

# Out on the Pampas

By G. A. HENTY

## CHAPTER VIII.

A fortnight passed without the slightest incident or alarm. The sheep and cattle were carefully secured at night; two or three of the native dogs were fastened up, down at the fold; one of the mastiffs was kept at the men's hut, while the other's kennel was placed by the house; the retrievers, as usual, sleeping indoors. A flagstaff was erected upon the lookout, with a red flag in readiness to be run up to summon those who might be away on the plain, and a gun was kept loaded to call attention to the signal. The boys, when they went out for their rides, carried their carbines instead of their guns. The girls fulfilled the duties of lookouts, going up every half-hour from daybreak to dusk. One day Mr. Hardy had ridden over to Canterbury to arrange with his friends about hiring shearers from Rosario for the united flocks. The boys and Terence were in the fields plowing, at a distance of half a mile from the house, when they were startled by the sound of a gun. Looking round, they saw both the girls standing upon the tower; Maud had just fired the gun, and Ethel was pulling up the flag.

"Be jabbers! and the Indians have come at last!" Terence exclaimed, and they all three started at a run.

Maud turned round and waved her hand to them, and then she and Ethel continued looking over the plain. At this moment they were joined on the tower by Mrs. Hardy and Sarah.

"It is all right," Charley, who was of an unexcitable temperament, said. "The Indians must be a long way off, or the girls would be waving to us to make haste. Take it easy; we shall want to keep our hands steady."

So they broke from the headlong speed at which they had started into a steady trot, which in five minutes brought them up to the house.

"What is it?" they exclaimed as they gained the top of the tower.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" Ethel said. "They have got all the animals."

"And I fear they have killed Gomez and Pedro," Mrs. Hardy added.

It was too evidently true. At a distance of six miles the boys could see a dark mass rapidly retreating, and numerous single specks could be seen hovering round them. Two miles from the house a single horseman was galloping wildly. The girls had already made him out to be Lopez.

The whole party went down to meet Lopez, who was just riding up to the inclosure. He was very pale, and his horse was covered with foam.

"Are the peons killed, Lopez?" was Mrs. Hardy's first question.

"I do not know, signora; but I should think so. The Indians caught them; I heard a scream," and the man shuddered.

"How was it that you were surprised, Lopez?" Charley asked. "You were so particularly ordered to keep a good lookout."

"Well, Signor Charles, I was keeping a good lookout, and it is lucky that I was. I was further away than I ought to have been—I know that, for the signor told me not to go far; but I knew that the rise that I took them to was the highest in that direction, and I could see for miles away into the Indian country. So I got out there, and Pedro and Gomez had got the sheep and cattle all well together, and there was no fear of them straying, for the grass there is very good. So the men lay down for their siesta, and I was standing by my horse looking over the campo. Some of the beasts seemed uneasy, and I thought that there must be a lion somewhere about. So I got on my horse, and just as I did so I heard a noise; and looking behind, where I had never dreamed of them, I saw a lot of Indians coming up at full gallop from the hollow. The cattle went off at the same instant and I gave a shout to the men, and stuck my spurs into Carlos. It was a near touch of it, and they gave me a hard chase for the first mile; but my horse was fresher than theirs, and they gave it up."

"How many Indians were there?" Charley asked.

"I don't know, Signor Charles. It was only those in front that I caught sight of, and I never looked round after I started. Some of them had firearms, for eight or ten of them fired after me as I made off, and the arrows fell all round me."

"What do you think, girls, about the number?"

The girls were silent, and then Ethel said: "They were all in a lump, Charley. One could not see them separately."

"The lump seemed to be about the size that our cattle do when they are close together at the same distance. Don't you think so, Ethel?" Maud said.

"Yes," Ethel thought they were.

"Then there must be from one hundred to a hundred and fifty of them," Charley said.

"I wonder what papa will do! One of us had better ride off at once and fetch him."

"I will go," Hubert said, moving away to saddle his horse.

"Stop, Hubert," Charley said. "I think you had better take Lopez's horse. I don't know what papa may make up his mind to do, and it is better to have your horse quiet fresh."

long way off, but he is coming."

Hubert at once galloped off and met his father. They rode together back to the house at a canter. Mr. Hardy paused at the men's hut to give Lopez a hearty raving for his disobedience of orders. A party of pursuit instantly started out.

Scarcely a word was exchanged for an hour. At a long, steady gallop they swept along. There was no difficulty in following the track, for the long grass was trampled in a wide swath. Several times, too, exclamations of rage burst from the boys as they came across a dead sheep, evidently speared by the savages because he could not keep up with the others. After passing several of them, Mr. Hardy called to the boys to halt, while he leaped off his horse by the side of one of the sheep, and put his hand against its body and into its mouth.

