



THE ROAD TO TULI

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THE sky-line was scarlet from east to west, and above the scarlet lay massed bronze. The rest of the world was composed of tan-colored *kopjes* and rocks, and the road along which the Cape cart dolorously crawled resembled a river of dust rising in mountainous waves through which the setting sun loomed like a blood-red heart.

It was the road from the Transvaal to Tuli, and the cart had been traveling along it for hours, but was still many miles from the wayside hotel where a night's rest for man and beast was waiting; and the off-side leader had gone dead lame, while the other three horses appeared to have lost all enthusiasm for life. On the crest of a rise the cart came to a standstill, and they stood with hung heads and quivering barrels panting under their lathered harness. The driver descended. A burly Cape boy, he

had the thick mouth of a Hottentot and the hang-dog swagger of a low-class Boer; but, as far as horses were concerned, he was an angel from heaven. When he spoke to his beasts they lifted up their despairing heads, trembling like lovers to his voice, seeming to stand together again with fresh resolution while he rubbed the nose of one, slapped another's soapy flank, and once more examined the leader's foot. Afterward he emitted a kind of resigned grunt and stood chewing a bit of grass he had plucked in stooping. The two men crammed in the body of the cart, with several dogs, guns, and a mass of shooting-kit, looked on grimly. They were merciful men who hated to see a beast suffer, but they also hated the prospect of a night on the veldt without provisions or blankets. They were weary as only a day's traveling in a Cape cart under the hot sun can make men weary.— dead beat, begrimed, and hungry. Moreover,

they were in a hurry to reach their destination; if they had not been they would have waited for the weekly mail-coach instead of chartering a special cart.

The significance of the driver's grunt was not lost on one at least of them — a dark man burnt almost black, with hard blue eyes and a grim lip, who looked as though, with a red handkerchief on his head instead of a slouch hat, he would have made a first-class pirate. Never handsome, a broken nose and a deep scar, which began over one unflinching eye and finished somewhere in the roots of his short thick hair, had not softened his appearance. Yet no woman would have glanced twice at the other man (a well-set-up, good-looking fellow of thirty) while Dark Carden was about. If Carden returned the glances of women with interest, he also knew something of men and horses, and because of this he now saw very well that the leader was done for and the driver resigned to a night on the veldt. Disentangling himself from the shooting-kit, he threw himself out of the cart, and the dogs leaped after him, barking joyously.

"This is a nice lookout, Swartz!"

"Yes, Baas," assented Swartz, not unamiably. "The leader's leg is gone for sure, and the others are done up. We can't make Webb's to-night."

"How far is it?"

"About thirty miles yet."

Carden looked at the man in the cart.

"Feel inclined to tramp it, Talfourd?"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Talfourd. "Do you?"

"Not much!" said Carden, smiling. "We'll camp. After all, we've got the buck." He gave a glance to the back of the cart, where a beautiful little riet-buck, still warm, but with the glaze of death over its eyes, was suspended. Then his keen eye traveled swiftly over the surrounding country. The dust was subsiding, and it could be seen that they were in a wild place of lonely *kopjes* and immense patches of gray-green bush. Far off, taller, greener trees, growing thick and close as moss, outlined the banks of a great river. Across the midst of the scene, round *kops*, and through bush, curved the dusty white road that led to Tuli, and thence upward and onward through Mashonaland and Matabeleland to the north.

Swartz had begun to outspan the horses, knee-haltering each, so that they would not roam too far.

"They'll be safer than they would have been fifteen or twenty years ago," he announced. "It was somewhere about here, on the banks of the river, that Baas Kavanagh, the great hunter, was killed by a lion."

"By George!" said Carden softly, under his

breath, and his blue eyes took on a misty look that softened them curiously. He was thinking of Francis Kavanagh, the big, lawless, lovable Irishman who hailed from his own part of Ireland, County Carlow, and had all the magic of the West in his voice and eyes. Kavanagh had been the hero of Carden's boyhood dreams, the man who first inspired him with a love and longing for Africa. His thoughts went back in a straight line to the day when, as a college boy, he had last shaken the hand of the explorer, famous even at thirty for his travels and exploits. He had told Kavanagh of his intention to come to Africa as soon as his college days were over, and the hunter had warmly urged him to come as soon as possible to join a projected expedition into a part of Africa that had not then been penetrated. Carden had indeed left Ireland within two years of that time, but by then Kavanagh had died, accidentally and mysteriously, as men do die on the veldt, with nothing but native rumor to tell of the manner of his death; and Carden, with no friend to join, and too poor to fit out wagons for the hunting adventurous life that lured him, was obliged to make for the comparatively civilized places where money was to be made.

