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On the Veldt

By FRANK H. SWEET

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It was the dry season on the veldt, and the grass was burned down and half covered with yellow dust. Not a kraal was to be seen or a habitation, not a tree or shrub so far as the eye could reach—only the other brown earth stretching away and at last ending in the same level sky lines to the north and south and east and west, and crossing the sun blistered waste one little animate dot, the canvas covered wagon of a Boer family trekking with the sheep and cattle in search of a water course that had not dried up.

For three days had the dot been moving across the waterless waste, and for three days had the sun left the thirsty sky line in the east only to glare down pitilessly until it dropped behind the equally thirsty sky line in the west, and now the tongues of the cattle were hanging from their mouths and the sheep bleated piteously, and the small quantity of water brought along for the trekkers' own use was exhausted.

By the end of the second day they had expected to find water, but the stream counted on had proved but a dusty, sun dried depression, and for twenty-four hours they had followed its course, hoping to find some sink hole from which the water had not dried. Now they were pondering the necessity of seeking the next water course yet another twenty-four hours away. If that were dry also, what then?

Other families had trekked over this veldt before them, and more would follow, for this was the annual custom. When the dry season came and burned every vestige of green from the home grazing land, the Boers would load their families into the great wagons, drawn by many spans of oxen, and, driving the sheep and cattle before them, seek the water courses that had not dried up. And there they would



"WELL," HE SAID HARSHLY, "WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

remain as long as the drought lasted, until weeks of steady and violent rains should come and transform the dry, barren veldt into a tropical garden. Then they would trek back home.

Long before the sun rose for a new day of burning heat and thirst the dot of wagons and animals was ready for departure. But even as it began to crawl away from the river bed that was dry toward the one that might contain water, several of the mounted Boers who were circling about the cattle descried something less than a third of a mile away.

In the dim light they at first thought it a wild animal, and examined their rifles; then, as the object drew near, they made it out to be a man, and that he was on foot instead of horse-back. But it was not until he had approached to within a few rods that they discovered he was very young, scarcely more than a boy, and that he was an outlander.

Now there is nothing more obnoxious to a Boer than an outlander or witlander—alien. He feels that their coming into the country threatens his institutions, and that the very object of their coming is wrong. The treasures of the earth belong to the earth, and should not be wrested away. The bustle and desire for change, for wealth, for investigating, even the progressive ideas of these outsiders are causes for suspicion and dislike. So when a cherry "Hello!" came from the wayfarer their answer was but a gruff and unintelligible grunt.

All this time the train was moving forward, but slowly, for oxen are plodding travelers. The boy was obliged to pause for the animals to pass, and he watched the long, straggling line with the interest of a newcomer. After the cattle and sheep and their guard came the creaking, unwieldy wagons, with their inspanned oxen. Beside the first of these wagons rode a large, broad faced man whose white hair and air of authority proclaimed him the head of the family. As he came opposite the boy stepped forward.

"Hello," he called again cheerfully.

The man looked down at him, his face hardening, but he stopped.

"Well," he said harshly, "what do

you want? Isn't it a little strange for a boy to be crossing the veldt without a horse?"

"Oh, I don't know," the boy answered carelessly. "I walked up from the coast three months ago. You see, I didn't have money enough for a horse and a good outfit, and I needed the outfit most. Besides, I was raised on a farm and am used to walking. A man I met carried my outfit to the mines, and I pegged on behind."

"And now you are going back home empty handed?" the Boer asked, sarcastically.

"No, indeed," quickly. "I didn't come here for fun. I'm going to college some time, and that takes money; and I've got half a dozen brothers and sisters who are planning for different things. It was easiest for me to leave, so all of them put in their savings toward my expenses. Of course I don't expect to get rich," frankly, "but I shall work hard to take back enough to get us all a good start."

The Boer grunted.

"Why are you going back, then, without your outfit?" he demanded.

"Got to have something to eat," the boy answered easily. "I went to the mines first, but the only opening was to work for somebody else or to buy a claim at a fabulous price, so I shouldered my outfit and struck off prospecting. I kept it up three weeks, and now," his eyes flashing eagerly into the grim ones above him, "I believe I've found a spot that will turn me in a lot of money. But I'm out of provisions and must go back after a supply. I don't suppose you have any you would sell?"

