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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne
Burroughs Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato
Potter Zola Lawrence Stevenson Dickens Harte
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**From Capetown to Ladysmith An
Unfinished Record of the South
African War**

G. W. (George Warrington) Stevens

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: G. W. (George Warrington) Steevens

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-8111-4

www.tredition.com

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MAPS.

MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND LADYSMITH

MAP ILLUSTRATING THE SEAT OF WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

FROM CAPETOWN TO LADYSMITH

I.

FIRST GLIMPSES OF THE STRUGGLE.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS – DENVER WITH A DASH OF DELHI – GOVERNMENT HOUSE – THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY – A WRANGLING DEBATE – A DEMONSTRATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED – THE MENACE OF COMING WAR.

Capetown, Oct. 10.

This morning I awoke, and behold the *Norman* was lying alongside a wharf at Capetown. I had expected it, and yet it was a shock. In this breathless age ten days out of sight of land is enough to make you a merman: I looked with pleased curiosity at the grass and the horses.

After the surprise of being ashore again, Pg 2 the first thing to notice was the air. It was as clear—but there is nothing else in existence clear enough with which to compare it. You felt that all your life hitherto you had been breathing mud and looking out on the world through fog. This, at last, was air, was ether.

Right in front rose three purple-brown mountains—the two supporters peaked, and Table Mountain flat in the centre. More like a coffin than a table, sheer steep and dead flat, he was exactly as he is in pictures; and as I gazed, I saw his tablecloth of white cloud gather and hang on his brow.

It was enough: the white line of houses nestling hardly visible between his foot and the sea must indeed be Capetown.

Presently I came into it, and began to wonder what it looked like. It seemed half Western American with a faint smell of India—

Denver with a dash of Delhi. The broad streets fronted with new-looking, ornate buildings of irregular heights and fronts were Western America; the battle of warming Pg 3 sun with the stabbing morning cold was Northern India. The handsome, blood-like electric cars, with their impatient gongs and racing trolleys, were pure America (the motor-men were actually imported from that hustling clime to run them). For Capetown itself—you saw it in a moment—does not hustle. The machinery is the West's, the spirit is the East's or the South's. In other cities with trolley-cars they rush; here they saunter. In other new countries they have no time to be polite; here they are suave and kindly and even anxious to gossip. I am speaking, understand, on a twelve hours' acquaintance—mainly with that large section of Capetown's inhabitants that handled my baggage between dock and rail way-station. The niggers are very good-humoured, like the darkies of America. The Dutch tongue sounds like German spoken by people who will not take the trouble to finish pronouncing it.

All in all, Capetown gives you the idea of being neither very rich nor very poor, neither Pg 4 over-industrious nor over-lazy, decently successful, reasonably happy, whole-heartedly easy-going.

The public buildings—what I saw of them—confirm the idea of a placid half-prosperity. The place is not a baby, but it has hardly taken the trouble to grow up. It has a post-office of truly German stability and magnitude. It has a well-organised railway station, and it has the merit of being in Adderley Street, the main thoroughfare of the city: imagine it even possible to bring Euston into the Strand, and you will get an idea of the absence of push and crush in Capetown.

When you go on to look at Government House the place keeps its character: Government House is half a country house and half a country inn. One sentry tramps outside the door, and you pay your respects to the Governor in shepherd's plaid.

Over everything brooded peace, except over one flamboyant many-winged building of red brick and white stone with a garden Pg 5 about it, an avenue—a Capetown avenue, shady trees and cool but not large: attractive and not imposing—at one side of it, with a statue of the Queen before and broad-flagged stairs behind. It was

the Parliament House. The Legislative Assembly—their House of Commons—was characteristically small, yet characteristically roomy and characteristically comfortable. The members sit on flat green-leather cushions, two or three on a bench, and each man's name is above his seat: no jostling for Capetown. The slip of Press gallery is above the Speaker's head; the sloping uncrowded public gallery is at the other end, private boxes on one side, big windows on the other. Altogether it looks like a copy of the Westminster original, improved by leaving nine-tenths of the members and press and public out.