Destiny led him to the diamond fields, where, fascinated by the life of danger and excitement, he had been caught in the big money-making whirlpool, and had stayed. Then, when the current set for the Transvaal, where the game was even keener and the life wilder, with gold for stakes instead of diamonds, he had gone with it. But always he meant to leave it some day, and go where his dreams called him, to the wild, strange spots and lonely places of Africa. Sometimes he seemed to hear them calling in the night with a voice that was like a woman's voice. Twice he had made and lost enormous fortunes; and now, only moderately rich, but on the eve of a great financial coup that if properly brought off would make him a millionaire, he had suddenly thrown down the game and set out for the wilds. He had listened to the voice of his dream at last. In haste, yet with the steady purpose of one who carries out a long-formed plan, he had fitted out his wagons, sent them on to Tuli, and was now on his way to join them there.

And the end of his second day's traveling had brought him thus unexpectedly to the place where Francis Kavanagh had died! Ah, well! God rest him for a fine Irishman, a true friend, and a brave man. The mist cleared from Carden's eyes, and his usual unfeeling, not to say stony expression returned. He cast another alert look over the country, and instantly espied at some distance a broken-down cattle kraal, and near by it the stooping figure of a



"HIS HAND WENT DOWN AND FOUND HERS, AND, FINDING IT, TOOK IT. SO THEY SAT LISTENING, HAND IN HAND, WHILE TALFOURD SANG HIS LAST SONG."

Kaffir gathering *mis*. In a straight line from there, pitched on the side of a *kopje*, and by reason of its coloring hardly distinguishable from the bush about it, was a gray stone house; a light spot in front of it might have been the flicker of a woman's dress. There was also the gleam of a fire.

"That's a farm, Swartz. Whose place can it be?"

Swartz gazed in the direction indicated, and his stolid countenance took on a certain degree of interest.

"Och, what! That must be old Johannes de Beer's place. Yes! A Transvaal Boer, Baas; used to be a transport rider until he got too old. I heard he had bought a place about here and settled down. But I dunno if he'll be much good to us. He hasn't got a farm; just lives on his savings and shoots for the pot."

"Well, we may as well see what he can do for us. If he'll put us up for the night and let us have some bread to eat with our buck, that will be something. Come on, Talfourd."

"Gad! I'm glad to stretch my legs again," said the latter, getting stiffly out of the cart.

Preceded by the bounding dogs, they made their way to the house. As they drew near they recognized the typical Boer farm—a low, sprawling building with high *stoep* and veranda. The light spot Carden had noticed was, as he had supposed, the dress of a woman sitting on a wooden bench by the door. About thirty yards from the house was a fire with a large three-legged pot over it, and another woman, a Kaffir with a shrewd, withered face, squatted beside it, stirring with a long metal spoon. A blue vapor rose from the pot and the scent of roasting coffee beans was on the air. A baboon chained to a pole barked hoarsely at them, and the old Kaffir regarded them with unfriendly eyes; but the woman in the veranda rose and came down the steps toward them, and they saw that she was a young girl, slim and straight, in a pink print dress, with her face far back in a print sunbonnet. All that could be distinguished in the failing light was that, like most Boer girls, she had a fine complexion. Carden took off his hat and shook hands with her in the Boer fashion, addressing her in good Dutch.

"*Dag, Jefrouw!* Is this Johannes de Beer's place?"

"*Jab, Mynbeer,*" she answered. Her voice was surprisingly soft and melodious, and it seemed to Carden that he had heard one like it before.

"Our cart has broken down, and we want to know if Mr. de Beer can put us up for the night. Perhaps we could speak to him?"

"He has gone to Pretoria," said the girl. "There are only Kaatje, Yacop, and me here."

"We can not do anything for you," said the old woman, who had approached and stood by with the spoon in her hand. "This is not a hotel, and the old Baas would be angry if we took you in." She scowled at them, but when she saw Swartz, who had come up behind them, her features slightly relaxed and she gave him a curt nod.

"This is pretty tough," said Carden, putting his hat on the back of his head in an absent-minded way and laughing a little. "We'd better go back to our buck. Make a fire in the open, Swartz, and we'll camp by it and get some sleep, anyhow."

But the girl suddenly began to speak in English with an odd but rather charming accent.

"Oh, no," she said excitedly; "Kaatje is mad. You mustn't go away. Of course we will do all we can for you. Come inside. Don't mind Kaatje. Would you like some coffee?"

