

"The beasts was scart by redskins," asserted Old Derrick.

"Right you are!" shouted Calkins. "The Apaches ain't fur behind. Up with you, men!"

Even as he spoke a faint, ominous sound rose on the quiet air, without doubt the hoof falls of the Indian band riding forth to murder and destruction.

In a trice the men were mounted, the two who were horseless getting up behind comrades. The wagon and its supplies were abandoned, and the little party swept away to the north.

"Will they overtake us?" Quin asked of Calkins.

"It's hard to tell," was the reply. Twenty minutes passed; then the muffled poundings of the savages grew more distinct, and it was possible to make out a dusky blot far to the rear.

The Apaches knew that the cowboys were in front of them, riding to give the alarm, and they were straining every resource to catch them up.

On and on through the fleet night air to the music of galloping hoofs and the clank of arms. Mile after mile slipped behind, and the Indians were gaining steadily. Then a silver gleam flashed close ahead, and the fugitives drew rein on the brink of the Rio Gila.

But now the river was full and flowing swiftly. There must have been heavy rains near its head. In the middle of the 300 yard current rose a little island, covered with stones and bushes.

"It's all right," said Calkins. "This ford is passable in high water, and it's the only one that is for 50 miles in both directions."

The horses plunged into the surging tide, and without once getting off their feet they carried their riders safely to the island. It was shaped somewhat like a bowl, the rim of which was formed of loose rocks and bushes.

Quin examined the spot with a critical eye, with a plan taking form in his mind. "You say this is the only ford for 50 miles in either direction?" he asked as the party were about to push on.

"Yes," declared Calkins. "And unless the Indians cross here they won't get over at all!"

"Not without going round." "Then we'll check them here and hold the ford," Quin said coolly. "I think we can do it. This island is almost impregnable—more so than the other bank. By and by, if we can spare a man or two, we'll send word to the fort for help. What do you say?"

The response exceeded Quin's expectations. In the eyes of the rude cowboys he at once became a hero, and they applauded him boisterously. They eagerly assented, realizing all that was to be gained by the success of his proposition.

The chances of failure, of being annihilated in the fight, they did not give a thought to. In a trice the men had dismounted. There was plenty of room, and they made their well trained horses roll over and lie down flat. Then they ensconced themselves in the shelter of the rocks and bushes, ready to take aim through the crevices.

They did not wait long. Soon, with a clatter of hoofs and a burst of frenzied yells, the band of Apaches, a good hundred and more strong, swept to the south brink of the Rio Gila. Quin gave the word to fire, and a steady volley blazed from the island. Some of the Indians were seen to drop from the saddle, and riderless steeds pranced about.

The whole troop fell back, apparently dismayed. They described a half circle on the plain and then came on, whooping like fiends, their rifles and war paint glittering in the bright moonlight.

"They're going to rush us!" exclaimed Old Derrick. "Steady, boys!" "Make every shot tell!" cried Quin. The savage horde rode straight into the water, firing rapidly at the island as they came. But the well delivered storm of lead was too hot for them, and a second time they withdrew, with heavy loss. A part of the band rode up stream, and entering the river there, they endeavored to force a passage to the island. But when they had lost half a dozen of their number they abandoned the attempt, and the survivors gained the bank and joined the main body, all then withdrawing to the shelter of some sand hills a quarter of a mile distant.

None of the defenders was even wounded, so well were they protected. "The enemy are not beaten?" Quin asked. "Not much," was the grim and forcible reply of Calkins. "Just wait a bit."

when the sun comes up they'll take the island if it costs them a score of men."

"Well, we'll stick it out to the end," declared Quin; "I mean until we see that we are overpowered. Then we'll make a bolt for the shore. I'm sorry we didn't get a messenger off to the fort, but it's too late for that now."

"Watch sharp," put in Old Derrick. "The varmints are stirring." As he spoke—it had become much lighter—the redskins opened fire anew, at first in a straggling manner, then more briskly. The defenders replied cautiously, saving their ammunition for the rush that was expected.

