

NEWS FROM THE WRITING AND PUBLISHING WORLD

SOME VIVID AND REALISTIC STORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA

Five good stories are included in Captain Stockley's "Wild Honey" (G. P. Putnam's Sons). South Africa is painted for us—grand distances, fierce heat, a lion now and then, six miles dragging the bumping mail coach along the road to Bulawayo. Plainly Vivienne carries, though haughty, is lovely. Strange and fearful tales were that this young lady heard related concerning the effects wrought upon persons who got lost in the bush. The coach stopped for the night at Palapye, great road of Khama, King of the Bechuana tribes. For supper in the square hut that served for a hotel the travellers had goat chops, potatoes and steaming green peas boiled on the fire.

Here the disturbing tales were told. A thunder storm was raging. "Lightning streaked through the canvas windows and rain lashed the earth." The substantial tent shook to the celestial uproar. A Kimberley man told of a pioneer who had not lost. "When they found him again," said the narrator, "all his front teeth were gone. He couldn't remember how it happened. But of course it was lying on the ground gnawing roots that did it." The Kimberley man cheerfully enlightened his hearers further regarding the consequences of being lost in the bush. He said: "I've known lots of fellows who've been lost and they all agree that the first instinct when you realize you're lost is to start running. Just run and run till you drop. Then the madness gets you and you begin to tear off your clothes and pitch them in every direction as you run. Nearly every fellow ever found after being lost is stark naked." Vivienne paled as she listened, and she was soon moved to leave the supper table. When, not very long afterward, she herself was lost in the bush she justified a good deal of what the Kimberley man had said, but not all of it. Only a portion of her neat attire was discarded, and she did not lose even one pretty tooth through gnawing roots.

All that happened further to Vivienne will keep the interest of the reader alive—her rescue by the coarse and unscrupulous Hoper, who supposed for a time that she was a boy; her defence of herself against the enticed and alarming Hoper with the help of a pistol smuggled to her by the gray-eyed passenger who had sat near her in the mail coach; her arrival at Bulawayo and her experience there of emotions tender and compelling and said to be seated in the heart.

In another of these stories the hero is an American, and a tremendous fellow he is. Consider his blue eyes. They were blue as the inner light of a glacier, with something of the ice's quality in their steady stare—a fighter's eyes, hard as a rock that you cannot think of women forgiving anything to. Hammond in this story justifies his eyes. He should not be misunderstood. He was not cruel; he was a betrayer. On the contrary, he was generous, magnanimously forgiving. Such a character does not leave the reader cold. The record of him makes of this story a stirring and a moving tale.

Few tales are more effectively and strongly told than "Watchers by the Road." Here the careless lover dallies for a day, conquers easily, passes on. The consequences are strange and terrible, and for the reader there is an impress in the deep enough to stay. Another disturbing tale, but less disturbing, is "The Mollusc of the Mountain." This is the story of a witch who devoured children. It is well told, but it belongs to an order of stories that we are accustomed not to believe, and so its poignancy is modified. The next tale, "On the Way to Beira," is good comedy. Bettyington, who strongly desired and firmly intended to remain a bachelor, thought that he was flirting with a married lady, whereas really the person whom he was essaying to conquer, and who conquered him, was the married lady's unmarried sister. It is impossible to be sorry for Bettyington, for although he was deceived he managed to be exceedingly happy. He had good right to be. The story is admirable.

The old Boer who objected to that form of progress which consisted in the laying of a British railroad through his farm is at once an impressive and an amusing figure. His farm was sterile, one of the worst; the price offered him by the railroad people was liberal and should have gladdened his stony old heart; but he was not one to be propitiated, not a yielding person. His bare farm in his eyes was beautiful, and he had no mind to sit on his front step and behold iron monsters tramping the landscape. It was owing to his inflexible determination in the matter that after ruining himself in costly legal proceedings he tried dynamite. He made a

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