"Wouldn't we?" said Talfourd. "And if we could only have some soap and water —"

Carden said nothing, but stared keenly into the girl's *cappie*, trying to see her face. She led the way indoors, and they followed her, Talfourd limping with weariness, but fatigue gone from Carden's face. Through the veranda they walked into a large low room remarkably unlike the usual *eat-kammer* of a Boer house. It is true there were guns in the corner, karosses on the furniture, and skins on the floor; but the things were arranged with taste, and there were flowers about—a big jar of wild jasmine on the chimney-piece, with long fronds trailed upward over a fine pair of koodoo horns nailed near the ceiling, and on the table a native bowl of leaves and bright wild geraniums.

"What a capital room!" said Talfourd, full of enthusiasm; but Carden always and ever remained silent.

"If you will sit down I will see about a room for you," said the girl in her soft voice.

They protested that they wished to give no trouble, but she opened a door and disappeared, returning after a matter of five minutes to lead the way to a bedroom which astonished them even more than the *eat-kammer* had done. It contained only one little narrow white bed, but there was a sofa, large and comfortable-looking, covered with a beautiful leopard kaross. Rough, dark tables had white calico cloths edged with narrow lace upon them. A white wooden shelf on the wall held a few books, and again there were flowers everywhere.

"I hope you will be able to manage with the bed and sofa," the girl said before she left them; and Talfourd, dead beat, was about to throw himself upon the white counterpane, when Carden interposed:

"I don't think we ought to use that bed, Tal."

They stood staring at it together, and Talfourd came to the same decision: it was so simple and dainty, so obviously a girl's bed. He, therefore, threw himself on the sofa instead.

"I'll camp on the floor with a rug," said Carden. "It won't be the first time." He poured out water in the white enamel bowl, and got rid of some of the dust under which he was hidden. Afterward he wiped up with his handkerchief the splashes he had made, and left everything as dainty as before.

"Be careful to leave the wash-hand-stand as you find it, Talfourd," he said, with something very like command in his voice. But there was no response from the weary Talfourd, who was sleeping like a child.

Carden smiled, and looked about him for wherewith to do his hair; but when he saw the little wooden brush and white bone comb, he made shift to groom his black head with the flat of his hand, after which he carefully hid the brush and comb, on the principle that what was too good for him was certainly too good for Talfourd. He had discarded his tie in the heat of the day, and several buttons of his thin silk shirt were undone, exposing a tanned, muscular throat; he carefully fastened them up, and, though they came undone again a moment or two later, he did not notice it, so concentrated was he on his thoughts, whistling softly under his breath while he moved about the room. When he had finished he roused Talfourd, told him to get a bustle on him, and, opening the door, went back to the living-room.

Candles had been lighted, and the table laid with a spotless white cloth, cups and saucers, tin plates, bone knives and forks, and a large loaf of the brown-meal bread known as *simms broot*. A fine, savory smell of riet-buck crisping and singing on red embers came from outside, where Swartz and Kaatje, now reinforced by the old Kaffir who had been picking up *mis*, were officiating over the fire. Carden sat down by the open window, and presently a door from another part of the house opened, and the girl came in, carrying a pot of coffee. She had taken off her *cappie*, and by the flickering candle-light Carden saw the smoky black hair growing above her brows like the glossy spread wings of a raven; the bar of golden freckles that lay across her nose; her dewy, mist-colored eyes, which, like all eyes that have looked long on great spaces, were full of dreams of forests and rivers and seemed to reflect the shadows of far blue mountains. God had been good to her. She was lovely as a flower.

She sat down on the other side of the table,

and she and Carden looked at each other. The pupils of the man's eyes expanded, giving a curious intensity to his glance; and something in hers seemed to leap out like a swift, radiant spirit to him and become his. She gave a deep sigh and her lids closed, as though, some living, vital thing gone out of her, she was dead, or asleep. For an instant she stayed so, then rose quietly and went out of the room. Carden, breathing heavily like a man who has been running, and with a rushing sound in his ears, heard her speaking to the servants at the fire, and a moment later Talfourd came in.

The girl sat with them at dinner, serving them daintily to the luscious venison, and cutting big slices of the *simms broot*, which tasted like wheat with the heat of the sun still in it. Later she poured them out cups of the coffee whose beans had so lately been roasted over Kaatje's fire. She had little strong hands, burnt a pale brown by the sun.

