the Emperor without qualm or regret. Fortunately for us and for civilization, her mate is rarely her equal. Past middle life, he is debauched-looking, flabby, and dyspnoeic; a Landsturm raised in Windhuk would be very small beer.

May 31.—To-day I visited the native location, situated on a rounded hill a little distance west of the town, where there are said to be about 10,000 natives, mostly Hereros with a sprinkling of Hottentots. The place is laid out in a very orderly manner. The streets all radiate from the summit of the hill, where there are benches, an ornamental pond, and a flag-pole, the sides of each street being lined with tins painted white, in each of which there is a tree, either a pepper or a eucalyptus. At present these trees are only small, but when they grow the place will be quite imposing. But the huts themselves are the most miserable habitations imaginable. In his natural state the Herero builds a circular hut about 10 feet in diameter, with a rounded roof, the whole thing having the shape of the upper end of an egg. These huts are normally built of long sticks bent over to form the roof, the intervening spaces being filled in with mud, and the roof thatched. Beaver-like, the Hereros have tried here to keep to this design, but, not having the necessary materials, they have attempted to make the huts with any material that

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NATIVE LOCATION—WINDHUK.



came to hand, such as roofing iron, petrol tins flattened out, bits of plank and sacking. The effect is very bizarre, and to most of these dwellings wind and rain must find a ready entrance.

For the most part the people are well dressed and clean-looking. The women are much more comely than Bantus usually are, and have very peculiar and distinctive figures. They are tall and thin; at least, viewed from the front or back they look very thin, due to a narrowness across the shoulders, which approaches deformity. They make up from before backwards what they lack from side to side; thus, their figures give you the idea of having been compressed laterally. The dress they affect accentuates these peculiarities, for they wear their waists just under their armpits, and they fold a handkerchief, or *duk*, the shape of an ordinary flowerpot, and wear it on the head.

Of the various peoples in the country, the Germans can only claim to have subdued the Hereros, who seem to be a very docile and peace-loving race. What are left of them the Germans have reduced to a state of slavery by a very simple and efficient means. They do not allow the Hereros to own cattle or land except under conditions which make it next to impossible. In order to live, therefore, these people must work, their pay being about 10 marks a month; and this they must spend at the German storekeeper's, the only place where food is to be obtained. There is no doubt whatever that the Germans have treated these people systematically with the greatest cruelty.

Their lives are of little account; since we have been in Windhuk several bodies of murdered natives have been exhumed and their murderers brought to justice. One man readily admitted shooting a native. "But why make such a fuss about it?" he queried.

I have several times seen the shackles used by the Germans; they are very heavy, and remind one of those used in the Middle Ages. A common practice was to chain five prisoners together—legs, arms, and necks—in such a manner that if one wanted to move it disturbed the others. I have also seen photographs of executions and floggings, all very barbarous. Natives are generally hanged to trees with their arms free, so that they linger a long time, preventing suffocation by holding on to the reins with their hands. Around may be seen a group of German soldiers apparently enjoying the proceedings. On one occasion our troops found some bodies hanging from a branch by means of barbed wire round the necks. Bodies, too, were found fastened together in graves, with every indication of having been buried alive. German soldiers and others had regular harems of Herero women, who, when they happened to have a child, were given a few goats and cut adrift.

An attempt was made by societies in Germany to prevent the obvious evil of colonizing the country with "Eurafricans," and large numbers of German girls have been sent out, ostensibly as barmaids, telephone clerks, and typists, but their fate is often little better than that of their African sisters. It is quite a common thing to find at the farms, not a frau, but

a fräulein, living with the farmer. Her position, of course, is quite insecure, but the custom seems to receive social recognition, and nobody thinks any the worse of her.

June 1.—We have started an out-patient department at the hospital for the troops. Several units are here without medical officers, and in other cases the regimental doctors are engaged in chasing about the country doing post-mortems and attending exhumations of murdered natives. Every morning at nine the Burghers flock to the sick parade in great numbers. About 10 per cent. have toothache, 20 per cent. a skin complaint which we call veldt sores, another 20 per cent. have intestinal complaints resulting from improper food, and the remaining 50 per cent. are malingerers or attend for a little diversion.

The unwisdom of allowing men with slight defects to go on active service is now very apparent, for men who are desirous of getting home use these defects as a means to that end, and, although they may be suffering no inconvenience, we have to believe them. One ingenuous man wanted to get a sick discharge in order that he might, so he said, go to Europe to fight. Among the men who attend are many fine old backveldters, who nearly all fought against us in the Great War, as they call the Boer War. Most of them have wounds to show; one has eleven, with two British bullets still in him; yet he is now willing to extend the British Empire since General Botha is doing so. These men will stand rifle-fire all day at 1,000 yards or so, but they are nervous about the big

guns, and don't quite like the machine guns since the experiences at Jackalswater. Many of them are now armed with Mausers, which they prefer to the Lee-Enfield. They think it inflicts a more deadly wound, and this is the view the Germans hold, too. A few days ago a German officer attempted to blow up the line, but was shot and captured. The first thing he said, when taken, was, "Was I shot with one of our rifles or one of yours?" On being told he was shot with a German rifle, he replied, "I am done for, then." One thing I have certainly noticed with regard to the Mauser bullets is that, if they meet with resistance, such as buttons or bones, they are very easily stripped of their nickel casing, and the lead, spreading or breaking up, makes a very large wound; sometimes, indeed, there are several exit wounds.

The Burghers never look like fighting men when off their horses, but now they look less like soldiers than ever. Much of their original clothing has been worn out, and the necessary substitutions have not always a military cut. Quite a number of men are entirely clothed in German uniforms, which may lead to complications if fighting should occur. A few days ago a motor-driver lost his life because he was wearing a German hat. He approached the farm of a Bastard, who, mistaking him for a German, shot him dead. The Rehoboth Bastards were much upset by this incident, and offered to shoot the man who had made the mistake, or hand him over to us for justice, so anxious are they to conciliate General Botha's armies.

The Germans about here are now broken up into small parties, which our men may be said to hunt. The present object of the enemy is to harass us by interfering with the train service between here and Karibib. Every few days they succeed in doing damage to the line; but it can only be slight, for the daily service of trains is rarely interfered with. We hear they nearly succeeded in blowing up the big suspension-bridge at Okahandya, a very fine effort, seeing that an infantry regiment was detailed to protect the bridge.

Six men of Hunt's scouts captured twenty-four Germans the other night. It was very dark, and the scouts heard some waggons lumbering along the road, so they lined up in the bush close to where the waggons were to pass. The unsuspecting Huns were riding on the waggons, some being asleep, and were quite taken by surprise when our men appeared suddenly out of the bush. Pointing their rifles at the reposing foe, with a "Come down out of that!" the thing was accomplished. Having no bayonets, the scouts mounted guard with the weapons of the prisoners, whom they put in a cattle kraal for safety's sake until the morning. The prisoners' disgust was extreme, next morning, when they saw how few their captors were, and they were inclined to be truculent; but a few prods with their own bayonets quickly rendered them docile.

June 4.—The army is now "reorganizing"—that is, resting and getting fit for another dash northward. The headquarters of the various brigades extend from

Karibib to Windhuk along the line; General Britz's brigade form the left wing. They are to advance left of the line towards Elosha Pan, and have perhaps the longest and most difficult march. Their horses have been sent down the line so that they can be more easily fed from Swakupmund. A large number of infantry are concentrating at Karibib: the Rhodesians and 2nd Kimberleys of Trekkoppi fame, also the 1st Durban Light Infantry. General Bere's brigade has been brought round from Luderitzbucht, consisting of the Pretoria Regiment, the Transvaal Scottish, and the Wit Rifles. General Lukin's brigade of the South African Mounted Rifles have also joined the Northern Army, and are at or near Karibib. The Free Staters, under Marnie Botha, have their headquarters at Johann-Albrechtshöhe. The right wing of our brigade, the 3rd, is at Wilhelmstaal under Colonel Jordaan; Colonel Albert's brigade, the 2nd, is at Okasisi. The Rand Rifles are at Okahandya, and we, the left wing of the 3rd Brigade, under Colonel Mentz, are at Windhuk, although the bulk of it is to go to Okahandya to take part in the advance. It will therefore appear that, if Grootfontein be the objective, General Britz, on the left, will have to go farther than anyone else. We at Windhuk will not get very far, I fear, but remain behind in case the Germans break back. Nominally, Colonel Mentz's troops remain the garrison of Windhuk, but they may be relieved by General Mackenzie's Natal Mounted regiments, who are advancing north along the line from Gibeon, and whose scouts have already entered Rehoboth.

Some of Colonel Berrangé's Eastern Army who have trekked across the Kalahari from Vryburg through Rietfontein are also on the way up through Keetmanshoop. General Van der Venter's Southern Army turned back at Keetmanshoop, and have been disbanded with the exception of the heavy artillery under Colonel Devine, who are very slowly coming up this way from Upington. Practically speaking, our front can now be said to extend from Karibib to Okahandya, a distance of about sixty miles. I cannot say now how many troops are taking part in the final advance, for the Burgher brigades are being very much reduced, men being allowed to return home on very trivial grounds. We of the left wing (3rd Brigade) were about 1,400 strong at Wynberg; now I don't suppose we have more than 500 effectives. I don't think any of the mounted brigades exceed 1,000 strong, and the infantry 500 to 600 in a regiment, which would give a total of about 9,000 men.