Yet here—alas, for placid Capetown!—they were wrangling. They were wrangling about the commandeering of gold and the sjamboking—shamboking, you pronounce it—of Johannesburg refugees. There was Sir Pg 6 Gordon Sprigg, thrice Premier, grey-bearded, dignified, and responsible in bearing and speech, conversationally reasonable in tone. There was Mr Schreiner, the Premier, almost boyish with plump, smooth cheeks and a dark moustache. He looks capable, and looks as if he knows it: he, too, is conversational, almost jerky, in speech, but with a flavour of bitterness added to his reason.

Everything sounded quiet and calm enough for Capetown—yet plainly feeling was strained tight to snapping. A member rose to put a question, and prefaced it with a brief invective against all Boers and their friends. He would go on for about ten minutes, when suddenly angry cries of "Order!" in English and Dutch would rise. The questioner commented with acidity on the manners of his opponents. They appealed to the chair: the Speaker blandly pronounced that the hon. gentleman had been out of order from the first word he uttered. The hon. gentleman thereon indignantly refused to put his question at all; but, being prevailed to do so, gave an opening Pg 7 to a Minister, who devoted ten minutes to a brief invective against all Uitlanders and their friends. Then up got one of the other side—and so on for an hour. Most delicious of all was a white-haired German, once colonel in the Hanoverian Legion which was settled in the Eastern Province, and which to this day remains the loyallest of her Majesty's subjects. When the Speaker ruled against his side he counselled defiance in a resounding whisper; when an opponent was speaking he snorted thunderous derision;

when an opponent retorted he smiled blandly and admonished him: "Ton't lose yer demper."

In the Assembly, if nowhere else, rumbled the menace of coming war.

One other feature there was that was not Capetown. Along Adlerley Street, before the steamship companies' offices, loafed a thick string of sun-reddened, unshaven, flannel-shirted, corduroy-trousered British working-men. Inside the offices they thronged the counters six deep. Down to the docks they Pg 8 filed steadily with bundles to be penned in the black hulls of homeward liners. Their words were few and sullen. These were the miners of the Rand—who floated no companies, held no shares, made no fortunes, who only wanted to make a hundred pounds to furnish a cottage and marry a girl.

They had been turned out of work, packed in cattle-trucks, and had come down in sun by day and icy wind by night, empty-bellied, to pack off home again. Faster than the ship-loads could steam out the trainloads steamed in. They choked the lodging-houses, the bars, the streets. Capetown was one huge demonstration of the unemployed. In the hotels and streets wandered the pale, distracted employers. They hurried hither and thither and arrived nowhither; they let their cigars go out, left their glasses half full, broke off their talk in the middle of a word. They spoke now of intolerable grievance and hoarded revenge, now of silent mines, rusting machinery, stolen gold. They held their houses in Johannesburg as gone beyond the reach of Pg 9 insurance. They hated Capetown, they could not tear themselves away to England, they dared not return to the Rand.

This little quiet corner of Capetown held the throbbing hopes and fears of all Johannesburg and more than half the two Republics and the mass of all South Africa.

None doubted—though many tried to doubt—that at last it was—war! They paused an instant before they said the word, and spoke it softly. It had come at last—the moment they had worked and waited for—and they knew not whether to exult or to despair.

Pg 10

II.

THE ARMY CORPS — HAS NOT LEFT ENGLAND!

**A LITTLE PATCH OF WHITE TENTS — A
DREAM OF DISTANCE — THE DESERT OF
THE KARROO — WAR AT LAST — A CAM-
PAIGN WITHOUT HEADQUARTERS —
WAITING FOR THE ARMY CORPS.**

Stormberg Junction.

The wind screams down from the naked hills on to the little junction station. A platform with dining-room and telegraph office, a few corrugated iron sheds, the station-master's corrugated iron bungalow — and there is nothing else of Stormberg but veldt and, kopje, wind and sky. Only these last day's there has sprung up a little patch of white tents a quarter of a mile from the station, and about them move men in putties and khaki. Signal flags blink from the rises, pickets with fixed bayonets dot the ridges, mounted men in Pg 11 couples patrol the plain and the dip and the slope. Four companies of the Berkshire Regiment and the mounted infantry section — in all they may count 400 men. Fifty miles north is the Orange river, and beyond it, maybe by now this side of it, thousands of armed and mounted burghers — and war.

I wonder if it is all real? By the clock I have been travelling something over forty hours in South Africa, but it might just as well be a minute or a lifetime. It is a minute of experience prolonged to a lifetime. South Africa is a dream — one of those dreams in which you live years in the instant of waking — a dream of distance.