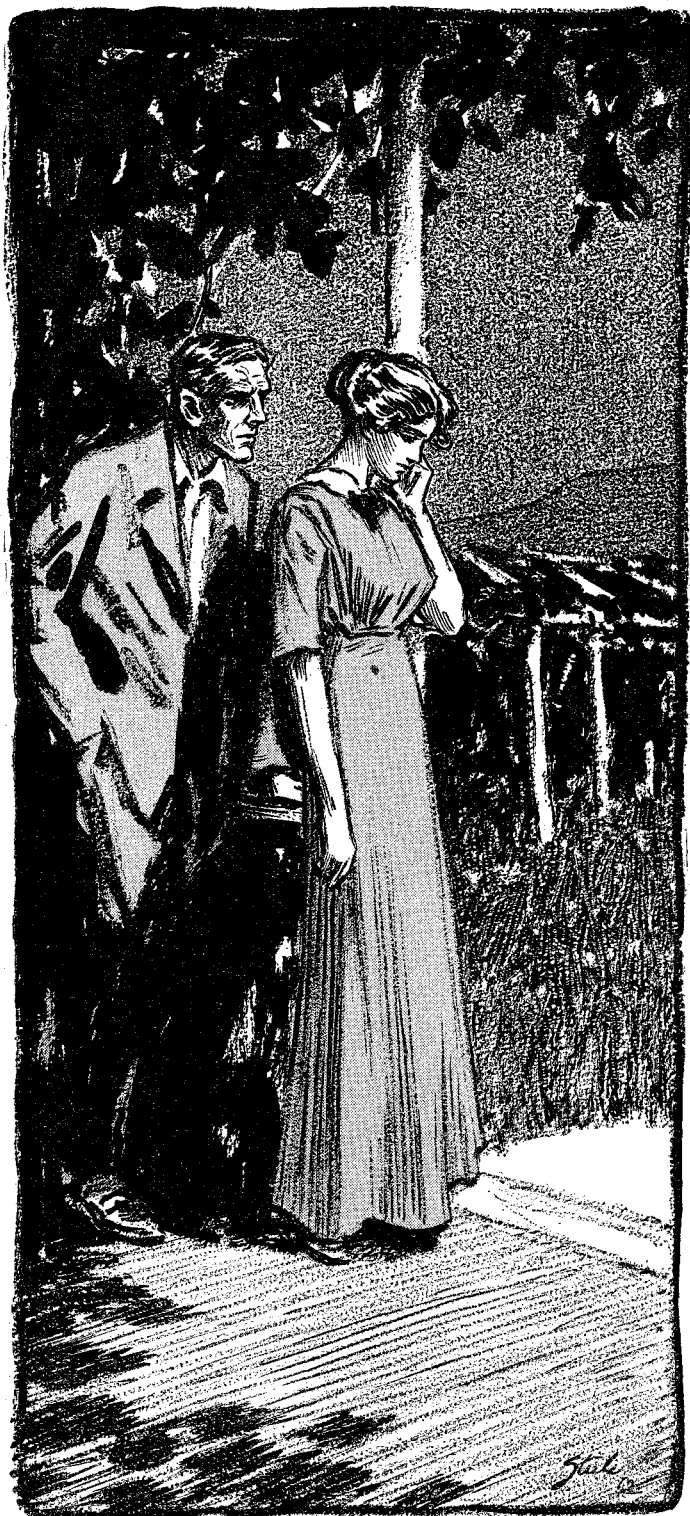
Afterward the two men walked up and down, smoking, in the moonlight that was bright as daylight, only softer and more tender. It transformed the walls of the mean farm-house so that they seemed to be made of alabaster with the shadows of the trees etched in ebony upon them. In the distance the broken-down kraal looked like a gracious ruin. A little wind had risen, and drifting wraiths of cloud gave the impression that the moon was racing across the sky, with one lone silver star following her deathlessly. When they came back to the veranda they found the girl sitting on the wooden bench, and, with her permission, they sat beside her.

"By Jove! What a night!" said Talfourd, and, feeling well after a rest and an excellent meal, began in a very fine tenor voice to sing:

"Have you forgotten, love, so soon, that night, that lovely night in June,
When down the tide, so idly dreaming, we floated where the moon lay gleaming?
My heart was weary and oppressed by some sweet longing unconfessed,
When, like an answer to my sighing, your hand in mine was gently lying."

When he had finished, the girl said in a low, tremulous voice: "Sing again!"