A good many officers, too, some of high rank, have been given their congé. Some, we are told, are burning to take part in the political campaign. There is, of course, a strong political vein running through the whole Burgher army. To some extent this is unavoidable, owing to the commando system. Naturally, the Government appoint a man as commandant in a district who is one of their supporters, and who is more trustworthy than the Parliamentary representative? Either the commandant has become M.L.A. or the M.L.A. has become commandant.

In some cases this arrangement has worked quite well. Young men who proved themselves in the Boer War, and subsequently entered Parliament, have in not a few cases proved themselves good leaders now; but in other cases, I regret to say, men have been put into high positions purely because of their political status or command of votes. Even in the medical corps there are several members of Parliament, all holding the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. In fact, I never heard of an M.L.A. holding a lower rank than Major. We have yet to acquire that altruistic spirit which compels men of note to shoulder the rifle as the French senators are doing. In a scratch army like ours, soon to be disbanded, these soldier politicians can do little harm; but, unfortunately, the political element has been allowed to enter our permanent defence force. Beyers, the first Commandant-General, was a man belonging to a political party, and when the crisis arrived he abused his military position, with the disastrous results so well known. If recent happenings do not teach us that our defence force must be kept free from political bias, then many useful lives have been lost in vain.

The medical service is also undergoing reorganization, for it is now abundantly clear to the authorities that the field ambulances are not sufficiently mobile for this kind of warfare. Medical officers are to have more horses, and a greater number of the orderlies are to be mounted and attached directly to the commandoes. Most important of all, the O.C. of the medical unit is to be attached to the Brigadier's staff,

instead of being with the tent subdivision of the ambulance, which is always in the rear. In this way it is hoped the ambulance will be kept in touch with the troops and get early advice of their movements. On the way up we generally had to fend for ourselves, and were left without escort or even orders. Or we would receive a belated order, such as this: "Follow the spoor of the ammunition waggons." We were always forgotten until a few men were hurt, and then there was considerable outcry if we were not on the spot. But this lack of cohesion is evident all through, and is due to one cause, and one cause only—namely, a dearth of properly trained staff officers.

I wish to goodness they would "reorganize" the ambulance waggons, which are of bad construction and worse design, being much too light and furnished with bad springs. Moreover each one only holds two severe cases, and it seems to be a great waste of energy for twelve mules to be engaged in transporting two wounded men. Even when one feels well and strong it is pain and grief to ride in these ambulances, and an officer suffering from severe lumbago, who was invalided down from Riet after the battle, told me that he preferred to walk rather than ride in them. Never shall I forget the agonized expressions of some German wounded whom I brought in from the Riet affair. Time was pressing, we made the mules trot a good deal, and the waggons bumped horribly. When these men write their memoirs, they won't forget to mention their experiences of the ambulance waggons of the South African Medical Corps.

June 6.—Away to the south-east runs a very impressive and inviting range of mountains, known as the Auas, culminating in a point known as the Moltkeblick, to which the maps give an elevation of 8,141 feet. Together with an Africander colleague, I rode out to-day to make a preliminary survey of this range with a view to climbing it on a future occasion. The road passes east over a ridge into the peaceful hamlet of Klein Windhuk, where the chief means of livelihood seems to be vine-growing. The soil is very full of lime, and the grape seems to do very well. Good local wine is to be had at a convent here, although the worthy Sisters tell you that selling to the military is “verboten.” But in this as well as other matters here we do not respect the German “verboten,” for everything is forbidden to everybody everywhere. You see this vile word on every public building, in streets and parks, on mountain-tops and in the bush. If the Prussian system withholds most of the things worth living for from its own adherents, what will it be like for us when “the day” arrives?

Riding through this little village, where the younger Germans were attending Sunday-school and the older ones drinking beer, we arrived among the foot-hills of the Auas Mountains. It would have been the usual quiet Sunday afternoon but for the continuous reports of guns and rifles in the valleys around. It was as if an infantry battle were in progress, but in reality it was only Burghers shooting guinea-fowl and any other game that was not entirely scared away. Guinea-fowl literally swarm in these parts, and one

sees whole acres of ground along the watercourses scratched up by them, and resembling the surface of the ordinary circumscribed fowl-run.

We climbed a neighbouring hill which goes by the name of the Kudu Berg. The view from the top was very extensive, except towards the south, where the Auas Mountains towered above everything. One could not help noticing the arrangement of all the mountains within sight, which were on a very definite plan. The mountains hereabout are composed largely of a mica-sandstone, or, rather, what geologists call a mica-schist, with a good deal of intrusive granite. The strata forming the mountains have all been tilted in one direction, and all at the same angle. The angle the strata make with the horizontal is something between 15 and 20 degrees, and the dip is towards the north-west. The ascent of any mountain here from the north is easy; you climb at an angle of 20 degrees or so, but without fail, as soon as you are on the crest, you encounter a precipitous jagged descent of 70 or 80 degrees towards the south. The whole thing gives one the impression of a gigantic incoming tide suddenly solidified. The great and small waves all have the same shape and direction, the gradual rise to the crest and then the sudden fall.

As I have said, there is a good deal of granite scattered about among the sandstone, which, being the harder, resists to a much greater extent the softening effects of the weather, so that the final result is that not only the mountains and the valleys, but also the streets of Windhuk, are covered with loose hard

pebbles of granite, which make walking and riding very tedious.

On the way home we called at the farm of an Italian living in rather a poor way. At first he was not inclined to be very communicative. He was under the impression that things were going very badly with the Allies in Europe, and that we were about to be bundled out of German West. The Germans had told him that London was in flames, Calais and Warsaw taken, and that England, Russia, and France, were *kaput*, a word we hear frequently on German lips, and equivalent to utterly destroyed *plus* damned. We assured him that none of these things were so, and then he came down on our side of the fence without reserve. "The Germans call us Italians 'dirty pigs' now," he said, spitting on the ground with great emphasis, "and will crush us under foot like beetles; but we will show them!" and he destroyed several imaginary Germans in a very quixotic manner.

To turn the conversation into a quieter channel, I asked him if an urchin standing by eating a tomato, and whose colour and hair suggested Bantu blood diluted with a paler mixture, belonged to him. "Yes, but my two *sons* at home are soldats fighting for Italy now." "Your wife is dead, of course?" "Oh no, she is in Italy, too." And then, with a laugh, he told us he had also a wife in Brazil, one in Buenos Ayres, two in Cape Town, one in Okahandya; "and this one," pointing to a Herero woman standing by, holding a squalling brat. "The Herero is the best of the

lot," concluded this polygamous father of thirty-three children. "Hadn't we better be going?" gasped the astonished and faithful Africander.

June 10.—Every morning at nine the able-bodied Windhukers turn up at the Feste for roll-call, and this morning all were there as usual. The Provost-Marshal called out the names of fifty-five prominent citizens, asking them to step forward. "Gentlemen, the train for Cape Town leaves at eleven. You have two hours to prepare yourselves." What a shock! Protestations, remonstrations, all in vain. One, a medical, pleaded a weak heart. "You, a doctor," replied the inexorable Provost, "ought to know that heart disease does better at the coast." Another pleaded: "I live at Klein Windhuk, and have only this thin overmantle." "We will lend you some blankets," was all the satisfaction he got.

They were all at the station at eleven, their women folk seeing them off, a special guard of fifty soldiers and a Maxim looking on. An account of each man's offence went down, too, most being guilty of attempting to communicate with the enemy. On the whole it was a very well-managed affair, reminiscent of the Government's seizure of the strike leaders.

Standing about Windhuk Station are a lot of derelict locomotives; but there are some besides which are quite in good condition, but we cannot work them because the Germans have removed some of the essential parts and hidden them. Some genius hit on the following plan to recover the parts: German engineers were offered a pound a day if they would

work the engines. Money being scarce, the lost parts were soon forthcoming, and the engines put into working order, when the services of the would-be drivers were dispensed with.

June 12.—Our military politicians are employing their best endeavours to find out what share the Germans took in the rebellion; for it will obviously be a powerful weapon in the hands of the Government if it can be proved that the rebel leaders were in league with the Germans. Judging from what leaks out, there seems to be little doubt that Beyers was plotting with the Kaiser as early as 1913. The Kaiser sent wireless messages to Beyers after the war broke out, which were conveyed to him through Maritz and a certain De Wet who was resident in the country. When matters seemed ripe, Dr. Seitz went down to Warmbad to discuss things with Beyers, but the latter did not turn up owing to the shooting of Delarey. A German in Windhuk who is in the know admitted that a certain well-known Africander was to have been President of the new republic, but “now we are in the mud he knows nothing about it.” Unfortunately for truth, the wireless tapes at the Telefunken relating to these transactions are not forthcoming, although those interested have used every effort to find them.

There is every reason to believe that the Union Government knew well enough about Beyers' little game; but the evidence against him was too indefinite, and his seizure would, no doubt, have precipitated the rebellion.

Now, although the Germans fostered the rebellion, there does not seem to be very much evidence pointing to their having made preparations for invasion of the Union. There are people who say that the Herero Rebellion was a very much overrated affair, that the Germans kept it going so that they might introduce large quantities of stores and munitions into the country without exciting suspicion. The country is certainly very well stocked with war material; besides what we have found, the Germans have destroyed a lot, and probably hidden a lot more. In Windhuk, for instance, there was a tremendous quantity of horseshoes, sufficient to shoe all the horses in South Africa for four years, as one man put it.