The spitting of rifles echoed far on the morning air. Wreaths of white smoke drifted over the foaming river and the parched plain.

"We're in a tight place," said Quin. "Half of our horses are killed, and the rest will have to carry double in case of a retreat."

"I've got seven cartridges left," Calkins growled between his teeth. "and I don't suppose you fellows—"

"Hello! What's up?" interrupted Pepper Smith. "What, indeed? To the amusement and delight of the cowboys, the Apaches were seen running from all points toward the hill that sheltered their horses. Then they reappeared mounted, riding at full speed to the south, and about the same time the clear notes of a bugle were heard. The sound came from the north, and when the men glanced in that direction they saw a glorious sight—a troop of United States cavalry, twoscore strong, galloping down the arid slope of the river.

Quin and his party eagerly crossed to meet them, some on horseback and some wading. The officer in command of the soldiers, the same who had been encountered on the previous day, listened with increasing admiration and wonder to the story of the siege of the Rio Gila ford.

"It was splendid!" he cried. "An achievement to boast of! A mere handful of men against a hundred Apache devils! You have saved many lives, my brave fellows. As for you"—he clapped Quin on the back—"I owe you an apology. I came to arrest you. I was under the impression that you were a rascally trader who was trying to smuggle a load of arms and ammunition into the San Carlos reservation."

"It was a very natural mistake," Quin replied. "We'll say no more about it."

So the Indians were repulsed, and the settlers saved, and what happened afterward is another story. The dead cowboys were buried, and the wounded accompanied a part of the soldiers back to Fort Stayman. The rest stopped to guard the fording. On the following day a strong column set out to the reservation. They drove the Indians before them, disarmed them and carried off their leaders for trial and punishment, thus checking the rising before it had made any headway.

And the camels? Quin did not abandon the quest. He and his cowboys, after a week's search, corralled the herd and with some difficulty captured eight of them alive. They were shipped east soon afterward and are now a part of Barnum's circus and menagerie.

**A Cat Story.** It may interest your readers to hear of the determined efforts of a mother cat to save her kitten from an untimely death. The two had a luxurious bed on the top of some hay in a barn, but one morning, while the old cat was away, the farm people came and, not noticing the kitten, buried it under six feet of freshly cut grass. Four hours later I heard of this and was told that the kitten was dead and buried under the heap of grass.

A friend and myself immediately set to work to see if the kitten could still be saved, and we dug downward into the grass and made a long search, the old cat intently watching our proceedings. No signs of the poor little mite were forthcoming, so reluctantly we gave up the search, and I returned to the house and took up a book, intending to read.

But the old cat followed me and uttered the most piteous howls and made me understand clearly that she felt I could find and save her kitten if I would. "Do look again. I am sure it is there," she seemed to say, so we went together, and I searched and burrowed diligently, the cat watching the while. This time my efforts were crowned with success, and the kitten emerged none the worse for its adventure, and joy and content reigned in the heart of the mother cat.—London Spectator.

**Fading Colors of Birds' Eggs.** The beautiful and delicate shades on the eggs of birds are not very fast, especially if they belong to the lighter class of colors," remarked an ornithologist to the writer. "In many instances some of the finest and most characteristic tints of eggs disappear almost entirely on exposure to light. A common example is the beautiful pale blue of the starling's egg, which, on exposure to sunlight for a few days, loses its clear blueness of tone and becomes purpler, approaching more to a slate tint. Such is also the case with most of the greenish blue eggs, like those of many sea birds, the common gull-eggs, for instance, the beauty of which largely depends on the clear freshness of its blue tints.

"It is, therefore, wise for egg collectors to keep the glass cases containing all such specimens carefully covered up when not being inspected, otherwise much of the beauty of tint will be lost in course of time."—Washington Star.

**The Reaction.** "How is your new man getting along?" asked the customer. "Well," said the grocer, "I'll try him for a little while longer and see if he will wake up. But just at present it looks as if he had put out so much energy in getting the job that he has none left."—Indianapolis Journal.