So he sang Tosti's "Adieu," and then Schubert's "Serenade." Such sounds, such words, had perhaps never before been heard in the vicinity of the little farm-house. Yet who can tell! Carden's Irish imagination evolved the idea that many beautiful things must have been spoken and thought before the flower-like girl by his side had been born. He stirred a little on the old bench at the thought, and the girl stirred too, putting her hand down beside her as if to rise. Carden did not see her movement, but by



"NO ONE ELSE HAS EVER KNOWN, EXCEPT KAATJE — AND NOW YOU"

some instinct his hand went down too and found hers there, and, finding it, took it. She left it for an instant in his, then tried to draw it away; but he held it closely, as he always held things he once took a grip on, whether they belonged to him or not, and she left it there. So they sat listening, hand in hand, while Talfourd sang his last song to them:

"I want no star in heaven to guide me,
I need no sun, no moon to shine,
While I have you, dear love, beside me . . ."

Again the girl's strong little hand fluttered like a bird under his; but he held it fast, as now he knew he meant to hold it always.

At last Talfourd proposed to go to bed, but first he wanted to know what the plans were for the morning. Swartz was called up and a discussion held. There were no horses to be had at the farm, for it appeared that old man de Beer was using the only two he possessed to take him to Pretoria to be treated for a pain in his stomach.

Swartz' plan was to take the best horse of the four, ride on to Webb's, and bring back a fresh span in the evening; and Carden thought it a good plan, if Miss de Beer would allow them to encroach so far upon her hospitality.

"We'll earn our dinner, if there is any shooting to be got about here," he said.

"Oh, yes; plenty of red-wing partridge, steinbuck, and *duiker*." She was standing opposite him now, having escaped in the general movement.

"Much *matatendela* also," volunteered the old native man Yacop, who had come up to take part in the *indaba*. Carden laughed.

"They'll do for you, Tal; guinea-fowl need a sprinting athlete after them, and you are younger than I am." He looked very boyish and happy as he spoke.

"All the more reason why I should go to bed at once," said Talfourd. "Good night, Miss de Beer, and many, many thanks for pouring oil and wine upon us the way you have done. You have been a good Samaritan indeed!"

"No; it was you who found me by the roadside," she answered, with a grave little smile; but she looked at Carden only.

He lingered behind with her, hoping she would come and sit beside him again; but she did not move from where she stood leaning against the veranda-pole. Swartz and Yacop had gone back to squat by the fire, and the former had produced the inevitable concertina that every Cape boy knows how to manipulate. Carden and the girl stayed listening to his melancholy strains, though it seemed to the man that it was the surging of waves in his ears that

he heard, and little drums in all his pulses beating a call to arms.

Dark Carden had been loved many times, and had loved carelessly back; but never had he met the woman he wanted to take and keep for ever in his life until to-night, when something had come winging its way from a girl's eyes into his heart. He knew that love had come to him at last, and for a moment he had desired to lay hot, impulsive hands on it, as he had done on all things he wished to take for his own; but in the next he knew that it was not thus a man should accept the most wonderful gift that had ever come to him. A longing to hear the voice that charmed him, that was as the voice of his dream when it cried to him in the night, made him break the spell of silence that had fallen on them.

"I do not know your name," he said gently.

"Frances," she answered as gently; "Frances de Beer."

"But you are not Dutch," he said, knowing that it would not matter if she declared herself a native of Timbuctoo. The important thing was that she was *she*, and was going to be his.

"No; my mother was an Englishwoman who married a Boer. But my father was an Irishman."

She hesitated a moment, and then went on:

"My mother lived in this house with her Boer husband, who was very cruel to her. The only pleasure in her hard life was to sit here sometimes and watch the road. One day when her husband was away in the Transvaal, an Irishman came along the road. He was a hunter and an adventurer, and my mother said there was a magic in him that no woman could resist — unless *she was of his own country*; for all others he was one of those who *must* be followed when they call, and I think he must have been; for one so sweet and good as my mother to have forgotten all for him. He took her away to his wagons, and they were going away together to the interior; but a lion killed him over there by the river."

"What was his name?" asked Carden, though he already knew. He knew now whose musical voice had echoed up old memories when first he heard her speak.

"Francis Kavanagh. My mother told me when she was dying; but no one else has ever known, except Kaatje — and now you."

"Why do you tell me?" he asked, though he knew the answer to that, too.

Perhaps she did not hear, for she gave no response, only made a little foot-note to her tragic tale.

"She made me swear a solemn promise by her sin and his." A moment later she added:

"But I can never help being glad that I am not the child of a Boer."

"Yet you have stayed on? You still live with the Boer who was so cruel to your mother?" Somehow, it was difficult to reconcile this strange fact with her; but doubtless she could explain. She could.