"No," shortly, "but where's your outfit?"

"Oh, I've concealed that in the sand. I guess it'll be all right. Anyway, there was nothing else to do. But I didn't stop you to talk about myself," coloring a little. "I wanted to say that your cattle are awful thirsty. At home we would drop everything to furnish such cattle with water quick."

The Boer's face relaxed somewhat. "Even if there was no water between four days' journey?" he asked contemptuously. "You outlanders, who would do all things, can make rivers as you need them, I suppose?"

"There is the water course only one day's journey behind you," the boy retorted, "and your cattle show they were not attended to there. No matter the hurry a man may be in, it is a crime to neglect beasts as you have yours."

"The water course behind was dry, as this is, and as the next one may be," the Boer said. "My teams have not had water in three days, and God knows what may happen if the next river bed is like this one and the last."

The boy's face paled suddenly. "The river dry," he gasped. "Why, I counted on getting water there. I've only just enough with me to last one day." Then he forgot himself in concern for the cattle.

"You must turn back toward the place I've found," he cried authoritatively; "it's only five or six miles away. There's a hole in the river bed that has water, and it's thirty yards or more across and several feet deep. It will be enough to supply your herds for some weeks. And beyond it are three or four miles of good grazing where the soil has not yet become dry. If you keep on this course the cattle will all perish."

The Boer had straightened up, preparatory to riding on, but at this he turned sharply.

"Water," he cried, "and plenty of it." He raised his hand to his mouth and called to the men in front. One of them rode back. To him he gave a quick, peremptory order. Then he turned back to the boy.

"Do you understand what you have done?" he demanded. "This place you have discovered will need water to work it, and if you use that, as we doubtless shall, you will lose all the benefit of your discovery for this season."

The boy threw back his head as though to ward off the insinuation.

"The cattle need the water more than the land," he returned. "If the water is gone when I return with the provisions, I can go and prospect somewhere else, and perhaps come back after the rains set in. The folks at home would not want me to put by

money at the expense of suffering."

The Boer leaned down and held out his hand.

"It is well," he said simply. "You will go back to the basin with us. We do not sell provisions, but we have plenty which we will give you. And it may be," with a friendly twinkle banishing the last trace of hardness from his eyes, "that we will be able to advance the success of your object here."

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A. O. U. W.—Linkville Lodge No. 110 meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every Tuesday evening. Visiting Brothers always welcome. Roy Hamakar, M. W. J. W. Siemens, Recorder.

Evangeline Lodge No. 88 Degree of Honor Lodge meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every second and fourth Thursdays in the month. Nancy N. White, C. of H. Jesse Marple, Recorder.

W. O. W.—Ewauna Camp, No. 799, W. O. W., meets every Tuesday evening at 7:30 o'clock at Sanderson's hall. All neighbors cordially invited. C. K. Brandenburg, Clerk.

A. F. & A. M.—Klamath Lodge No. 77. Meets Saturday evening on or before the full moon of each month in the Masonic Hall. Alex Martin Jr., W. M. W. E. Bowdoin, Secretary.

O. E. S.—Aloha Chapter No. 61, meets in the Masonic hall every second and fourth Tuesday evenings in each month. Laura A. Willits, W. M. Jennie E. Reames, Secretary.

I. O. O. F.—Klamath Lodge No. 137 meets every Saturday evening in the A. O. U. W. hall. Jasper Bennett, N. G. Geo. L. Humphrey, Secretary.

Ewauna Encampment No. 46, I. O. O. F. Encampment meets second and fourth Saturdays in the month in the A. O. U. W. hall. Jasper Bennett, C. P. Geo. L. Humphrey, Scribe.

Prosperity Rebekah Lodge No. 104 I. O. O. F. meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every first and third Thursdays in the month. Jennie Hurn, N. G. Lorinda M. Sauber, Secretary.

K. of P.—Klamath Lodge No. 99 meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every Monday evening. Bert Bamber, C. C. John Hamilton, K. of R. and S.

M. W. of A.—Lodge meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every first and third Wednesday in the month.

W. B. McLaughlin, Consul W. A. Phelps, Clerk.

Foresters of America—Ewauna Camp, No. 61, meets in the A. O. U. W. hall every second and fourth Fridays in the month. C. D. Willson, C. R. E. E. Jamison, Rec. Sec.

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