Speaking generally, the roads in the country are very poor, often mere tracks following the lines of least resistance. But there is one road running east and west through Windhuk which, from the excellence of its construction, at once made us think that it had been made for a special purpose. It is very wide, and could accommodate four vehicles abreast; embankments and cuttings have been freely used, and the surface is well metalled. From Windhuk it runs east through Seeis out towards Gobabis, near the Bechuanaland border, and westward it passes through Hensis towards Otjimbingwe. Of course, there is no reason why the Germans should not make good roads, but this one neither links up important places nor taps populous districts, and the conclusion which comes naturally to the mind is that the Germans had the idea of using it as a military route for the invasion

of the Union. When the Germans were questioned as to what this road was for, the reason given was not very satisfactory. They said that when Herr Dernburg visited the country he expressed a desire to go in the direction of Gobabis, so they had the road put in order for him !

CHAPTER VIII

TO OTJIHANGWE

June 17.—There is much tedium in war; but it is like holding lottery tickets: the suspended hope of excitement or reward prevents ennui. To-day I got a little change which was very welcome after three weeks attending to a lot of wounds which do not seem to get very much better. News came in that there had been fighting at a distant outpost, and, there being no regimental doctors available for the duty, I was deputed to go.

Nobody seemed to know where the place was, what the name of it was, or what had been the nature of the fighting. Besides our own motor ambulance, the O.C. motor transport kindly put a large 35 h.p. Chalmers at our disposal, and came himself, bringing with him a greasy little bantam driver whom they called Chipp. "It's seventy miles," says Chipp. "I can do it in three and a half hours." "I can't do it at all: my radiator pipe is leaking," puts in the somewhat pessimistic driver of the ambulance. However, with the liberal use of hospital plaster and string the leak is stayed. At noon we are ready to start, with a good supply of rations and plenty of petrol. The Chalmers looks very business-like, all bonnet and box-

seat, the body being replaced by a crude wooden seat with a large sort of tray behind. Knowing the weaknesses of the ambulance well, I chose the box-seat of the Chalmers, between O.C. and Chipp, the pessimistic driver and our tried Sergeant-Major following in the ambulance. "We ought to have had the Red Cross on this car," says the O.C. as we pass over the hill into Klein Windhuk. "Hadn't we better keep close to the ambulance?" is the best I can suggest. For the first dozen miles or so our way lay along the main-road which runs through Windhuk towards Gobabis, near our border in latitude 22° S.

This road is different to any I have seen in this country. It looks like a road with a purpose, making for its destination regardless of obstacles. Such a road the Romans might have made. It is quite new; in fact, it does not appear to be finished. The O.C. voiced my thought when he said: "The Germans were making this road to invade the Union by." One was glad to leave it at Kapp and turn to the left, so as to get away from such an outward and visible sign of German purpose and design. So far we had skirted the northern slopes of the Auas Mountains, but here the range comes to a sudden end with a rugged peak called Auas Ende, and a fine plain opens out, stretching east as far as one can see. At the foot of the mountain here is a farm known as Swartz-Klip, where the Germans killed a lot of Hereros, and lost a few men themselves, as the graves show.

Skirting some kopjes to the left, we soon made Neudamm, which is a Government farm with a beau-

tiful natural dam among the rocks, orchards, and some substantial farm buildings. Here we picked up our Burgher guide, who had ridden in after the fight to telephone for us. He looked very fagged, and well he might, for he had been two nights and a day in the saddle, with no sleep, little food, and the excitement of a fight thrown in. Even he did not know the name of the place we were going to, but said it was 120 kilometres. They all talk of kilometres in these parts; the word "mile" is not used. I, who have not learnt to think in the Metric System, translated this into seventy-two miles, but our speedometer subsequently showed that this was the distance from Windhuk.

We now entered the real upland bush country, flat, with spitzkopjes standing up here and there, the grass, bleached by the winter sun and frosts, standing knee-high. The country is well wooded with acacias, nearly all of the wachteinbilje variety. It is an ideal part for stock, especially cattle, and is full of game, such as buck of various kinds (especially kudu), zebra, guinea-fowl, partridge, ostriches, together with such carnivora as leopards and jackals. About 4 p.m. we came to a large farm, Mecklenburg, where a very big dam is being constructed. The two occupants spoke English well. I asked one his nationality. He prevaricated: "I am a British subject." "Where were you born?" "In Cape Town," he replied. "I came here in August to manage this farm, and have not heard from home since." It might be coincidence, but this was the third "British subject"

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I had found managing a farm for a German owner within a short while. The advantage of this arrangement to the farmer is obvious under present conditions.

The roads about here are really good, for the surface of the country is flat and the soil gravelly and porous. Pointed kopjes stick up here and there on the horizon; we were practically above the mountains. At sunset we came to another farm, Ongono Gotjari, a very bare-looking place where most of the Pietersburg commando were. Our destination was still eleven miles farther on, and we covered this in less than half an hour, so good was the road.

The commandant met me with, "I'm very glad to see you, doctor. They killed two of my men yesterday, and wounded three." His eyes looked tired, anxious, and angry, and a state of restlessness and worry seemed to pervade the whole place. I went straight to the badly wounded man. His white face was all I could see in the dark, stuffy little room. Shot through the stomach, and a leg shattered, his case was hopeless; but he was patient and reasonable, though obviously dying. As he was lying in an utter state of discomfort and filth, we tried to make him a little more comfortable. Another man was shot through the neck from side to side. How the bullet had avoided his spine was a mystery. He was fussy and restless, more frightened than hurt. Speaking generally, the majority of wounded men seem to be in a peculiar psychological state, apart from the shock and collapse, which I can only describe as

hysterical. This applies particularly to men who are shot quite unexpectedly, as, for example, those who are ambushed or shot accidentally. It was pathetic to see how gently and unremittingly their comrades tended the wounded. Nothing was too much trouble. Yet they, poor fellows ! were played out with fatigue and anxiety. One old man refused to leave the dying boy. They were neighbours at home, he said, and the lad always asked for him if he went out. Our sporting guide, as if he had not already done enough, must needs also hang about and do his bit of the nursing.

As a sleeping-place the farmhouse was very uninviting, and I preferred to brave the elements, bivouacking with my men under the lee of the motor-car. The night was terribly cold, and this, combined with getting up at intervals to attend the wounded, put sleep out of the question. It was with relief and hope that I saw the morning star appear in the east about 6 a.m. I remembered it was the centenary of Waterloo, and the thought of what our forefathers did on that day warmed my benumbed limbs a little. Our blankets were frozen stiff; the water in our water-bottles and a little milk we had were also congealed.

June 18.—During to-day I heard various accounts of the little fight, and how our men had been outwitted by the enemy.

A certain Lieutenant of the Pietersburg commando with his troops had visited the farm a few days previously, and had been received and kindly treated by the farmer. He made arrangements to come again

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on the 15th and take over some mealies from the farmer. A German officer with a patrol was known to be scouting in the neighbourhood. On or before the 15th he sends a telephone message to the Pietersburg commandant, asking him to send patrols to Gobabis to protect German women and children from the natives. Our commandant feels he cannot refuse this request, which turns out to be a ruse to get him out of the way. While the bulk of the commando are on this wild-goose chase, the Germans double back to Otjijhangwe, as this farm is called, to ambush the mealie-seeking Lieutenant.

The Lieutenant, however, having been told by some natives that four German soldiers are now at the farm, approaches with caution. He divides his troop into two parties. Twelve men under a sergeant he lines up in the river-bed, quite close to the farm, and he himself with the remaining twelve takes cover behind a large cattle kraal on the opposite side of the farm. For some inexplicable reason, and contrary to orders, the sergeant instructs his party to rush the farm buildings. This they do without taking any cover, and, running into the farmyard, they are met with rifle-fire from the five separate buildings which constitute the farm, and which are so arranged that our men could get but little cover by hiding behind the walls. Two men were shot dead immediately, and three wounded, including the sergeant, who had rushed up to one of the minor buildings and rather madly emptied his revolver through a window. The remainder of the troop withdraw, taking what

cover they could, leaving their dead and wounded in the yard.

It seems the Germans were partly taken by surprise themselves, for the farm offers very little facility for observing an approaching foe, and, besides this, a warning from a woman who was on the lookout at the neighbouring farm miscarried, a native girl to whom she had given a note telling the Germans of our approach, falling into our hands. Had the Germans been advised of the approach, they would in all probability have shot the whole troop down, for they had loopholed the walls and doors, and their rifles commanded the position in all directions.

As soon as the Burghers had retired, the Germans, about twelve in number, evacuated the place, and joined their main body towards the north. Before they left they had time to ill-treat the wounded, for the man who was shot through the neck told me that, as they lay in the yard, the Germans came out and kicked them. He was compelled to get up, and was bundled in a brutal manner into an outhouse. On the other hand, the farmer and a woman on the place did what they could, burying the dead and dressing the wounds. The woman was particularly assiduous in her attentions. Rather too much so, I was inclined to think, for no doubt they had taken part in the ambush, and as likely as not the farmer had shared in the shooting, for I found his sporting Mauser still loaded with soft-nosed bullets, with every evidence of having been recently discharged.