"It's quite dead, isn't it, papa?" Hubert said.

"Quite, Hubert; I never thought it was alive." And Mr. Hardy leaped upon his horse again. "I wanted to see how warm the body was. If we try again an hour's ride ahead, we shall be able to judge by the increased heat of the body, as to how much we have gained on the Indians and whether they are far ahead."

## CHAPTER IX.

After another ten minutes' ride Mr. Hardy again alighted and found a very perceptible increase of warmth in the bodies of the sheep. "I do not think that they can have been dead much more than a quarter of an hour. Keep a sharp lookout ahead, boys; we may see them at the top of the next rise."

Not a word was spoken for the next few minutes. Two or three slight swells were crossed without any signs of the enemy; and then, upon breasting a rather higher rise than usual, they saw a mass of moving beings in the distance.

"Halt!" Mr. Hardy shouted, and the boys instantly drew rein. "Jump off, boys. Only our heads have shown against the sky. They can hardly have noticed them. There, hold my horse; loosen the saddle girths of yours, too, and let them breathe freely. Take the bridles out of their mouths. It seemed to me, by the glimpse I got of our enemies, that they were just stopping. I am going on to make sure of it."

So saying, Mr. Hardy again went forward a short distance, going on his hands and knees as he came to the crest of the rise, in order that his head might not show above the long grass. When he reached it he saw at once that his first impression had been correct. At a distance of a little over a mile a mass of animals were collected, and round them were scattered a number of horses, while figures of men were moving among them.

"It is as I thought, boys," he said, when he rejoined his sons. "They have stopped for a while. The animals must all be completely done up; they cannot have come less than thirty miles, and will require three or four hours' rest, at the least. One hour will do for our horses. Rinse their mouths out with a little water and let them graze if they are disposed; in half an hour we will give them each a double handful of Indian corn."

Having attended to their horses, which they hobbled to prevent their straying, Mr. Hardy and the boys sat down and made a slight meal. Then Mr. Hardy again reconnoitered. There was no change; most of the animals were lying down, and there was little sign of movement. Two or three Indians, however, were standing motionless and rigid by their horses' sides, evidently acting as sentries. The boys thought that hour the longest that they had ever passed. At last, however, their father looked at his watch. "Now, boys, it is five minutes to the hour. Examine your carbines and revolvers, see that everything is in order, and that there is no hitch. Tighten the saddle girths and examine the buckles. See that your ammunition and spare carbine chambers are ready at hand."

"Hurray!" the boys both shouted as they started at a canter up the rise. As they caught sight of the Indians everything was quiet as before; but in another moment they saw the men on watch throw themselves on to their horses' backs, figures leaped up from the grass and ran toward their horses, and in a little over a minute the whole were in motion.

"Surely they are not going to run away from three men!" Charley said in a disgusted tone.

"They won't run far, Charley," Mr. Hardy said quietly. "By the time that we are half way to them they will see that we can have no one with us, and they will come on quickly enough. Halt, boys—steady, dismount; take up your positions quietly. Don't fire till I give you the word. I shall try my rifle first."

The well-trained horses, accustomed to their masters firing from their backs, stood as steady as if carved in stone, their heads turned inquiringly toward the yelling throng of horsemen who were approaching. Mr. Hardy and the boys had both dismounted, so that the horses were between them and the Indians, the saddles serving as rests for their firearms.

"No, Charley," Mr. Hardy said as he reloaded his rifle; "wait till they are four hundred yards off, then fire slowly. Count ten between each shot, and take as steady an aim as possible. Now! Well done, two more of the scoundrels down. Steady, Hubert, you missed that time; there, that's better."

The Indians yelled with rage and astonishment as man after man dropped before the steady and, to them, mysterious fire which was kept up upon them. Still they did not abate the rapidity of their charge.

"Done, papa," Charley said, as the two boys simultaneously fired their last shot, when the leading Indians were about two hundred and fifty yards distant.

"Change your chambers and mount," Mr. Hardy said as he again took aim with his rifle.

The enemy was not more than a hundred and fifty yards distant when they leaped into their saddles and started at a gallop.

"Steady, boys, keep your horses well in hand. Never mind their balls; they could no more hit a man at this distance from the back of a horse than they could fly. There is no chance of their catching us; there won't be many horses faster than ours, and ours are a good deal fresher. Keep a good lookout for holes."

Both pursuers and pursued were now going over the ground at a tremendous pace. The Indians had ceased firing, for most of those who had guns had discharged them as Mr. Hardy and his sons had mounted, and it was impossible to load at the speed at which they were going.