"I do not. He is long ago dead. I live here with Johannes de Beer, my husband."

It seemed to Carden that the night had changed and turned cold. The stars looked faint and dim, and the moonlight that had been so beautiful erstwhile was suddenly gray, the color of death. He too felt cold, and old. All the fatigue of the day descended upon him in a heavy cloud, and he had a great longing for sleep and forgetfulness.

"Ah, yes — your husband," he said in a vague way, like a man whose thoughts are elsewhere.

"He was always very kind to me," she said sadly. "When I was a child, he used to pass this way often with his wagons, and he was my friend. When my mother died and I had no one in the world, he asked me to marry him and take care of him as a daughter. He is old and sick, but he is a good man, and I mind him well."

Later she said:

"He bought this farm and came to live here because it has always been my home — and I like to watch the road."

He did not ask her why. The "boys" by the fire got up and shuffled away to their blankets. The old woman was long since gone. These two were left alone in the silence and the moonlight that had grown so cold.

"Did you think that some one for you would come along the road some day?" he asked at last, coming very near her; and after a moment she answered, with a little sobbing sigh in her throat:

"But I must always remember the promise I made to my mother."

Her face, bright and pale in the white light, was like the face of a brave boy looking on death. The heat and madness went out of Carden. He took her hand very gently and kissed it; then he walked away into the night.

But out in the lonely veldt madness came upon him again. A promise! Can the dead bind the living with promises? He laughed loud and bitterly in the night, and the birds stirred in the trees at so strange a sound. A "bush-baby" curled in some distant clump of mimosa began to wail, and the dog that had followed his master from the farm whined uneasily. He had walked far and long. The swift rush of the river was close at hand, and the whereabouts

of the farm could only be guessed by one little faint yellow light that streaked across the distance. Some one was keeping vigil.

Married to a Boer! Those dewy, dreaming eyes that were of his land, that black hair that winged above her forehead as his mother's had done, that ardent, radiant spirit that had leaped from her eyes and found a home in his heart! And he, Dark Carden, who had always taken what he wanted from life, wrenched it from men's hands and women's lips, he must be denied, must go empty away! Yes, his life would be empty from this day, because he had at last found what would fill it — the one woman who fitted into the wild places his soul loved, a woman with dreams of stretching plains and forests and rivers in her eyes, a woman with whom to seek the blue mountains, to camp with under the stars and forget cities and sins! And he had found her in the child of a man he had loved, and with the blood of Ireland in her veins. *And she was married to a Boer!*

Raging, he bit on the empty pipe in his mouth, and blood came into his eyes, so that he could no longer see clearly, but went stumbling on his way, raging, cursing.

But later a quietness fell upon him, for he seemed to hear her voice saying again:

"He asked me to marry him and take care of him as a daughter; . . . he is a good old man, and I mind him well."

He flung himself like a boy face down on the earth, ashamed of his tears, then ashamed of his thoughts, and at last ashamed of his life. The dog sat uneasily by him, and from time to time gently licked his ear.

Dawn was not far off when he returned to the farm. The stars were darkening, and the indescribable freshness of morning could be felt in the air. Shadows under tree and bush were stirring as if for flight. A wedge-shaped flock of wild duck passed, honking mournfully, toward the east.

The light in the farm-house had gone out; but, as he came quietly to the *stoep*, he heard from a window that stood ajar a sound as of a woman softly and brokenly weeping. After a little while some Kaffir words, spoken fiercely, yet with a kind of crooning love, came out into the shadowy dawn:

"See you, now, what you have got from watching the road! A knife in your heart. Did not old Kaatje warn you? Hush, *arreme kindje!* Weep not!"

But the soft and broken weeping went on.

Talfourd, coming to breakfast with the serene conscience and clear skin of a man who has spent the night according to its ordained pur-

pose, presented the appearance of a typical healthy Englishman; but Carden looked older than a man of thirty-four ought to look in a good climate, however swift has been the pace. It appeared that he had reconstructed the plan of the night before, and he and Talfourd were now to go on ahead to Webb's, while Swartz stayed behind and re-stocked the farm larder.

from him with eyes that were no longer dewy, but dry and brilliant like the sky above the Karoo in days of drought.

"Yes," he answered in a businesslike voice; "I must go." He got up and looked out of the window for a moment, then walked back to the table.

"I must go," he said, looking at her mouth,



"CLEAN AND SANE AT LAST, HE TURNED HIS STEPS BACK
TOWARD THE SOUTH"

"We can send back boys with fresh horses for him to come on to-night."