After the Germans had left Otjhangwe, this farmer

went over to the Pietersburg headquarters, which were now at Ongono, eleven miles away, and told the commandant that the Germans had left, and that he needed help to attend the wounded. Fearing another ambush, the commandant moved all his men up to Otjihangwe, and when they were near the farm the Adjutant made the farmer walk in front, covering him with a revolver, and promising him instant death if a shot were fired from the house. This farmer and his assistant were put under guard. I never saw two men in a more abject state of fear. They expected summary execution, but it speaks well for the restraint of our men that they were sent down to Windhuk instead of being shot.

There is a feeling of great insecurity in this place. An attack is expected at any moment, as we are only about twenty miles from a large body of Germans, and no communications can be established with any of our troops either by helio or patrol. Consequently everybody is a little "jumpy," especially at nights. The second night even the animals seemed restive, and a large number of cattle in a neighbouring kraal stampeded, and would have been over us, but for the friendly shelter of the motor-car. The horses too were uneasy, dogs barked the whole night, and the very fowls were affected with nerves. Challenges were frequent, and once "Who goes there?" was followed by a peal of laughter. A sentry had challenged a riderless horse wandering about.

June 19.—During the night the wounded boy died, and as soon as he was buried the commandant decided

to evacuate the farm, as it offered no facilities for defence. He still felt very angry, and wanted to destroy the farm. I tried to dissuade him, with what success I don't know,* for we left directly after breakfast. The women and three little children who had been at the place through all this trying time were sent off to Windhuk in a waggon.

Although the farm was a rather dilapidated and poor-looking place, it was very well stocked with household goods and personal effects, for your German colonial is very fond of comfort and likes good things. There was enough clothing in the farm to stock a shop, enough cutlery and plate for an hotel. In the dirty little kitchen, the thought of which spoilt one's appetite, there were between forty and fifty aluminium pots and pans.

Serviettes, towels, and handkerchiefs, tied neatly in bundles and marked, filled whole cupboards. For three small children there was enough clothing for thirty, and the same applied to toys. There was so much clothing at the farm that most of the men were able to supplement their scanty wardrobes, and some, notably my guide, were entirely re-equipped in German khaki, of better quality than fit. My conscience allowed me to take all the sheets and bed linen I could carry, for our hospital at Windhuk was not too well supplied with these commodities. In one of the outbuildings we found a great quantity of maize and dried beans, but there was no sugar, tea, or coffee, or any of those foodstuffs which the country has to

* The farm was destroyed.

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import. Indeed, the shortage of food, other than what the country supplies—which is not much besides meat—is being acutely felt everywhere.

June 25.—We are now getting patients from the south, General Mackenzie's force having reached Rehoboth, sixty miles south of Windhuk. The railway is now open running south, but delays and breakdowns are so frequent that the journey from Rehoboth sometimes takes several days. As the nights are very cold now and food scarce, the sick have a very rough time on the road. One man left Rehoboth with erysipelas, but when he reached hospital it was all over. They are sending them up to us in batches of thirty or forty every day. The men have no severe illnesses, but are suffering woefully from privation, many of them being utterly exhausted in body and mind. Most of them are suffering from dysentery, and their hands and arms are covered with scabby sores.

Both men and horses have reached the limits of endurance, and latterly they have only been trekking five or six miles a day. Men tell me that they are incapable of the slightest exertion, becoming breathless after a short walk, and that they hadn't energy left to catch sheep and kill them, but would wait for a sheep to pass, and then shoot it. Ever since the end of March they have had no regular supply of rations, and for the last month they have existed on meat alone, often not even getting salt. Pathetic tales are told of their privations. One officers' mess had a little flour in a bag which they used most

sparingly. This precious bag was in charge of the quartermaster-sergeant, with instructions that he was not to let it out of his sight. The care of this bag was a great anxiety to him, especially at nights, when he was in the habit of using it as a pillow. One morning, however, he found the bulk of his flour gone, although he was still lying on the bag. Some hungry trooper had cut a hole in it, and scooped most of the flour out without waking him. One man was seen searching among some refuse in a cellar. He wished to keep his discovery a secret, because he had found a few little wizened potatoes not fit for pigs. Many seemed to feel the lack of tobacco almost as much as that of food. One ingenious man told me he was fortunate enough to find a tin of tobacco extract, used for dipping animals. Lucerne hay, soaked in this and dried, made, he said, a very good smoke. Others, less fortunate, had to be content with dried leaves.

The horses died from sheer starvation in scores, and many went suddenly blind, which, my informant said, was due to the same cause.

June 27.—I have already mentioned the range of mountains, the highest in the country and running in a north-east and south-west direction, about ten miles to the south of Windhuk. Every night I have watched the sun set on these proud and fierce-looking peaks, and every night I have registered a mental vow to hold my head for a few brief moments higher than they. I had met nobody in Windhuk who had made the ascent, nor anybody who advised it. The matron of the hospital said an officer had once climbed

it, and taken two days, but he had said he would not do it again for 10,000 marks.

To-day Colonel K—— and I decided to make the attempt. Our plan was to ride as far as possible, and then have a shot at the Moltkeblick. Unfortunately, we were rather late in starting, and we rode and rode over thorn-clad foot-hills without apparently getting any nearer. It was half-past one before we reached a point where it was too steep and rocky for the horses to go farther.

The northern approach to the Moltkeblick is through a magnificent gorge about three-quarters of a mile wide. On either side of the gorge, and quite detached from the mountain, is a mighty cone-shaped peak, both of them being nearly as high as the Moltkeblick itself. They stand before the entrance like giant sentinels, silent and everlasting. Our hearts sank when we saw the distance still to go, but we decided to climb for two hours, and then, if not at the top, to turn back. Skirting the right side of the gorge, the Colonel led off at a brisk pace over level but very rough ground, and I instinctively felt that this was to be a race for the honour of being the first Britisher to climb the highest mountain in "British" South-West Africa. We crossed over to the left side of the gorge to follow a ridge running up to the summit, the Colonel leading easily.

And now the climb began. The mountain is covered with large stones of granite and sandstone which are very angular. They are loose and slip easily, and between them are tufts of grass and small

mimosas. Consequently every step is grief, and every other one pain. The Colonel zigzagged along at a killing pace, and, in order not to lose heart entirely, I soon ceased to look at him. About halfway up I stopped, on the point of throwing up the sponge; but I was much encouraged to see that my rival, too, was in difficulties, for he frequently stopped and turned round, ostensibly to admire the view, but in reality, I think, to get a little breath. Soon we were level. Near the summit we were confronted with 100 feet or so of almost vertical rock, and the Colonel edged away to the left, where it was less steep. I regretted my temerity halfway up this steep bit. Fortunately, however, the grass was firmly rooted, and I dragged myself to the summit and looked round. No Colonel in sight, and the beacon only a few yards away. Jumping to my feet, I hurried up to it. In less than half a minute the Colonel was there too. "God save the King!" gasped I. "Johnnie Walker first as usual," was his disappointed retort.

The outlook from the top of the Moltkeblick is simply sublime. This great ridge of broken sandstone runs east and west like the teeth of a saw. On the north it is accessible, but on the south, at the point where we were, it seemed a sheer drop of, I suppose, 2,000 feet, the rugged ends of the strata protruding a little like giant steps. To the south and east blue mountains bounded the horizon, what was apparently a great plain lying between, but no doubt containing hills of considerable height, indistinguishable at so great a distance. The white river-

beds, fringed with green, could be seen meandering south or east as far as the eye could reach. Northward the valley of the Swakup could be made out cutting its way through endless mountains; while a little to the west Windhuk was represented by a few white dots, the Telefunken station still visible; but man's handiwork now seemed insignificant, its great pillars resembling a little clump of black pins. Westward the mountains tailed off into the Komass Highlands, stretching toward the desert and the ocean like a sea of hills.

Following the usual custom, we had to think of something to leave at the summit. The most appropriate thing we could produce was a George V. 1912 shilling. Him we placed in a broken German beer bottle, and hid at the base of the metal beacon to watch over as much of the Empire as can be seen from any one point.

July 3.—To-day there is official news that General Botha's troops have occupied Otavi, Marnie Botha's brigade and the S.A.M.R., to whom the I.L.H. are attached, being the troops engaged in the movement. Only a few Germans were captured, we are told; the others have retired north into the "fly belt." War breeds rumour even more than peace. One day we hear Franke has shot himself, the next that he has accepted our terms, the third that he is under restraint, suffering from delirium tremens; but the Germans aver that he has done none of these things. "Franke is a brave man" is their only comment. A junior staff-officer told us the following: The

Germans have squared it with the Portuguese and retired into Angola; they will wait until our troops leave, and then take the country again. When told that this must involve Portugal with England, he glibly replied: "Oh! but we do things differently out here."

Yesterday and to-day the town has been crowded with men of the Central Force. They are nearly all British, and come from Natal. They are to go back immediately *viâ* Luderitzbucht, and are a little disappointed, after weeks of trekking under the hardest conditions imaginable, that they are not to have a share in the final drive. Many of them hint that the Burghers are being favoured, but they have no real cause for dissatisfaction or complaint. Even if their services were required further, neither men nor horses are in a condition to undertake another long trek. They have borne the burden and heat of the day, and everybody knows they have played their part as well as it could be played. An old German soldier who fought at Gibeon said they were the bravest and worst-equipped soldiers in the world, and that he would sooner meet other troops once a day than meet once a year the men who chased him at Gibeon.