During the first mile of the chase Mr. Hardy had looked round several times, and had said each time: "We are holding our own, boys; they are a good hundred yards behind; keep your horses in hand."

At the end of another mile his face brightened as he looked round. "All right, boys; they are tailing off fast. Three-quarters of them have stopped already. There are not above a score of the best mounted anywhere near us. Another mile and we will give them a lesson."

The mile was soon traversed, and Mr. Hardy saw that only about twelve Indians had maintained their distance.

"Now is the time, boys. When I say halt, draw up and jump off, but take very steady aim always at the nearest. Don't throw away a shot. They are only a hundred yards off, and the revolvers will tell. Don't try to use the second chamber; there is no time for that. Use your pistols when you have emptied your carbines. Halt!"

Not five seconds elapsed after the word was spoken before Charley's carbine rang out. Then came the sharp cracks of the carbines and pistols in close succession. The Indians hesitated at the tremendous fire which was opened upon them, then halted. The delay was fatal to them. In little over half a minute the eighteen shots had been fired. Five Indians lay upon the plain; another, evidently a chief, had been carried off across the saddle of one of his followers, who had leaped off when he saw him fall; and two others were evidently wounded and had difficulty in keeping their seats.

"Now, boys, change your chambers and take a shot or two after them," Mr. Hardy said, as he again reloaded his rifle.

The boys, however, found by the time they were ready that the flying Indians were beyond any fair chance of hitting; but their father took a long and steady aim with his deadly rifle, and upon its report a horse and man went down. But the rider was in an instant upon his feet again, soon caught one of the riderless horses which had galloped off with his companions, and followed his comrades.

"Well done, boys," Mr. Hardy said, with a hearty pat on their shoulders. "You have done gallantly for a first fight, and I feel proud of you."

Both boys colored with pleasure.

"How many have we killed?"

"I think seven fell at our first attack, papa, and six here, counting the one they carried off, besides wounded."

"Thirteen. It is enough to make them heartily wish themselves back. Now let us give the horses ten minutes' rest, and then we will stir them up again. We must not lose time; it will be sunset in another three-quarters of an hour."

(To be continued.)

Was Barred.

"So Cholly Vitevie is going to be married?"

"Yes."

"Sent in your congratulations?"

"No; fact is I don't know the girl, so I can't congratulate him; and I do know him, so I can't congratulate her."

Tommy's Success.

Mrs. Cawker—I am so glad that my little boy went to the head of his class this morning. How did you come to do it, Tommy?

Tommy—The rest of the fellows had guessed all the other ways of spelling the word.—Leslie's Weekly.

## Long Hair

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**PROCUOUS.**

Her Mother—Edith, don't you think you are too old to play with little boys? Edith—No, ma; the older I get the better I like them.—Melbourne Weekly Times.

**Cholly's Repartee.**

"Cholly is so clever at wopartee!" exclaimed Clarence.

"'an't he? said Reginald. "What's his latest?"

"A great, howlid bwute said to him, 'You are the biggest fool in this state,' and Cholly answered wight off, 'I don't agwee with you.'"—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

**Vain Pursuits.**

Miss Riche—Jack is a man after my own heart.

Cholly—Aw, what a lucky chap! Miss Riche—Not necessarily. He won't get it.

**Not a Repeater.**

"These old proverbs make me weary," sighed the professor.

"What's the matter now?" queried the other half of the sketch.

"Here's one that says 'History repeats itself,'" replied the learned parson, "and any schoolboy knows that isn't true."—Chicago Daily News.

**Two Different Kinds.**

"Does your typewriter need repairs?" asked the meandering tinker as he entered the office.

"It would seem so," replied the boss. "She just went across the street to consult a dentist."

**Base Flatterer.**

She—I spent two weeks in that town last summer and didn't see a single attractive thing there.

He—That's queer. Haven't they any mirrors in that village?

**Half and Half.**

Smart Aleck—Once upon a time there were three little children. Half of them were boys an'—

Dumb Della—Why, Aleck! could there be one and a half girls?

Smart Aleck—There weren't. The other half was boys, too.—London Tit-Bits.

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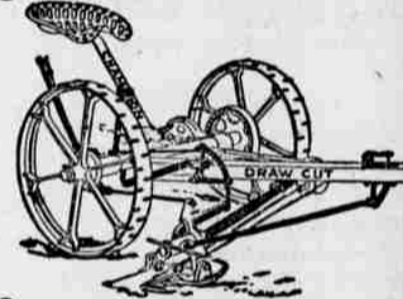
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