"How are we going to get there?" said Talfourd, looking up in surprise, for Carden was a man who stood by his plans.

"Surely we can foot thirty miles without endangering our lives?" answered Carden, with something so very like a sneer and so very unlike his usual impassive serenity that Talfourd was even more surprised.

"Oh, all right, my dear fellow," he said pleasantly. "It's your picnic. I only wanted to know."

The girl sat listening without comment, but she grew very pale. Afterward Talfourd went out to get the guns ready to take with them, and Carden remained sitting at the table.

"You are going?" she said, looking away

"because I wish to stay." Then madness fell upon him again, the madness of the hopeless. He came close to her and gripped her hands; his eyes searched hers; his lips were almost on her lips.

"What was the promise?"

A wave of color passed over her face, and her eyes darkened with tears; the drought was over.

"I think you know," she cried miserably.

"You must break it," he said firmly. "You are mine. You must come with me."

"No," she said, crying bitterly. "I can not."

He never knew how he found courage to go without kissing her quivering mouth.

Across the arid flats of Bechuanaland he went raging; and in the deep silences of the Somnabula forest he lay down with maledictions in his

heart. All the water sweeping down the violet-black precipices of Victoria Falls and twirling lazily in the subtle olive-green pool below was not heavier than his burden of hatred against God and man. As for Boers, he cursed them in his rising up and at his lying down.

Sport was excellent, he had splendid companions, good "boys," nothing went wrong with the wagons, the oxen did not die, the weather was unfailingly fine; but never a day so long and full as to find him too weary to fling a last sneer at the stars before he rolled himself to sleep in his blankets; and many a morning when he rose to a world new-born, fresh as a rose and glittering with frost crystals that looked as if they had been shaken from some giant Christmas card, his first thought was to curse the day he was born and gibe at every good thing life had bestowed on him.

But in the end — in the end Africa prevailed. The sun, that great healer of veldt sores, burnt out the poison from his wound. Rustling rivers by whose banks he lay down to sleep washed over his dark soul and cleansed the rage from it. Africa, the great, kind "mother and lover of men," took him in her arms. He lay on her breast, a troubled child, and she comforted him and made him well and gave him back his boyhood's heart with some at least of his boyhood's dreams reawakening in it.

Clean and sane at last, and looking ten years younger, he turned his steps back toward the South. He had been away nearly a year from his affairs, and knew, from occasional batches of letters that reached him at prearranged posts, that they needed his presence. One by one, and most reluctantly, the other men had left the good life and gone back to the Rand; for they, too, were men of affairs and could not absent themselves for more than a few months at most. Bingham had taken half a dozen "boys" and walked through Portuguese territory to catch a coast boat for Durban. Carter and Troubridge had made for Salisbury and got the weekly coach for Pretoria. Talfourd was the last to go. And now Dark Carden himself was for the home route. His intention was to sell all he held on the Rand and return to the veldt. Sick of money-making and politics and the little games and intrigues of finance, he meant to have done with it all and go back to the free, clean life of hunting and exploring, back to the breast of his new love, who would teach him to forget all that had ever been.

And he chose to take the Tuli route. He was strong and sure enough of himself to travel along that dusty white road that wound through *kops* and bush, past the haven of his heart's desire; to go close enough to see the little gray farm and

the broken-down kraal — even the smoke from Kaatje's fire: but no closer. He was strong and whole: but no use tempting Fate. He knew his limitations, and he did not mean to look again upon the face of the girl with the beautiful eyes of Ireland.

The wagons got there at the end of a long day's trek, and drew up by Carden's orders on the other side of the road, too far for any but his own keen eyes to distinguish the little ramshackle farm on the *kop*-side. Everything was as it had been twelve months before. The dust lay thick on the sage-green bush, and once more a blood-red sun was sinking to rest behind the horizon of massed scarlet and bronze.

No one had mended the broken-down kraal, and on a far-off rise a figure — that might have been Yacop — was picking up dried cow-dung. There was something very like the smell of roasting coffee on the air.

The only difference was that when night came there was no moon. Instead, a vapory purple darkness, be-diamonded with a million stars, fell in soft swathes and folds and enwrapped the land. The Southern Cross, picked out in four great silver points, leaned like the shield of some celestial knight directly over the camp, and beside his fire Carden lay staring up at it while the "boys" prepared his evening meal. When he sat at his low camp-table to eat, he saw that a stranger had joined his "boys" at the cooking-fire, and recognized the crouching figure of old Yacop, his half-filled bag of *mis* beside him. Suddenly the harsh barking of a baboon came on the night wind, and, looking in the direction of the farm-house, Carden saw the red haze of Kaatje's fire. His tongue grew dry in his mouth, and he could eat no more, but threw himself down again by the fire, this time leaning on his elbows, his face turned to the farm. But he did not call Yacop; and later, when the old Kaffir, slouching from the camp, passed close beside him, giving a wistful glance, he spoke no word.