**PURE BRITISH GRIT.**

**A SOUTH AFRICAN FIGHT THAT TRIED MEN'S SOULS.**

**Desperate Valor in the Defense of the Hospital at Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War—The Victoria Cross Won by Private Soldiers.**

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OER and Briton will have it out in South Africa. Everybody outside of England expects that the honors of personal pluck and prowess will surely rest with the Boers which ever way the victory goes. Here is a story of bulldog British grit displayed on the border between the Transvaal and Natal in the Zulu war:

Cetewayo, last of the great Zulu war chiefs, was standing off the British advance as the Boers have been doing since October and with true savage tactics managed to fall upon and use up isolated detachments of the white soldiers. One day he crossed the Buffalo river and slaughtered the British column at Isandlana, a few miles below Dundee, where the Boers and Britons first fought. The Britons had crossed Buffalo river at Rorke's Drift, making that point a hospital and supply station. While the fight was going on at Isandlana there were 80 fighting men and 36 invalids at Rorke's Drift.

In the middle of the afternoon a survivor from the massacre at Isandlana, mounted upon a foaming steed which reared on his last spurt, came to the little camp and cried out a warning easily of interpretation: "Stand to arms and defend yourselves! The Zulus are coming!" A stone and brick dwelling and church formed the defenses of Rorke's Drift. The dwelling served as a hospital and the church as a storehouse and stable. Outside was a kraal, and all lay open to attack. The garrison set to work to make a curtain for defense, connecting house and church and kraal. Wagons and mealie bags were made into a rampart, doors and windows barred and loopholes pierced in the walls.

While this was going on 10 native troopers of Durnford's horse rode to the Drift. Colonel Durnford had been killed at Isandlana, and the men were shaky. With 200 native footmen they were sent to the front to hold off the Zulus while the garrison worked on the ramparts. Lieutenant Chard, known as the hero of Rorke's Drift, was in command of the post.

The Zulus had picked up some British guns and announced their coming by shots at long range. There were 1,500 of them under the lead of Cetewayo's brother. At the first sound of battle music the friendly natives all skedaddled and left poor Chard and his handful to their fate. The savages crossed the river at a distance from the Drift and got upon high ground, where they could shoot down upon the buildings. But they were poor hands with rifles and failed to do much execution. Finally they charged in the famous horn formation and surrounded the place.

This is not a story of the fight so much as of the specimen pluck of a Briton or two, just to show what may be expected in the Boer war if Tommy Atkins has not sadly degenerated in pace with the English aristocracy. The main fighting force lay behind the parapet. At the end of the hospital, farthest from the storehouse and the ramparts, were stationed Privates John Williams, Joseph Williams, Cole and Henry Hook. The Williamses defended a ward with four patients and Cole and Hook a room next to a ward containing six patients. When the Zulus came on, Cole went out and joined the main body at the ramparts and was killed there. That left Hook alone in his isolated corner. With a Martini-Henry rifle he fired at the Zulus through the loopholes. The Williamses did the same. After some rapid work Hook found his cartridge was caught in the heated barrel. Some time was lost forcing it down with a ramrod, and the enemy was then upon him. He retreated to the ward under his care.

The Williamses had killed 14 Zulus, but finally a rush of savages burst a door in, and Joseph Williams, with two patients, was dragged out and cut to pieces by the savages. John meanwhile with a pick had made a hole through the wall into Hook's ward and, with his two patients, joined Hook. The main body of English had been driven from the line of defense at the rampart and were distributed behind piles of biscuit boxes and other cover, selling life as dearly as possible. The Zulus broke into the hospital through the front doors and set fire to the roof of grass.

"Now," said Hook to Williams, "make a hole with your pick through into the next room while I defend this doorway. It's our only chance!" The Zulus were already at the door. An assagai struck Hook in the head before he could fire a shot, but he kept his feet and a cool nerve. Every time he fired a Zulu went down. If the rush was too sudden for fire, he used his bayonet. Seven Zulus lay in front of the door, but their fellows pushed on as only savages can, despising death if it could but follow revenge. They seized the muzzle of Hook's gun and tried to wrest it from his grasp. The overheated barrel blistered the brave fellow's hands, and overhead the fire crackled in the straw thatch. Ammunition was getting low, the sick could offer no help, and Williams had his

own task of cutting an egress through the wall.