CHAPTER IX

WINDHUK TO LUDERITZBUCHT

July 13.—All last week rumours of peace, or rather of German surrender, were floating in the air, and now these rumours have merged into established fact. Seitz, Franke and Co., have surrendered. It seems that Franke, who met General Botha at Otavi, was quite unaware that he was totally surrounded when he went out to ask General Botha for an armistice. The General said he was quite willing to grant one, but he could not very well inform his wings about it, as they were far distant. Franke smiled in an incredulous manner, but he was soon to learn that he was shut in north-west and north-east as well as south, General Britz being on one side of him and General Myburg on the other. They had no option but to surrender. True to British traditions, General Botha has given them very good terms. The regular soldiers, about 3,000 in number, are to be interned, and the reservists, mostly farmers, are to be allowed to return to their homes, and trading facilities are to be granted to them.

The cessation of hostilities is, of course, the signal for a general exodus, almost a *sauve qui peut*, the Major and I having found substitutes among the fore-



COLONEL FRANKE (IN THE CENTRE)—IN COMMAND OF THE GERMAN FORCES.

most; and we are leaving for home to-day by train to Luderitzbucht, or possibly, if the line is open, we may go all the way to Cape Town by train through Upington.

A train leaves for the south each day now. It consists of a few ramshackle trucks, and possibly a van or two, generally drawn by a very unreliable German engine. A few days previously the Major, hoping for a *quid pro quo*, had given a sergeant of the Railway regiment some bedding which he was greatly in need of; but the best the sergeant could do for us was a capacious van, a sort of cross between a prison and a cattle truck, which we were to share with several other officers. At 3 p.m., just six hours late, we steamed leisurely out of the station, followed only by a few envious eyes.

Going south the railway has to climb a pass in the Auas Mountains. Railway and road, for the most part side by side, follow a most tortuous course between precipitous mountains until the top is reached, 7,000 feet up. Some day, when the roads are good, the railway reliable, and hotels and hydros are dotted about, the luxurious sightseer will come and spoil the primitive grandeur of this wonderful gorge. In the meantime let those who love Nature in her ruggedness hasten to Windhuk and walk or ride over the mountains to Rehoboth, the centre of the Bastard country, standing amidst waving grass and sharp kopjes. These Bastards, or, as they proudly call themselves, the Bastard Nation, have a history worthy of investigation and record. Some time dur-

ing the nineteenth century, long before the German occupation, some Dutchmen and Scotchmen trekked across the Kalahari into this rich pastoral country, and, finding it very good, settled here. Many of them were men of good stock, Van Wyks and MacNabs. They built houses, framed laws, and finally took to themselves wives from among the neighbouring Hottentots. Instead of degenerating, as such people generally do, they have done much to maintain European ideals and customs. They have a law-book written in Dutch. The early entries in this book are in High Dutch, but the language used has been gradually simplified in subsequent entries, until the later ones have come to closely resemble the Taal. They have some very quaint laws with regard to property. A man has a right to demand his neighbour's oxen, plough, or anything that he may require; but there is a fixed tariff for the loan of such things, which must be adhered to. If a magistrate makes a decision in court, and the existing laws do not cover it, then the decision is added to the statute-book as law.

These people do not encourage intermarriage with the native races, but they are open to receive white men on the following terms: A probationary period of six months' residence is insisted upon; if the would-be colonist acquits himself creditably during this period, he is allowed to remain, on condition that he marries a Bastard girl. In this way they have reduced the percentage of African blood in their veins, and in Europe, where people are less critical in

this matter, most of them would pass for Europeans. Some of the older men have very large possessions, or, rather, had until the recent trouble with the Germans. They are keen on education, and one hears of girls going to finishing schools in Europe, presumably in Germany, and they have returned with pianos and other signs of Kultur. The men occupy their time with pastoral pursuits and hunting. Each man carries a rifle, often of a modern pattern, and from all accounts they are marvellous marksmen. They have maintained their independence with great adroitness, and even the Germans have left them alone, or, rather, have only attempted their absorption by peaceful measures.

Whenever feuds or wars have been on, they have thrown in their lot with the stronger side. They assisted the Hottentots against the Hereros ; they helped the Germans against both the Hottentots and the Hereros. Finally, they refused to fight against their compatriots from the Union. This led to misunderstandings between them and the Germans, until at last they came to blows. The Germans sent down a punitive expedition from Windhuk, but the Bastards more than held their own in a fight on May 8, near Rehoboth. They claim to have killed 140 Germans in this engagement, but, although this is an exaggeration, the number of German wounded in Windhuk hospital who admit that they were wounded in this fight shows that the Germans did not have it all their own way. After this reverse the Huns, as usual, destroyed everything they could lay their hands on,

burning and shooting in all directions. An old Bastard chief said they destroyed all his cattle and waggons, and killed his children and grandchildren before his eyes. The Central Force on their trek up to Windhuk found ample evidence of these doings, such as the charred remains of waggons and effects, whole spans of oxen still in the yoke lying dead, to say nothing of women and children suffering from bullet wounds.

During the afternoon the engine was frequently in difficulties, and short stops were made to effect repairs to the injectors. Sleep on the floor of a bumping, thumping van was fitful and unrefreshing, and, besides, it was terribly cold. How the poor men in the open trucks managed, huddled together in little groups to keep warm, I cannot imagine. Daylight found us at Marienthal, a distance of only 150 miles from Windhuk, our magnificent German engine having dragged us at the rate of ten miles an hour.

July 14.—At Marienthal the country is flat, uninteresting, and rather barren. To the east, at some distance from the line, is a structure, interesting geologically, known as the Kalk Rand. This ridge runs parallel with the line from below Reboboth for a distance of 100 miles or more. The face is vertical, and beyond is a level plateau, which, of course, being several miles away, cannot be seen from the line. The ridge does not vary in height; I should judge it to be about 200 feet. To the west of it is an absolutely level plain through which the railway runs.

This plain is a veritable sea of granite pebbles sparsely covered with a little scrub.

Away to the west, and running a southerly course, is the Great Fish River. The direction of the river is roughly north and south, and it finally enters the Orange River about sixty miles from the sea. Unlike most of the rivers in the country, it generally has water in it, not running, but as large pools. The banks are lined with large trees, which in contrast to the arid plain form a very agreeable feature in the landscape.

After some delay the train moved on again, but at Orab, the next siding, we came to a final standstill, the engine being affected with incurable valvular disease. We were soon given to understand that we should have to wait here and chance our luck, hoping that an engine or train might turn up from somewhere. On the receipt of this news everybody bundled out on to the veldt, and those of us who had the where-withal began culinary operations. In the next van to us were a number of Hottentots going to Keetmanshoop. There were so many of them—men, women, and children—that, had we not seen them emerge, we could not have believed that so many individuals and so much material could have been crowded into so small a space. The adult women of the party set to work with great expedition to prepare a meal. They made a diminutive fire of tiny twigs; so small was it that it might have lain on the palm of a hand. Over this they placed a large cauldron of mealie pap. The women then sat in a circle round

the fire, and fed it so dexterously with little sticks that it burnt in a continuous flame like a spirit-lamp. Their pot was boiling as soon as our kettle, although we had a fire ten times the size and much less water to boil.

The porridge, when cooked, was served out in various receptacles—pots, pans, pan lids, meat-tins, cups, or saucers. They had several spoons, but they seemed to prefer to eat with their fingers, which they did in a rapid and complete manner. A little lady aged about two had her share in a pan lid, and the deft way she conveyed the hot porridge to her mouth was little short of conjuring. Whether a morsel stuck to her fingers, palm, wrist, or knuckles, it was unerringly carried to her mouth, and her tongue seemed to have the mobility of a chameleon's. In about twenty seconds she was finished, and her platter was handed in. They had an old patriarch with them who was too decrepit to walk or stand. He was provided with a chair, and ate a good meal with a spoon. He desired to wash it down with some milk from an immense calabash, but he was roughly choked off by word and look from an old hag who could only have been his wife, so connubial were her words and gestures. He relapsed into that futile muttering which even younger husbands are wont to resort to. His pitiable state greatly exercised the Major's tender heart until I suggested that she probably had her reasons and knew what was best for him. Feeding finished, the women alone smoked, using a pipe which looked like a large cigar-holder, and which had

to be held vertically to prevent the tobacco falling out. They had only two of these instruments, one of wood and one of tin, and these were passed from mouth to mouth until all the ladies had had a few whiffs. To get the smoke through seemed to require great suctorial effort, and, judging from the salivation induced, the fumes were fairly pungent.

Smoking over, the ladies proceeded to wash up and to titivate. One washed her face in a cup of water by scooping, or, rather, throwing the water up with the tips of her fingers, without losing a drop. She then arranged her hair and *duk*, just as "my lady" does. Subsequently a little coffee was made, and the old man aforesaid was again doomed to disappointment, rolling his bleary eyes and mumbling as before, this time at his wife's relentless back, for she only put the lid firmly on the coffee-pot and removed it out of harm's way.

About noon a train arrived from the south, and the engine ran up close to ours on the same line in an inquiring sort of way. At first the driver of this train did not wish to help us. His boiler was dry, his something-or-other entirely inefficient. But he finally succumbed to the shrill pleadings of our driver, and agreed to take our engine only back to Marienthal, if he could pull it so far; and the plan was that our own driver was to come back at 7 p.m. with the engine repaired.