Departing from Capetown by night, I awoke in the Karroo. Between nine and six in the morning we had made less than a hundred and eighty miles. Now we were climbing the vast desert of the Karroo, the dusty stairway that leads on to the highlands of South Africa. Once you have seen one desert, all the others are like it; and

yet once you have loved the desert, each is lovable in a new way. In the Pg 12 Karroo you seem to be going up a winding ascent, like the ramps that lead to an Indian fortress. You are ever pulling up an incline between hills, making for a corner round one of the ranges. You feel that when you get round that corner you will at last see something: you arrive and only see another incline, two more ranges, and another corner—surely this time with something to arrive at beyond. You arrive and arrive, and once more you arrive—and once more you see the same vast nothing you are coming from. Believe it or not, that is the very charm of a desert—the unfenced emptiness, the space, the freedom, the unbroken arch of the sky. It is for ever fooling you, and yet you for ever pursue it. And then it is only to the eye that cannot do without green that the Karroo is unbeautiful. Every other colour meets others in harmony—tawny sand, silver-grey scrub, crimson-tufted flowers like heather, black ribs of rock, puce shoots of scree, violet mountains in the middle distance, blue fairy battlements guarding the horizon. And Pg 13 above all broods the intense purity of the South African azure—not a coloured thing, like the plants and the hills, but sheer colour existing by and for itself.

It is sheer witching desert for five hundred miles, and for aught I know five hundred miles after that. At the rare stations you see perhaps one corrugated-iron store, perhaps a score of little stone houses with a couple of churches. The land carries little enough stock—here a dozen goats browsing on the withered sticks goats love, there a dozen ostriches, high-stepping, supercilious heads in air, wheeling like a troop of cavalry and trotting out of the stink of that beastly train. Of men, nothing—only here at the bridge a couple of tents, there at the culvert a black man, grotesque in sombrero and patched trousers, loafing, hands in pockets, lazy pipe in mouth. The last man in the world, you would have said, to suggest glorious war—yet war he meant and nothing else. On the line from Capetown—that single track through five hundred miles of desert—hang Kimberley Pg 14 and Mafeking and Rhodesia: it runs through Dutch country, and the black man was there to watch it.

War—and war sure enough it was. A telegram at a tea-bar, a whisper, a gathering rush, an electric vibration—and all the station and all the train and the very niggers on the dunghill outside knew

it. War—war at last! Everybody had predicted it—and now everybody gasped with amazement. One man broke off in a joke about killing Dutchmen, and could only say, "My God—my God—my God!"

I too was lost, and lost I remain. Where was I to go? What was I to do? My small experience has been confined to wars you could put your fingers on: for this war I have been looking long enough, and have not found it. I have been accustomed to wars with headquarters, at any rate to wars with a main body and a concerted plan: but this war in Cape Colony has neither.

It could not have either. If you look at the map you will see that the Transvaal and Pg 15 Orange Free State are all but lapped in the red of British territory. That would be to our advantage were our fighting force superior or equal or even not much inferior to that of the enemy. In a general way it is an advantage to have your frontier in the form of a re-entrant angle; for then you can strike on your enemy's flank and threaten his communications. That advantage the Boers possess against Natal, and that is why Sir George White has abandoned Laing's Nek and Newcastle, and holds the line of the Biggarsberg: even so the Boers might conceivably get between him and his base. The same advantage we should possess on this western side of the theatre of war, except that we are so heavily outnumbered, and have adopted no heroic plan of abandoning the indefensible. We have an irregular force of mounted infantry at Mafeking, the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment at Kimberley, the Munster Fusiliers at De Aar, half the Yorkshire Light Infantry at De Aar, half the Berkshire Regiment at Naauwpoort—do Pg 16 not try to pronounce it—and the other half here at Stormberg. The Northumberland— the famous Fighting Fifth— came crawling up behind our train, and may now be at Naauwpoort or De Aar. Total: say, 4100 infantry, of whom some 600 mounted; no cavalry, no field-guns. The Boer force available against these isolated positions might be very reasonably put at 12,000 mounted infantry, with perhaps a score of guns.