Finally the hole was open, and Williams dragged seven men through. Hook left his post and seized the eighth patient, but as he reached the opening a Zulu bullet struck the sick man, and Hook forced him through, breaking a leg for the poor fellow, although saving his life. There was but one egress from the room where the two sound and eight helpless men were beleaguered, and this led out among the Zulus, so it was decided to work their way back to the main body of defenses. Hook stood at the hole, and Williams again plied the pick. Twice they retreated until they stood in a room with two doors opening out upon the Zulus and a window on the side where it was supposed the main body of English still held their parapet. One of the patients became crazed at the sight of the Zulus and rushed out among them, only to be hacked to pieces with due ceremony. While this was occupying their attention Hook and Williams put the remaining sick men through the window and climbed after them. The last cartridge was gone.

But with the party outside the building it seemed for a moment as though the escape was only a jump from the "frying pan into the fire." Their comrades had been driven from the first line and were 100 feet from the hospital wall. The intervening space was covered with dead Zulus, showing that it lay within the zone of attack. It was swept by Zulu bullets and assagais, but salvation could only be had by crossing this field of death. Williams and six sick men crossed first without injury. Then Hook shouldered the seventh man, one having two broken legs, and made a struggle for cover. The burden was limp and hung like a sack. An assagai struck the man, but was turned aside by his thick overcoat. Hook panted in his struggle, he reeled under his burden, but by efforts more than human he reached the barricade and was drawn inside with his helpless charge. As soon as he could get his breath he took a rifle and made one more in the line of gallant defenders of Rorke's Drift behind the rampart of biscuit boxes.

By firing the thatch of the hospital the Zulus had spoiled their own game, for night came on, and the flames lit up the scene so that it was death for a savage to break from cover. Already their fallen made a second rampart on the narrow field of fighting, but with their wild frenzy worked up by war dances they stopped at nothing. Six times they pushed on over the heaps of their dead and reached the English parapet. With the bayonet the heroic English drove them off and then sallied out, chasing them from the field. A Zulu tried to fire the grass roof of the storehouse, but a well aimed bullet brought him down.

At 3 o'clock in the morning, after 11 hours of steady resistance, there was



HOOK SHOULDERS THE SEVENTH MAN.

a lull. The savages seemed to have had enough of it. Their dead numbered between 300 and 400, but the British had lost but 17 killed. The survivors of the garrison set to work to strengthen their position, ready for a return of the Zulus at daybreak. Men climbed to the roof of the storehouse to strip it, so that it could not be fired, and from this lookout saw a horde of dusky figures creeping up to surprise the garrison. The men at the barricade were warned, and the soldiers began to descend from the roof. The last to leave saw another sight, one to make him forget the danger and shout with all his lung power a wild "Hooray!" Coming over the low hills far to the eastward was a compact column of troops, which could only be the army of reserve under Lord Chelmsford hurrying to the relief of the posts in Natal. Chelmsford had been to Isandlana and found that Durnford's command had been practically annihilated. Turning to Rorke's Drift, he saw smoke rising from the burning hospital and supposed that the post had shared the fate of Durnford's men. Advancing cautiously, for fear of Zulu ambush, he soon saw the English flag waving from the storehouse. The advance guard rushed to the front and was welcomed with a cheer by the heroes of what Lord Chelmsford called the most gallant action on record. Hook and Williams were awarded the Victoria cross. Colonel Durnford, commander at Isandlana, was killed outside the camp early in the fight. He was succeeded by Colonel Pulteney of the Twenty-fourth foot. When his battalion found cut down to a handful, Colonel Pulteney gave the colors to Lieutenant Melville and Lieutenant Coghill to save if possible. After sending them away Colonel Pulteney turned to his men and said, "As for the rest of us, here we stay and here we die!" They staid and died. Such is one record of British valor in South Africa.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

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