We spent the afternoon getting the sleep we did not get during the previous night. True to his word, the driver turned up before seven. As he passed us

on the siding, he shouted, "I have only half an engine," and proceeded to ruthlessly turn out the occupants of the hindmost trucks. We, fortunately being near the engine, were left undisturbed. We started off at seven, and were making good time, congratulating ourselves that this driver was a man better than his word. "Dinner" was just over, and we were sitting on boxes round a large leather trunk which constituted the table, and drinking a liqueur of our own concoction, when, without any warning, all the movable things in the van seemed to race forward on their own account in three successive and rapid jerky bumps. One officer with his back to the engine outpaced his seat, coming in contact with the floor in a very undignified manner, and proceeded to attempt to jerk himself forward, while in a sitting posture, through the closed door at the end of the van. He was closely followed by the things off the table—in fact, the contents of the coffee-pot finally overtook him. Nevertheless, with great presence of mind, he continued to hold a valuable wine-glass overhead after the fashion of Truth holding her lamp; the liqueur, however, mingled with the coffee grounds upon his nether garments. Then the train stopped and people ran to and fro shouting. We jumped out to the tune of "Engine's off the line; nobody's hurt," and stumbled forward in the darkness.

The engine was clean off the line towards the left, standing at a perilous angle on a small embankment. It appeared to be one mass of steam and flame, for the firemen were already drawing the fires and throw-

ing the flaming coal and wood off in a very reckless manner. Hissing steam was emerging from all the usual and several unusual exits. The mangled remains of two oxen, the cause of the disaster, lay close to the line, bits of skin, flesh, and bone, were scattered about, and the intestines of one ox lay under our coach, the seventh in the line. The driver had gallantly stuck to his post, applied the brakes, and shut off steam. One of the firemen had jumped at the last moment, when he thought the engine was going to turn over, and he was the only man hurt. The driver said he had run bang into a whole herd of cattle. A search was made for the wounded, but none were found. The engine had dragged the three leading coaches off the line with it, and in the middle of the train two vans were also derailed. The one containing two soldiers was lying on its side. It seemed a bit of a mechanical puzzle why two of the middle coaches had turned over; but it appeared that the vacuum brake did not act beyond this point, so that, when the brake was applied suddenly, the train naturally buckled between the stopping front half and the oncoming back half.

Before one could properly take in the situation, our friends the Hottentots were busy at the mangled carcasses, cutting off meat, as if a railway accident were the most natural thing in the world. They lit fires, and, joined by other natives, started a regular orgie. The ingestion of large quantities of meat often seems to have a most stimulating effect upon the brain, and these people soon became garrulous and

departing on its southward journey. Not until 7 p.m. did we again make an attempt to get on, this time with a S.A.R. engine provided with a cow-catcher. We went along intermittently, and woke up to find ourselves, not at Keetmanshoop, but only at Gibeon. Shortage of water, we were told, was the cause of the delay this time.

July 16.—It was just light when we arrived at Gibeon. The same Kalk Rand was to the east, the same sea of pebbles, the same dreary outlook, as at Marienthal. Near the station are the graves of the Natal Light Horse and the 2nd Imperial Light Horse who were killed on the line three miles to the north on April 27. There are about thirty graves in a single line, each with a little white wooden cross at its head. The name of each fallen soldier and his regiment are painted on the crosses in black letters. It all looked very simple, quiet, and pathetic, standing in the lonely desert. Major Watt and two other officers lie here. The Major was found shot through the head, neck, and chest, still grasping his revolver. The circumstances which led up to the fight I have learnt from various sources, and I may as well put them down here.

For many months the Central Force had been unable to dislodge the Germans from their strong position at Aus, which is situated at the edge of the desert on the Luderitz line. At the end of March, with Berrangé from the east and Van der Venter from the south threatening Keetmanshoop, the German position at Aus became untenable. Further,

by this time General Botha with the Northern Force had seized Riet, and was threatening Karibib and Windhuk. If the Germans remained longer at Aus, they were in danger of being caught between all four forces. Aus was therefore evacuated, and the Germans had left it a week before General Mackenzie's scouts discovered the fact. The Central Army then moved up and occupied the place, with orders, so I believe, to remain there. They, however, with their mounted men moved on rapidly through Kuibis, Bethany, Beersheba, and along the Fish River, with the idea of cutting the Germans off at Gibeon.

The Germans had retired slowly to Keetmanshoop, destroying the line behind them, and were now engaged in blowing up the bridges, etc., between Keetmanshoop and Gibeon. It is said that Sir George Farrar, who was Assistant-Quartermaster-General to the force, was greatly opposed to this advance, holding that the troops could not possibly be fed. He was, however, overruled. About April 24 or 25 our scouts tapped the telephone line near Gibeon, and overheard a conversation between some Germans. They learnt that the Germans were well aware of Mackenzie's advance, but also that the Germans did not think it necessary to evacuate Gibeon yet.

It was therefore decided to cut the line north of Gibeon, and attempt to capture the Germans in the place, who were supposed to be 600 or 700 strong. Colonel Royston, of the N.L.H., was ordered to place his regiment across the line to prevent the Germans from escaping north. Our people blew up the line on

the evening of the 27th, and this put the Germans on the alert. For some unexplained reason the N.L.H. were lined up, not across, but along the line, and quite unexpectedly they were enfiladed by two machine guns which the Germans had in a culvert. Disorder prevailed in the darkness, men making frantic efforts to dig themselves in with the butt ends of their rifles; but, no supports arriving, the bulk of the regiment laid down their arms. Here the Germans made their mistake, for, instead of making off with their prisoners towards the north, they remained, thinking they had captured our whole force. However, they were surprised to find themselves vigorously attacked. The Natal men chased them next morning, releasing the prisoners of the N.L.H., and also capturing a good many Germans. Unfortunately, in this action the captured N.L.H. were fired upon by our men, and several were wounded.

The Germans who were captured here declared that they would not have believed that men could ride so hard and fire so quickly as ours did, and they were sure the firing had been done without dismounting. I was told that some of our troopers got right in among the fleeing Germans, that two at least of the enemy lost their lives owing to inferior horsemanship; for when told to "hands up" they were not able to do so, as they were hanging on to reins and rifle to keep their seats, and were consequently shot with revolvers. A certain small pugilist was also said to have unhorsed two burly Germans with his fists.

The trek from Aus to Gibeon was a wonderful feat

of pluck and endurance on the part of the men and horses, for over 200 miles of practically desert country had been traversed without transport. Roads there were next to none, and the men had hoped to live on the country; but there was little to live on save a few sheep and cattle, and dry scanty grass for the horses. Men and horses were utterly exhausted when they fought this fight, and they were yet to have two months of privation and exposure before they reached Windhuk. We of the Northern Force received most of the kudos for this campaign, but our sufferings never approached those of the Central Force, nor even, I believe, those of the Eastern or Southern forces who advanced to Keetmanshoop.

Among the passengers was a young Englishman who had been a political prisoner in the hands of the Germans. He told a pitiable tale of ill-usage, solitary confinement to gaol, and semi-starvation. One could see by his look that the iron had entered into his soul. He also told me that General Botha's attack at Riet was a great surprise to Franke, who that day was being entertained at a public luncheon in Windhuk, and that none of the staff were nearer the scene of action than Karibib. The bulk of the German supplies were at that time at Karibib; and had the Northern Force then pushed on, they would easily have captured the place and all it contained. After the reverse at Riet, the Germans were feverishly engaged for some days removing numerous supplies of all sorts farther north by rail.

The country between Gibeon and Keetmanshoop

is on the whole barren and uninteresting. Conspicuous on the plain to the west is a high flat-topped mountain, the Great Bruckkaros, which is visible both from Gibeon and also from the hills above Keetmanshoop. Journeying all day, we never seemed able to get away from the thing. About Tses, opposite the mountain, the Kalk Rand dies out, and is replaced by broken hills, which nearer Keetmanshoop are of an ironstone formation, kopjes being built up of great red boulders, which are often so arranged as to resemble ruined buildings on a giant scale.

Keetmanshoop itself is a clean little place surrounded by ironstone hills very bare of vegetation. Its only claim to existence is that the Germans saw fit to establish large railway workshops here, and no doubt it will continue to be a railway centre, especially since it has been linked up with the colony via Uptington. Here we decided to return to Cape Town via Luderitzbucht, and not to attempt the very uncertain overland route.

July 17.—We travelled well during the night—that is to say, we jogged along intermittently at a little over ten miles an hour, and dawn found us at Schalkskuppe. A white frost lay on the ground, and it was terribly cold. Very few trees were to be seen, and very little growth of any kind. Sand, rocks, flat-topped kopjes looking like slag-heaps in the early dawn, all very desolate, surrounded us. Hereabouts the Germans had destroyed the line very thoroughly, for broken rails lay along the track in great profusion. Apart from the railway there was little sign of man

or his handiwork. Here and there we saw heaps of bottles, sometimes large, sometimes small, where a German camp had been. Or, again, a collection of tins marked a spot where our men had rested and fed. Here, at any rate, beef had triumphed over beer.

