

THE UITLANDER

By JOHN EDGEWATER.

The veldt, a grassy upland, green with the luxuriance of a South African December, flecked with flowers—heaths, geraniums, and a variety of odorous blooms, and broken here and there by clumps of mimosa, stretched clear in the morning light northward to the verge of sight. Opposite, near at hand, rose gently a wave-like ridge of land, beyond which stood distantly the round-topped range of the Witwatersrand, whose deep kloofs were darkened by dense forest growths.

It would have been esteemed a pleasing scene by eyes more observant than those of the springbok which halted for a moment in its graceful flight on the crest of a knoll, or of the eagle which floated far up in the luminous blue sky, or of the herds of grazing sheep and cattle, scattered over the glades, which indicated the vicinity of some Boer homestead. And equally oblivious was a couple who rode slowly along the base of the ridge.

The woman, mature yet maidenly, with the ample stature, broad brow, yellow hair and steadfast eyes of her Holland ancestry, rode with the ease of long custom, a native horse of sturdy stock. The man, long of limb, lithe of motion, was an American. If one might judge from the thin, angular face, the quick glance of the humorous brown eyes, and, above all, the quality of his horsemanship. Even a Zulu stable-boy would recognize in the powerful, dark chestnut a Cape horse with the blood of English thoroughbreds, but her equipment would appear to him outlandish. The saddle was neither the short-stirrupped pig-skin of an English civilian, the heavy accoutrement of Her Majesty's dragoons, nor the deep, high-canted seat affected by the Boers. It was a 'McClellan' of United States Army type, which its owner sat with the grace nowhere so well attained as in the riding-school at West Point. In fact, Henry Clendenin was a graduate of that famous military academy, whose distinction in study earned him a coveted place in the Corps of Engineers.

His career was closed, however, after a few years by the death of his father, following an unlucky venture in business, which left the mother and a sister dependent on his care. He resigned from the army to accept a lucrative position as mining engineer in the Rand, where he had learned in one circuit of the sun, much about gold quartz and cyanide reduction, more to Transvaal politics, and, most of all, to love Annetje Maritz.

For it had chanced on a day of fortune while hunting, that he halted at Maritzdorp to claim the habitual Afrikaander hospitality. This was given without stint by genial Hans Maritz, who little dreamed that he might yet rue the grace in the loss of his Annetje. For the visitor was charmed to discover amid the rusticity of a Boer farm, even of the better sort, a girl of most unusual force of nature and grace of culture.

The scout at Capetown and a year in Europe had opened for her the mystic portals to the paradise of literature, and the quiet days at Maritzdorp had afforded many hours for reading. Studly, qualified by the duties deemed proper for a maiden by the housewife Moeder Katrine, such as tendance of garden, dairy and poultry-yard, dainty care of the home, control of the half-wild native servitors, with long rides over the veldt by the side of Vader Hans—sweet, domestic service, homely, healthy pleasures and the delight of books—had filled her life to the brim with satisfaction, until there rode into her heart this modern knight from over the hills, out of the far away.

He seemed to her an embodiment of that superb and strenuous America, which her fancy interpreted and adorned by the glory of Washington and Lincoln, Emerson and Longfellow. And she seemed to him like the first sweet stephanotis he had discovered

growing wild in the veldt. Its vigour and the splendour of its fragrant bloom was a delight of surprise to him who had known only its fragile sisters in the artificial culture of his home.

Thus it happened that often thereafter the chestnut was stabled at Maritzdorp, while Clendenin smoked with Mynheer on the wide stoop, and watched through the open door for the coming and going of Annetje. The good velder appropriated these visits, so that the eager suitor found scanty chance for speech with the daughter, until this day, riding since dawn from Johannesburg, he met her near the homestead and told his love with only the eagle in the heavens for witness, and the soft breeze to whisper the story to the flowers. She said:

'Oh! I am sorry. Why did you speak when we were happy?'

'But, Annetje, hear me; look at me; don't turn away. Do you mean then, that you cannot love me?'

'No; I will say the truth. I do love you'—her voice faltered, but instantly was calm and strong again—'I do, yes, I do. I will never deny it; but here it must end. You do not know how hard it is for me to pain you, but there is no help.'

Clendenin checked his horse, seized her bridle, and said with a decision which both pleased and frightened her:

'Then tell me why. You owe me a reason. If it is right we must submit; but I will not take this answer unless you justify it. Forgive me if I seem to overstep the bounds of courtesy. This is well nigh life and death to me. For all that makes living worth while is bound up with it. Tell me, dear—I will call you so, for so you are—tell me, Annetje, what is this obstacle, if you love me?'

'Do you not know that my father never, never would consent? You are an Uitlander. He would see me dead before he would say "yes" to our plea. And I—I cannot go against his will. I dare not take my own happiness by breaking his heart.'

'Why,' he said, the joyous smile coming back to his eyes, 'why, here is tragedy, indeed. Of course I respect Mynheer's prejudices. But I am no Englander. I have no more affection for their party than Oom Paul himself. As an American, all my heart goes out to the brave little Republic in this glorious African highland. Why, yes! Afrikaner and Amerikaner, we can surely agree. Is that all? Then wait and see how soon I'll gain his good will to our plans if you only give me leave.'

'Ah, you do not know him. You cannot appreciate his feelings. He is steadfast as the Rand himself. He can never be moved.'

'All right. I'll risk that. Only say, dearest, that you love me and all will be well.'

'I do.'

'Henry,' he interrupted.

'I do, Henry.'

He took her hand and bent over and kissed her.

'Now,' he said exultantly, 'that seals the compact, you dear, fearful soul. I'll manage the vader. I'll prove to him that there are two sorts of Uitlanders, and he ought to like my kind, just because he hates the other. Why, I am now bearing the best possible argument for our cause.'

'What do you mean?'

'Never mind. We will not talk politics to-day. In our skies not Mercury or Mars, but Venus is in the ascendant.'

What he said more is not essential to this chronicle, and after a time, reasonably brief under the circumstances, they rode upon a travelled track which turned through a wooded spruit in the hills and led to Maritzdorp.

The house, of plain colonial pattern, with heavy stone walls, of one storey, and a vast hipped roof, extending over a deep stoop along the front, stood on a natural terrace in the mouth of a dell. This closed, at some

distance behind, into a ravine, down which dashed a brook through a succession of cascades. It then skirted the dell on the right and disappeared in an artificial lakelet. On the other side of the house, partly bidden by shrubbery, were the kraal and hoek of the flocks. In front the land sloped

to the veldt, which swept far and wide in mimosa dotted vales.

Around the dwelling was an extensive range shaded openly with native trees, the immense yellow wood, the graceful Cape beech, the rugged ironwood, and planted with specimens of Old World growths, here

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