Mafeking and Kimberley are fairly well garrisoned, with auxiliary volunteers, and may hold their own: at any rate, I have not been there and can say nothing about them. But along the southern bor-

der of the Free State—the three railway junctions of De Aar, Naauwpoort, and Stormberg—our position is very dangerous indeed. I say it freely, for by the time the admission reaches England it may be needed to explain failure, or pleasant to add lustre to success. If the Army Corps were in Africa, which is still in England, this position would be a splendid one for it—three lines of Pg 17 supply from Capetown, Port Elizabeth, and East London, and three converging lines of advance by Norval's Pont, Bethulie, and Aliwal North. But with tiny forces of half a battalion in front and no support behind—nothing but long lines of railway with ungarrisoned ports hundreds of miles at the far end of them—it is very dangerous. There are at this moment no supports nearer than England. Let the Free Staters bring down two thousand good shots and resolute men to-morrow morning—it is only fifty miles, with two lines of railway—and what will happen to that little patch of white tents by the station? The loss of any one means the loss of land connection between Western and Eastern Provinces, a line open into the heart of the Cape Colony, and nothing to resist an invader short of the sea.

It is dangerous—and yet nobody cares. There is nothing to do but wait—for the Army Corps that has not yet left England. Even today—a day's ride from the frontier—the war seems hardly real. All will be Pg 18 done that man can do. In the mean time the good lady of the refreshment-room says: "Dinner? There's been twenty-one today and dinner got ready for fifteen; but you're welcome to it, such as it is. We must take things as they come in war-time." Her children play with their cats in the passage. The railway man busies himself about the new triangles and sidings that are to be laid down against the beginning of December for the Army Corps that has not yet left England.

Pg 19

III.

A PASTOR'S POINT OF VIEW.

AN IDEAL OF ARCADY – REBEL BURGH- ERSDORP – ITS MONUMENTS – DOPPER THEOLOGY – AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF ITS PROFESSORS.

Burghersdorp, *Oct. 14.*

The village lies compact and clean-cut, a dot in the wilderness. No fields or orchards break the transition from man to nature; step out of the street and you are at once on rock-ribbed kopje or raw veldt. As you stand on one of the bare lines of hill that squeeze it into a narrow valley, Burghersdorp is a chequer-board of white house, green tree, and grey iron roof; beyond its edges everything is the changeless yellow brown of South African landscape.

Go down into the streets, and Burghersdorp Pg 20 is an ideal of Arcady. The broad, dusty, unmetalled roads are steeped in sunshine. The houses are all one-storeyed, some brick, some mud, some the eternal corrugated iron, most faced with whitewash, many fronted with shady verandahs. As blinds against the sun they have lattices of trees down every street—white-blossoming laburnum, poplars, sycamores.

Despite verandahs and trees, the sunshine soaks down into every corner—genially, languorously warm. All Burghersdorp basks. You see half-a-dozen yoke of bullocks with a waggon, standing placidly in the street, too lazy even to swish their tails against the flies; pass by an hour later, and they are still there, and the black man lounging by the leaders has hardly shifted one leg; pass by at evening, and they have moved on three hundred yards, and are resting again. In the daytime hens peck and cackle in every street; at night-fall the bordering veldt hums with crickets and bullfrogs. At morn come a flight of locusts—first, yellow-white scouts Pg 21 whirring down every street, then a pelting snowstorm of them high up over

the houses, spangling the blue heaven. But Burghersdorp cared nothing. "There is nothing for them," said a farmer, with cosy satisfaction; "the frost killed everything last week."

British and Dutch salute and exchange the news with lazy mutual tolerance. The British are storekeepers and men of business; the Boers ride in from their farms. They are big, bearded men, loose of limb, shabbily dressed in broad-brimmed hats, corduroy trousers, and brown shoes; they sit their ponies at a rocking-chair canter erect and easy; unkempt, rough, half-savage, their tanned faces and blue eyes express lazy good-nature, sluggish stubbornness, dormant fierceness. They ask the news in soft, lisping Dutch that might be a woman's; but the lazy imperiousness of their bearing stamps them as free men. A people hard to rouse, you say—and as hard, when roused, to subdue.