Both from a scenic and strategic point of view Aus has a very fine position. It is placed in a gap in an inaccessible range of mountains running north and south. Advancing from Luderitz, you are bound to go over Aus Nek, for to the north and south of it is the interminable and waterless wilderness. There is quite a little town here, for there is water, and the place is a regular oasis. From here towards the coast there had been a very unseasonable fall of rain, and the young green grass and the white rocks glistening in the morning sun made a gallant show. From Aus the line winds down an ever-widening S-shaped funnel. Precipitous granite rocks bound this funnel on either side, and its floor is just sand, neither stick nor stone for men to take cover behind. Our advance from Garub could only take place into this winding, ever-narrowing funnel, in full view of the enemy. Further, the Germans reconnoitred our position every day by means of an armoured train or aeroplane.

Looking up towards Aus the view is sublime, and at the very apex of the funnel, where the mountains come together, is a great rock, the "Aus Needle," standing like a sentinel. It was here that De Meuillon, a reckless scout and a man known all over South Africa for his bravery, met his death. Several accounts of his last adventure are current, and I will

merely give the story of his death as told to us by the Germans.

Between Garub and Aus, near the entrance to the funnel, a party of six German soldiers were engaged in destroying the line, when they noticed some horsemen advancing from Chankaib. They immediately hid in a trench they had dug near by, and the horsemen came on unsuspectingly. At close range the Germans fired a volley. De Meuillon fell at once, mortally wounded. Two natives were shot dead and three others were taken prisoners, while three white men escaped. De Meuillon died soon after, and they buried him on the northern side of the funnel and hanged the natives on a tree close to the grave. And here the grave and corpses were found when the advance to Aus was subsequently made.

There is hardly anything at Garub now to show that it had once been a large camp—just a few tin shanties, a tent or two, and a pumping plant. The places where the stacks of forage had been are now, after the rain, beautifully green little lawns of stunted oats. A handful of natives gather up the débris, and when they have finished no sign of the camp will be left.

The desert now has a tinge of green, as if it had received a very thin coat of paint of that colour, which gives it a charm not to be described. A beautiful little heliotrope flower is growing, too, in great profusion, and I even saw a few birds.

Near Chankaib is an extinct volcano, and a little nearer the coast a pale grey lava enters largely into



SCENERY NEAR LUDERITZBUCHT.



the composition of the desert. At Rotkuppe, and thereafter, although there had been plenty of rain, there was no sign of vegetation. As we approached the coast the country became more and more wild and weird. About Grassplatz it is utter chaos. Tumbled rocks of all shapes and at all angles intermix with the sand blown up from the coast. Mountains, hills, valleys, precipices, escarpments, gorges, ravines, fissures, without arrangement or order, fill in the whole landscape. The rocks are a dull grey, unearthly colour; even the sky looks grey and sombre. One feels here as if the end of the world were coming or had already come.

How the railway finds its way through this tangled mass is a mystery. It is nothing but curve and gradient, and you cannot see 20 yards ahead. It is here that they have such difficulty in keeping the line clear of sand, and to prevent it from blowing about somebody has hit on the novel idea of covering sand-hills near the line with canvas. One sees whole acres of dunes treated in this way, long strips of canvas several yards wide being sewn together, stretched tightly over the sand, and pegged down at intervals. Large gangs of natives are also engaged in constantly shovelling away the sand into small trucks run on light rails up to the line. It all seems a hopeless task, for the sand seems to come on in endless avalanches as fast as it is removed.

Kolmanskop, where the diamonds are, is a dreary waste of sand and rock. The diamondiferous gravel is collected into little heaps arranged in long regular

lines waiting to be sifted. All this work is now at a standstill. The German Government had recently put down a lot of machinery here for working the mines, which is worked by electricity generated at the power-station in Luderitzbucht. There are a good many houses and offices for the workers, all well built and of large size; but it seems very incongruous to see human habitations in such a place, and I cannot imagine sane men living here even for the sake of getting rich.

The diamonds from this area are, generally speaking, small and of inferior quality, but they seem to be very numerous. I told a resident of Luderitz that I had heard of a soldier in a certain blockhouse having collected a pickle-bottleful of diamonds. "That's nothing," he retorted; "if he'd been energetic, he might have got a petrol-tinful." I hear, too, that attempts are being made in a systematic manner to get unregistered diamonds from Kimberley passed through as having come from Kolmanskop, but the difference between the diamonds from the two places ought to make the detection of such little tricks easy.

It is five in the afternoon by the time we get to Luderitz. Everybody is exhausted and disinclined for further effort. Our batman heaved our belongings on to the platform, where they constituted a respectable-looking mountain. For a while we sat and looked at it, and finally decided that some efforts must be made to find food and shelter, as it was cold and windy and getting dark. We set out to look

for a place where we might lodge, but found the various places full.

At last a Good Samaritan appears in the shape of a sergeant mechanic known to me, and he shows us an empty house, of which, having put to flight many feline tenants, we take possession. There is some difficulty in getting water, for, although water is laid on to the houses, it all has to be condensed ; consequently the supply is very limited, and the authorities cut it off at once from empty houses. However, we finally got a jugful from a shop still open. Furniture there was none in the house worth considering, but with the help of a few broken-down old bedsteads and our blankets we should have had a comfortable night if the cats had not made determined efforts at short intervals to recover the position.

CHAPTER X

LUDERITZBUCHT

July 18.—I don't suppose there is a more desolate, dreary, God-forsaken site for a town in the whole world than this, and nobody except extreme optimists like the Germans would ever have dreamed of trying to establish one here. There is not a drop of fresh water anywhere near, nor a plant nor tree of any description except seaweed. There is not even a flat space where buildings can be erected, and many are perched on pinnacles or in fissures in the rocks. Its only natural advantages are the sun, sea, rocks, sand, and wind. The town is at the foot of a great tumbled mass of volcanic rock which juts northward into the sea, and this mass is obviously continued in three islands with small shallow channels between them. In this way a bay is produced. Dias, who visited the place, but did not stay, called it Angra dos Ilheos—the Bay of Islets. Later it was renamed Angra Pequena—Little Bay. Finally the Germans changed the name to Luderitzbucht, after an explorer of theirs, Luderitz by name. All the rocks about are of the dull grey colour of pumice, and everything, including sea and sky, seems to reflect the same leaden hue.

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LUDERITZBUCHT
LUDERITZBUCHT



LUDERITZBUCHT.

The island nearest the town is now joined to the mainland by a causeway about 170 yards long, which the Germans built in 1907. The reasons for this causeway are two. In the first place it improves the harbour, and in the second it joins the island to the mainland. While an island it belonged to the Union, as all the other islands do along the coast; but when they joined it up to the mainland the German sophists argued that it was part of the mainland, and accordingly began to build upon it, erecting a fine hospital there and a lighthouse. Appropriately enough they named it *Halfisch Insel*—*i.e.*, Shark Island. One can hardly blame the Germans for jumping this island, for it is one of the few places where a road could be constructed so that the inhabitants of Luderitzbucht might stretch their legs a little. It is upon this island that the Germans are said to have marooned a number of refractory Hottentots, where they might choose from among the following deaths—hunger, thirst, drowning, sharks, or a bullet.

The streets are sandy and rough, but are not to be compared with those of Swakupmund in this respect. Little railway lines run in all the streets, and in some places into private yards. The foreshore is utterly spoilt by base mercantile constructions—wharfs, yards, stores, fences, and sidings—all begrimed with coal-dust. There are four or five broken-down little jetties running out a few yards into the bay, but nothing in the way of a pier or landing-stage comparable to that at Swakupmund. The bulk of the buildings are substantial and well built, with granite

foundations. Cement, bricks, and reinforced concrete, have been freely used. Most of the houses are of two stories. The bank, the Woermann Linie offices, the railway-station, and the hospital, are all good buildings, but there are a great many shanties and makeshifts. The house we are living in is a most inconvenient structure. There are seven rooms in parallel opening on to a stoep. There is nothing resembling a passage or a hall, and all the windows and doors look the one way. In front—that is, on the side where the doors and windows are—is a small yard surrounded by high walls and outhouses, so that both ventilation and view are not of the best.

The town was full of petty craftsmen living under conditions similar to those which their ancestors must have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. You find watch-makers, tinkers, dyers, cleaners, and sweet-makers carrying on a diminutive business in a small dark building which also serves as a dwelling-place for the artisan and his family. Next door to us a small iron-monger and tinker must have plied his trade. In front he had a little shop; behind was his dwelling and workshop, which was really one room divided into four, two bedrooms at the back with no light or ventilation except when the door was open. These bedrooms opened into the living-room-workshop, and off this room, to one side, was the kitchen, size 8 by 4 feet, as dark as night, with a modern cooking range at the far end. Imagine what it must have been like on a hot summer's evening, the thermometer at 110°, with Mr. Tinker tinkering in the parlour, and

poor Mrs. Tinker frying the evening meal in the kitchen, and several little Tinkers rebreathing the foul air in the fusty bedrooms, to say nothing of the guests who no doubt were often there, judging from the number of wineglasses and other utensils, in the cupboard, for drinking and eating.

Indeed, Luderitz seemed to have relapsed into a state of medieval feudalism. Above were the great castles, not of Baron this or that, but of the haughty Woermann Shipping Company and Diamond Company, while below in their wretched hovels cowered Mr. Tinker and his equally submerged confrères.