When the whole camp, tired out with the long day's run, was sleeping, he still lay there, his eyes fixed on the little red point of fire until it died away, and instead a long streak of primrose light flashed out from an open window. It lured him like a pale beckoning hand: but he lay still by his fire in the still camp, like a stone man: only his eyes were alive and burning. But when, like a pale hand held out long in hope and at last despairingly withdrawn, the streak disappeared, the light went out of his eyes too, and he laid his face to the earth and groaned. He was tasting defeat, and the taste was bitter as death in his mouth. He knew now that he

had been a fool to come that way; and, because a fool must pay for his folly, he paid in the next hour, lying there on his face, going over every detail of his brief sweet dream of love, remembering her face, her voice, her eyes and the soul of her that had leaped from them to him. And, as always, the thing that stirred him most was the memory of her fluttering hand under his. He remembered how a mist had come over his eyes at the feel of it; his heart had seemed to turn over in his breast. It was as though he had trapped something that he had lain in wait for all his life; and the tyranny and tenderness of his nature had been roused in that moment, with something of a boy's elation when he has caught with his own hands some beautiful wild thing that he has watched long for, but would not harm for the world. He re-lived that moment, and again he felt the flutter of her hand trying to escape from his, flung out before him on the ground; but now he gripped it more cruelly, dragged it to his lips. And, by the grace of God, it was a real hand, and came to his hungering lips like the lips of a lover! It was *her* hand! She was there beside him in the luminous darkness!

He sprang to his feet and dragged her with him to the fire, staring into her face.

"*You!*" he muttered. "*You! . . . You . . . It is you?*"

It was the voice he loved that answered him.

"When Yacop told me it was you, I waited long," she said simply; "and at last I realized that you did not mean to come. But I could not let happiness pass by on my road without trying to get it for me and you. So I have come to you. For I think you want me, Dark Carden, . . . do you not?"

"*Want you!*" he said very softly.

"You must go back," he said presently, stammering, for those were not the words he meant to say, and he gripped her hands the closer as he said them.

"I know," she said, trembling to his voice, her own vibrating to his like a violin to its master's touch. Some swift feminine instinct bade her make haste to tell him how it was she came, free to seek him, that night:

"Poor old Johannes de Beer never came back. The doctors in Pretoria operated on him for the growth that gave him so much pain, and he died in the hospital some weeks later. I was with him; and at the last, because he could not die happy for the thought that I would be left alone, I told him of you, and he was glad. He knew of you. Every one in the Transvaal seems to know of Dark Carden, and I heard many wonderful things about you. How proud I was! How proud I am that you should love me . . . a poor, nameless girl of the veldt!"

But she spoke like a queen, for that is the everlasting pride of the Irish — to be proud in their humility; and in her heart she felt herself a queen, because her heart was clean to bring to her man who was a king.

With the clear simplicity her life had engendered, she said, as he brought her to the farmhouse door, and they stood for a moment before she went in:

"We can be married in the morning at the Jesuit mission that has lately come. It is about three miles from here behind the *kop*."

Then, with the restraint and gentleness that becomes a conqueror in the sure hour of victory, Dark Carden was able to kiss her lips.



STOVER AT YALE

By Owen Johnson

*Illustrations
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CHAPTER XXII

WHAT Stover in his fuddled consciousness had said to little Wookey on that last wild night returned to him with doubled force in the white of the day. He had given his opponents the right to destroy all he had stood for by pointing to his own example. He had been a deserter from the

cause; but the sound of the enemy's bugle had recalled him to the battle. He took the first occasion to stop Le Baron, for he wanted him to make no mistake about him.

"Hugh, I was rude as the devil to you the other night," he said directly; "I was drunk—more than you had any idea. What I want you to know is this. You put the question right up to me. You've forced me to take my stand, and I've done it. You're all wrong on the argument, but I don't blame you. Only, after this you'll never have the chance to fling that at me again. You and I'll never agree on things here; we're bound to be enemies. But I want to thank you for opening my eyes, putting it squarely up to me."

"I SAY, FELLOWS, WE'VE CORNERED THE SLEIGH MARKET!"