A loitering Arcady—and then you hear with astonishment that Burghersdorp is Pg 22 famous throughout South Africa as a stronghold of bitter Dutch partisanship. "Rebel Burghersdorp" they call it in the British centres, and Capetown turns anxious ears towards it for the first muttering of insurrection. What history its stagnant annals record is purely anti-British. Its two principal monuments, after the Jubilee fountain, are the tombstone of the founder of the Dopper Church—the Ironsides of South Africa—and a statue with inscribed pedestal complete put up to commemorate the introduction of the Dutch tongue into the Cape Parliament. Malicious comments add that Afrikaner patriotism swindled the stone-mason out of £30, and it is certain that one of the gentlemen whose names appear thereon most prominently, now languishes in jail for fraud. Leaving that point for thought, I find that the rest of Burghersdorp's history consists in the fact that the Afrikaner Bond was founded here in 1881. And at this moment Burghersdorp is out-Bonding the Bond: the reverend Pg 23 gentleman who edits its Dutch paper and dictates its Dutch policy sluices out weekly vials of wrath upon Hofmeyr and Schreiner for machinating to keep patriot Afrikaners off the oppressing Briton's throat.

I went to see this reverend pastor, who is professor of a school of Dopper theology. He was short, but thick-set, with a short but shaggy grey beard; in deference to his calling, he wore a collar over

his grey flannel shirt, but no tie. Nevertheless, he turned out a very charming, courteous old gentleman, well informed, and his political bias was mellowed with an irresistible sense of humour. He took his own side strongly, and allowed that it was most proper for a Briton to be equally strong on his own. And this is more or less what he said:—

"Information? No, I shall not give you any; you are the enemy, you see. Ha, ha! They call me rebel. But I ask you, my friend, is it natural that I—I, Hollander born, Dutch Afrikaner since '60—should be as loyal to the British Government as Pg 24 a Britisher should be? No, I say; one can be loyal only to one's own country. I am law-abiding subject of the Queen, and that is all that they can ask of me.

"How will the war go? That it is impossible, quite impossible, to say. The Boer might run away at the first shot and he might fight to the death. All troops are liable to panic; even regular troop; much more than irregular. But I have been on commando many times with Boer, and I cannot think him other than brave man. Fighting is not his business; he wishes always to be back on his farm with his people; but he is brave man.

"I look on this war as the sequel of 1881. I have told them all these years, it is not finish; war must come. Mr Gladstone, whom I look on as greatest British statesman, did wrong in 1881. If he had kept promises and given back country before the war, we would have been grateful; but he only give it after war, and we were not grateful. And English did not feel that Pg 25 they were generous, only giving independence after war, though they had a large army in Natal; they have always wished to recommence.

"The trouble is because the Boer have never had confidence in the English Government, just as you have never had confidence in us. The Boer have no feeling about Cape Colony, but they have about Natal; they were driven out of it, and they think it still their own country. Then you took the diamond-fields from the Free State. You gave the Free State independence only because you did not want trouble of Basuto war; then we beat the Basutos—I myself was there, and it was very hard, and it lasted three years—and then you would not let us take Basutoland. Then came annexation of the

Transvaal; up to that I was strong advocate of federation, but after that I was one of founders of the Bond. After that the Afrikaner trusted Rhodes—not I, though; I always write I distrust Rhodes—and so came the Jameson raid. Now how could we have Pg 26 confidence after all this in British Government?

"I do not think Transvaal Government have been wise; I have many times told them so. They made great mistake when they let people come in to the mines. I told them, 'This gold will be your ruin; to remain independent you must remain poor.' But when that was done, what could they do? If they gave the franchise, then the Republic is governed by three four men from Johannesburg, and they will govern it for their own pocket. The Transvaal Boer would rather be British colony than Johannesburg Republic.

"Well, well; it is the law of South Africa that the Boer drive the native north and the English drive the Boer north. But now the Boer can go north no more; two things stop him: the tsetse fly and the fever. So if he must perish, it is his duty—yes, I, minister, say it is his duty—to perish fighting.

"But here in the Colony we have no race hatred. Not between man and man; but when many men get together there is race Pg 27 hatred. If we fight here on this border it is civil war—the same Dutch and English are across the Orange as here in Albert. My son is on commando in Free State; the other day he ride thirteen hours and have no food for two days. I say to him, 'You are Free State burgher; you have the benefit of the country; your wife is Boer girl; it is your duty to fight for it.' I am law-abiding British subject, but I hope my son will not be hurt. You, sir, I wish you good luck—good luck for yourself and your corresponding. Not for your side: that I cannot wish you."

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