Not only have the Germans a lot of wretched dwelling-houses in their towns, but altogether I was surprised to see how little attention was paid to sanitation. In Windhuk when we arrived there were epidemics of typhoid and diphtheria, yet no precautions had been taken to limit their spreading. We appointed a medical officer for the town, but he could get no help from the municipal authorities or from the local doctors. The sanitary condition of the hospital was distinctly bad when we took it over, and the gaol was also in a dirty state. A sanitary officer remarked to me that the Germans are clean in front and dirty behind, and this certainly applies to their dwellings and shops. A butcher's shop, for instance, would be scrupulously tidy, but his back-yard would be the very reverse, skins, offal, and other filth, lying about. I remember going to inspect the back premises of one of the crack hotels in Windhuk, and finding a cesspool and a well side by side, the

fusion of the contents being facilitated by other means as well as mere proximity.

July 24.—You can see all there is to be seen in Luderitz in twenty-four hours, or less. From the barren land we have turned our attention to the apparently equally barren sea, and for the last few days some of our party have been trying their luck at fishing, with very indifferent success. Seaweed is easily caught, and besides this the Major has bagged a few dogfish and young sharks. Crayfish are very numerous and large all along this coast. They are very voracious and easily caught on a bait tied to the end of a string. Curiously enough, although so plentiful on the west coast of Africa, they are not found on either the south or east coast.

July 26.—We have now been ten days in Luderitz, waiting for a boat, and I think we have exhausted its pleasures. With the town deserted, it is most dreary here, and, like those of marooned sailors, our eyes are ever on the horizon. To-day we expected our boat to arrive. Another boat is in, but, as it is bound for Swakupmund, we regard it with impatience and loathing. For several days a tall thin man in white trousers, a black coat, and long-footed German boots has attracted my attention. To-day he spoke to me in unmistakable English while I was scanning the bay for the boat. "You are going home?" he said. "Yes," I replied; "I have been out six months." His tired eyes searched my face, and I could see his form was spare and his gestures languid. "I have been a prisoner eleven months, and they

are brutes !” he almost hissed. “ I had been engaged in business in Luderitz for eight years. At the beginning of the war I was taken to Windhuk. There I had three months’ solitary confinement, with half an hour’s exercise twice a day in the prison yard. Food was scarce and the place overrun with bugs. When they moved us north, we were kept in a large kraal, and given very little and bad food. Two days before we were released the officer in charge said he could not take us with him, as he had neither food nor transport for us. Next morning there was not a German on the job. Fortunately for us, the Burghers turned up next day.” “ What are you going to do ?” I queried. “ I don’t know,” he said; “ my place here has been looted, and there is no chance of getting my money out of the German Bank.”

He also said that, when the Germans saw how things were likely to go, the Governor took all the available money and paid it out to the soldiers, giving three and six months’ pay in advance. He then issued notes on his own responsibility, which, of course, nobody, not even the German Government, would honour. Seitz also advised the people to bring all their savings to him, and he credited them in Berlin by wireless. That is how the German settler prevented his savings from falling into the hands of the rapacious “ English.” A good many of them already realize that they were somewhat ill-advised in this matter.

War passes like a scorching brand over the land, and one is apt to forget the singed and squirming

creatures left in its wake. The chief sufferers are, naturally, the weak—women, children, and the aged. In Windhuk several thousand women and children were left behind. Many of the women were young, earning a living as typists, teachers, telephonists, and barmaids. Their means of livelihood suddenly cut off, and the wages due to them in many cases unpaid, their position has become desperate. Not a few poor girls have been driven into misfortune, and some have sold themselves for soldiers' rations.

Of course, lots of people, especially farmers who deserted their homes for the towns, have lost all their belongings—stock, furniture, and clothes—and they have been hard pressed to obtain sufficient food, although the Government have been dispensing rations freely. Without work and assets, the prospects of the German community in the near future are gloomy indeed. All this suffering has come to a people who have only experienced the irreducible minimum of the evils of war. Its real horrors have been spared them. The behaviour of our armies towards them has been most exemplary, and everything has been done that could be done both by the authorities and by individuals to mitigate the sufferings of the civil population. The inhabitants of Luderitz are now flocking back to empty houses and empty shops, and the so-called "reservists" are in great evidence. They don't look a bit conquered, are rather jaunty, and not a little impudent. Many wiseacres are shaking their heads and prognosticating "trouble."

The German nature is bitter and unrelenting. To

show mercy is not in their creed. The German nurses who stayed on at Windhuk, mainly to take care of their own wounded, were quite ostracized by their compatriots, and were almost afraid to leave the hospital. Even the matron's children came in for abuse. "Your mother is 'English,' and we won't play with you," said their former companions. I heard of a case of two women who tried to make the lot of some prisoners a little easier, and when our hungry troops arrived sold them some little things. One of them was a wife of three months' standing; her husband threatened her life, and finally gave her a revolver, telling her to go out and shoot an Englishman and then herself, as it was the only course left to her. These women dared not leave the house, and had to seek our protection.

One feels one is at grips with a madman, a madman stimulated by egoism and hate. It is most uncanny living among them. So sure are they of their superiority, their omnipotence, their Divine right almost, that one is at times almost persuaded and doubts one's own sanity. To-day groups of their ex-soldiers parade the streets of Luderitz. "You scum!" "You filth!" flashes from their eyes. Comic enough this, behind the iron cage of defeat, terribly tragic were the circumstances otherwise. Intelligence without wisdom, strength without restraint, purpose without pity, egoism naked and unabashed—these are the forces civilization is up against. It is the subconscious realization of this cardinal danger which, as nothing else, has united the white,

the yellow, and the black, to destroy the ogre in their midst.

July 29.—Our boat has come, and we are to embark to-day at noon; two or three hundred men of all ranks, regiments, and callings, somewhat disparagingly known as “details.” There are besides 700 or 800 natives and a lot of horses, mules, and donkeys. For the last day or two, while the boat has been in the bay, we have behaved very like people unused to travelling, constantly running down to find out when the boat sails, to look if she has sailed, or to make arrangements for our kit. But the embarkation authorities know their work now, and everything is done in order: officers to embark at noon, men at ten; servants and luggage went yesterday. 11.30 finds us on the jetty, which is high. The tide is out, so it is a big drop into the waiting, wobbling barge below. One by one we brave it, and punctually a tug takes us out to the ship, followed by the feeble cheers of twenty men or so there to see us off and wish themselves off too, no doubt.

Getting out of the barge is ten times worse than getting into it. The lowest rung of the gangway towers above us. The barge sways up and down, to and fro. A stalwart sergeant-major comes down the gangway to help us up. An officer whispers in my ear: “If you fall between the barge and ship, dive at once.” “Take your chances, gentlemen!” shouts the sergeant-major to the hesitating group below, as the barge swings up within reach. My turn comes too soon. My left hand seizes the ladder, the sergeant

seizes my right; we pull simultaneously. For a sickening moment I am suspended in space, and then I am awaked to consciousness by my shins scraping on the ladder.

I shall not dilate on the pleasures of the trip to Cape Town, for they were discounted by several circumstances. The boat was slow, high in the water, and the decks crowded with superstructures for men and animals; the weather was cold and windy. Above all, we were all thinking of home, and the appearance of Table Mountain on the horizon was the thing we lived for. When it did appear, we watched it grow into form from a shadowy ghost. The greenness of Robbin Island was almost painful to eyes inured to sand and rock. About three girls were on the quay to meet us—that is, some of us. We were only details, the Cinderellas left behind to do the washing up, and a civic or other reception would have been out of place for such. And no doubt Cape Town was not a little tired of welcoming khaki. War had not scared the noble city. The same undersized, anæmic seminuts were in the streets; the same pleasure-seeking girls, bedecked a little differently, perhaps; the same intolerable hoot and clang of motor conveyances; the same tempting shops: all were there as when we left. And, thank goodness, above the turmoil, din, and smoke, the same glorious mountain raised its scornful head.

PRINTED BY
BILLING AND SONS, LIMITED,
GUILDFORD, ENGLAND;

Telegrams : "Scholarly, London."

Telephone : 1883 Mayfair.

Partners : { E. A. ARNOLD.
A. L. MUMM.

41 and 43 Maddox Street,

Bond Street, London, W.

March, 1917.

Mr. Edward Arnold's

SPRING

ANNOUNCEMENTS, 1917.

FRENCH WINDOWS.

By JOHN AYSCOUGH,

AUTHOR OF "MAROTZ," "SAN CELESTINO," ETC.

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Telegrams : "Scholarly, London."

Telephone : 1883 Mayfair.

Partners : { E. A. ARNOLD.
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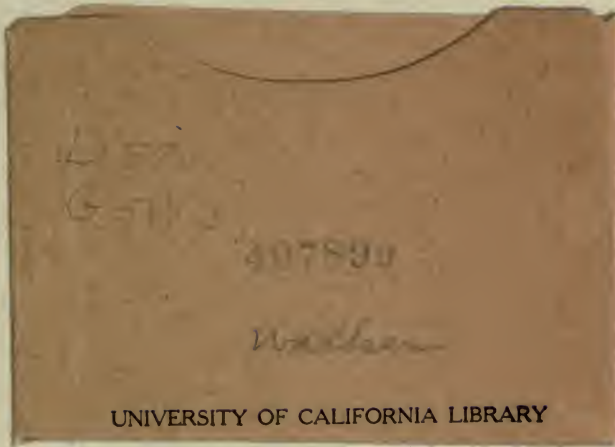
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